

Skill Development and Quality of Life of Persons with Disabilities: Some Reflections

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Abstract

India requires a new wave of educated and skilled individuals to adapt to a knowledge-based economy. Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) are a considerable part of the population of India, having untapped potential for ensuring the spirit of economic growth of the nation and an equitable society. Many regulations and Acts were enacted to encourage their growth and well-being, but the marginalised sections have been in the wrath of low skills and low productive employment due to the lack of access to education and training, or the low quality or relevance of training. This article approaches equating skill training concerning the quality of life, thus integrating differently abled personnel into the workforce. The paper aims to show how skill development escalates employment opportunities, expedites high productivity, and results in income growth and development. The reflections emerged from the study indicate that PwDs undergo deterrents thrown by the environment, thus posing constraints to physical access to employment, instead of the existence of remarkable schemes. This shows that disability is a social construct rather than an individual one, and as a result, due to a socially constructed mindset, PwDs face multiple challenges in accessing resources and benefits for themselves. Since India is making a beeline for emerging as a 'Knowledge Economy', it becomes peremptory to pivot on the amelioration of skills, thus targeting the dead centre, that is, the emerging economic environment.

Keywords: Skill development, skill training, quality of life, differently abled, persons with disabilities

Skill Development

India requires a new wave of educated and skilled individuals to adapt to a knowledge-based economy. A country's vying ambition is discerned by its people's aptness to not only use knowledge effectively but also create and share it to raise productivity (Tara & Kumar, 2016). Skills development significantly touches on the productive proficiency that is cultivated through all levels of learning and training, which may be obtained through formal, non-formal, informal, and on-the-job settings (Sida, 2018). The 12th Five-Year Plan document (Planning Commission, 2013) formulates the urgency of mainstreaming skill formation in the formal education system and laying down innovative and generative arteries for creating skills outside the formal education system. A paradigm shift is initiated by the government's coordinated action on skill development in getting a grip on the relevance of skill development; however, the variance in skill development is to be singled out so that the objectives of quantity, quality, outreach, and mobility can be brought out. Setting up a National Skills Qualification Framework institutes different levels of skill requisites of the industry. It admits multiple points of entry and exit, acknowledges prior learning and discerns mobility across different levels. It recognises the need for appropriate infrastructure and sets up an institutional framework that provides students access to bank loans and offers them placements (Tara & Kumar, 2016).

Need and Importance of Skill Development

To contend with poverty sustainably, structural change alongside economic diversification concerning high-productivity sectors is ineluctable (Sida, 2018). For India's economy to evolve and face cut-throat competition in world markets, investing in quality secondary and tertiary education and vocational education and training (VET) becomes significant (World Bank, 2008). A skilled and more adaptable labour force is required to encourage domestic and foreign investments (Sida, 2018). The vulnerable and marginalised sections have been in the wrath of low skills and low productive employment due to the lack of access to education and training, or the low quality or relevance of training. A framework is provided by the National Skill Policy to establish access to various target groups, such that their potential for productive work is taken into consideration and utilised in economic and social development (Sanghi & Srija, 2019).

Skill development can help functionally bring poverty down by tweaking employability and productivity, support inclusive growth, and pave the way for sustainable enterprise development. It escalates employment opportunities, expedites high productivity, and results in income growth and development. Skills' linkage with productivity will both benefit the enterprise and the economy, but would also oil the wheels of the various population segments- typically those sections of the society that are under-represented to accumulate the growth in the economy through skill development (Sanghi & Srija, 2019). Productivity and generation of employment can be quintessentially linked with skill training, thus drawing up the skills-development strategy as a constitutive part of the national education system, as well as dealing with life situations and fostering lifelong learning (e.g., work, active citizenship, and family life) (Sida, 2018).

In order to build up the flexibility and competence of the labour market, developing skilled workers becomes obligatory. It ameliorates a person's job mobility; the mediation of skilled workers is capacitated in the economy and takes the edge off the skilled bottleneck. (World Bank, 2008). Swain and Swain (2020) have summed up the benefits of skill development as follows: critical thinking & problem solving, the ability to take responsibility, grow confidence, improve decision-making power and enhance a greater sense of self-awareness.

Barriers Faced by Persons with Disabilities in the Employment Market

Full-time employment is remote, and economic passivity is rampant among people with disabilities (OECD, 2010); they may also be placed in jobs for which they are over-competent (International Labour Organisation, 2013). They take up jobs with poor prospects and below-average working conditions, thus trying hard to make a living from informal and subsistence jobs. Procuring and retaining one's employment are significant hassles faced by persons with mental health and intellectual disabilities. Disabled women find it very difficult to find an up-to-par job compared to non-disabled women or disabled men. It becomes imperative to empower those at the margin of the labour market to get to grips with the employment barriers (social, cultural, economic, and physical) which contribute to economic development and societal growth, as these intercept access to decent work for persons with disabilities.

As per a report issued in the Economic Cost of Exclusion and Gains of Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, a few hiccups have been affirmed regarding formal and informal employment based on authentication from low- and middle-income countries (Banks & Polack, 2014) as follows:

- People with disabilities are socially isolated, and they exclude themselves on purpose.
- Employers often misconceive or hold a discriminatory attitude about lower productivity and the under-qualification of disabled employees.
- Their capabilities and employability are not highly expected.
- Vocational services during interviews are often interrupted by Physical and communication barriers in work settings or social events.
- Microfinance schemes do not include Persons with Disability. They often lack collateral guarantors (Beria et al., 2007; Yeo & Moore, 2003), and formal banking institutions have barred them, too (Beria et al., 2007; Labie et al., 2015).
- Legal standing is lacking, i.e., that includes exclusion from both programs and beneficial policies (Mitra, 2005).

Skill India Mission and Inclusion of the Differently-abled

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in 2015, launched a roundabout program named Skill India Mission that envisioned making our nation's youth capable of empowering them and becoming self-made. It perhaps unfolded as the world's largest initiative to up-skill the workforce, refine skills and puff up entrepreneurship globally. Skill development chips in by tweaking the potency and empowering people to operate more competently, thus stirring the nation into a high-yielding, pioneering and vying economy with adept manpower (Behera & Gaur, 2022). Combining all key ministries, viz., the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, and the Ministry of Labour & Employment, sets the seal on quality discharge and implementation (Chenoy et al., 2019). Researchers Swain & Swain (2020) have found that India is accorded with a 'demographic dividend' which computes mileage to our economy, thus propping up the Make in India drive by corroborating a more adroit workforce. The government has set an ambitious target of skilling around 400 million people by 2022 (Arora & Chhadwani, 2019).

In developing countries like India, educational and vocational training is a cause of diminishing skilled opportunities and integrating job experience for the youth of that economy. Any economy prerequisites skilled youth who can look at pressure and undertake the risk of starting up a company, therefore promoting the country's economic growth. It is often noted that persons with disabilities, that is, persons with long-term physical, emotional, intellectual or dramatic impairments, get used to confinement on equal footing with others in any type of industry. In most cases, employees hold prejudices while recruiting in favour of the differently abled. Thus, the key revenue most persons with disabilities generate is out of self-employment (Behera & Gaur, 2022).

Despite the fact that India has assented to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability (UNCRPD), persons with disabilities are still stuck being faced with various predicaments related to the labour market. It becomes a gruelling plight for persons with disabilities in India to develop employable skills to secure purposeful employment. However, in the recent past, agencies such as National Institutes under DEPwD, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJ &E), the career and guidance centre for the PwD under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, vocational colleges, technical institutes, vocational schemes under the umbrella of MSJ&E, non-governmental organizations, public sectors, skill development agency etc. are making efforts with the intention to skill PwD for more acceptability and empowerment.

Skill Training of Persons with Disabilities and Quality of Life

As per a report published by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, investments in human resources are to be shot up to show that quality education, technical vocational education and training are made accessible universally to set up the magnitude of persons with disabilities (United Nations, 2019). What else is critically important is how the interplay of enabled conditions and incentive mechanisms heartens persons with disability partaking in the labour market.

Talking about a few other nations, the Accessible Canada Act draft set the seal on providing a barrier-free employment environment. A national programme launched on

employment support services in Georgia dispensed support to job seekers with disabilities with the help of job coaches and wage subsidies. Belgium included persons with disability through the 2016 provision of vocational training, thus developing a mechanism that would open doors for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. India devised programs that would alleviate poverty through programmes and other developmental schemes, reserving a 5% quota for persons with disabilities, which also gives a special focus on women with disabilities.

Significance of Skill Development for Differently-abled for Quality of Life

Quality of life gives a definition to people's perception of health, which is a consequence of functional limitations that take hold of their social and professional life (Khayatza-deh-Mahani et al., 2020). Features included in quality of life are quiddity of comfort and security, stable habitat and housing, welfare, ingress to education and culture, efficient healthcare facilities, etc. (Overchuk et al., 2021). Community membership is a notion that falls intermediate to the ideals of perception, which includes community living, community participation, and inclusion that the disability rights movement has been naturally exercising (Chenoweth & Stehlik, 2004). It has become necessary to turn out social places, spaces, and networks within communities where persons with disabilities are fully included and are allocated with identical look-ins for participation as non-disabled persons. Considering this pattern, it is conspicuous that inclusion causes reinforced participation and builds the potentiality and capacity of persons with disability. In order to set up more significant opportunities for employment (hereafter), training opportunities are to be acquired under self-development strategies that are to be availed (Ebrahim et al., 2022).

Knowledge (human capital) and novel skills are to be taken upon and amassed by individuals, and be after networks that very likely strengthen future employment prospects (International Labour Organisation, 2013). It is often noted that persons with disabilities, that is, persons with long-term physical, emotional, intellectual or dramatic impairments, get used to confinement on equal footing with others in any type of industry. In most cases, employees hold prejudices while recruiting in favour of the differently abled. Thus, the critical revenue most persons with disabilities generate is out of self-employment (Behera & Gaur, 2022).

Skill training is a worthy tool for driving the public into society and forming an implicit and effective community (Mirani et al., 2019). Keeping in mind the marked particularity of different types of disability, it calls for a direct style of approach (Forsyth et al., 2007). For a disabled person to save his life and make a living, he has to acquire a few basic skills. These basic skills may be attained through education, technology and professional skills, where people may be accredited for involving themselves in defined activities and practical work, such as business skills, attitudes, and knowledge required for success (WHO, 2010). Skill development aims to hold up local initiatives for the differently-abled, surveilling and assessing the worth of programs and reinforcing and thriving micro and macro income-generation look-ins in the community. If the skill development activities are taken on as per the interest of an individual and (determination of) disability, it will bear more meaning, and build on their performance and sense of well-being in the long run, thus contributing to career advancement (Soeker, 2018). Technical and vocational skill programmes stimulated persons with disability to work as it led to employer acceptance, took care of their social needs, led to guaranteed income, elevated self-esteem, and catered for more facilities and instances for appreciation in the workplace.

Skill development also targets inclusion. Inclusion includes every single person, still and all of their propensity, impairments, or health care needs, who are entitled to be admired and acknowledged as members who are significant to the communities. Recreational activities may be pitched in, holding down work that atones competitive wages and having careers that make brimful use of their amplitude (Ebrahim et al., 2022). Skill Training gives a sense of gratification and entitlement by helping out Persons with Disability round off their work-task and embarking on daily activities within the workshop, thereby satisfying their job-related prerequisites; and having reached their intent by playing a part in these work tasks and having had an experience of a sense of universality in the workplace, the workers came across an intuit of fulfilment (Soeker, 2018). Over the trial of an employment-training program, differently abled adolescents acquired several practical skills, including social and communication skills and elevated self-confidence. Despite personal pick-ups, youths delineated confrontations while looking for jobs after having completed their course.

Workforce involvement is held in high accord, and it is discerned that it is as a result of their association that essential life skills have been expanded (Lindsay et al., 2012). Beneficial livelihood outgrowths are a clear result of Skill Development training, which encompasses earning their livelihood, providing for their families, and securing monetary independence- thus impacting their quality of life in a positive light, making them sense empowerment, thrive communication skills, exhibit leadership, and helps in establishing greater relationships with a family member and ratification in the community (Fraser & Abu Al Ghaib, 2019).

As stated by Dubey (2016) in Industry, Skill Talk - A crucial role is played by skill development in building up the productivity and self-esteem of persons with disabilities (PwD). Training them called for some adjustments in methodologies and acclimatisation of special needs. Training and employability needs of PwDs in urban and rural India must be addressed with high priority (Dubey, 2016). Several PwDs aspire to be independent through rewarding employment or self-employment. Besides, there is a sturdy socio-economic compulsion to help them get productive along with sustained livelihoods.

As per the Scheme for Implementation of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016), vocational /skill training brought forth to private training institutions, public sectors, and government sector training institutions (like VRCs) creates a skill training network often led by NGOs (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, 2016). The vocational training is all set to make it a point that a high employment ratio is obtained after securing a track record of purveying skill training. Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and DEPwD financially succour the upshots that these training programmes bear. Reciprocal support is provided by the National Institutes of DEPwD, training institutions of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, other Central Ministries and State Governments to the training providers. Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), having consulted with the Sector Skill Council and various National Institutes of the DEPwD, have taken up the role of ushering in a course curriculum that is homogenous in nature and will alleviate and spur training providers to action with a certificate mechanism.

Conclusion

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities “recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others; this includes the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities” (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006, Article 27). Persons with disabilities undergo deterrents thrown by the environment, thus posing constraints to physical access to employment. This comes from a vantage point that people hold a prejudiced mindset against persons with disabilities, reinstating the fact that they are less prolific and less constructive than their non-disabled peers. The prowess and competence of differently abled employees are often misconstrued, thus drawing a line between them and their non-disabled counterparts. Indifferent behaviour is often cited when integrating disabled individuals into the workforce. Skill training and development programmes coalesce persons with disabilities into the contentious labour market. Skill development acts like a central agency to allocate specialised job training, individual supervision, and coaching to make job seekers job-ready with the backing of assistive technology. Since India is making a beeline for emerging as a ‘Knowledge economy’, it becomes peremptory to pivot on the amelioration of skills, thus targeting the dead centre, that is, the emerging economic environment.

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