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SKILL DEVELOPMENT AS A KEY FOR AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction:

Globalization has created a great demand for a skilled workforce which is responsive to emerging market needs and is equipped with knowledge. Although the Indian economy has experienced rapid growth over the recent period, the low level of education and formal training of the workforce are matters of concern. Availability of such skilled workforce is closely associated with the kind of vocational education and training system existing in the country. In India, the informal sector employs nearly 90 per cent of the workforce, most of whom are either non-skilled or inadequately skilled and there is very little investment or opportunity for formal 'skilling'. To get productive employment, especially in the informal sector, it is crucial to acquire skill sets with strong labour market linkages (Jamal and Mandal, 2013).

India to become world's youngest country by 2020 (average age group of 29 years). 64 per cent of India's population to be in the age group of 15-59 years by 2026. PM Narendra Modi launches Skill India Mission on the occasion of world youth skill day and sets target to provide skill training to 40.02 crore people. 263 million people (54.60%) are engaged in the agriculture sector and over half of them are now agricultural laborers. Total agricultural workers expected to decline to 190 million (2022) with an expected decline of 33 per cent. In agriculture sector about 18.50 per cent of the workers were skilled in 2009-10, of which Less than 0.50 per cent have formal technical education (Anonymous, 2017).

Skill Deficiency in India:

According to the estimates of the National Skill Development Policy, presently skills base of the Indian economy is quite low compared to other developed economies of the world. The present vocational training capacity is estimated to be around 3.1 million whereas 12.8 million persons, according to the 61st round of the National Sample Survey Organization (2004– 05).

The unorganized sector in the country constitutes nearly 90% of the workforce. Skills in the unorganized sector are acquired through informal apprentice system and the prevailing formal training system does not take care of the required skills. This eventually has led a huge gap in skill demand and supply. However, in order to reap the benefits of demographic dividend, India will have to equip this manpower to meet the requirement of skilled manpower across geographies.

National Policy on Skill Development:

Mission

National Skill Development Initiative will empower all individuals through improved skills, knowledge, nationally and internationally recognised qualifications to gain access to decent employment and ensure India's competitiveness in the global market.

Aims

The aim of skill development in the country is to support achieving rapid and inclusive growth through-

- Enhancing individuals' employability (wage/ self employment).
- Improving productivity and living standards of the people.
- Strengthening competitiveness of the country.
- Attracting investment in skill development.

Objectives

The objectives of the national policy on skill development are to:

- ▶ Create opportunities for all to acquire skills throughout life, and especially for youth, women and disadvantaged groups.
- ▶ Promote commitment by all stakeholders to own skill development initiatives.
- ▶ Develop a high-quality skilled workforce/ entrepreneur relevant to current and emerging employment market needs.
- ▶ Enable the establishment of flexible delivery mechanisms that respond to the characteristics of a wide range of needs of stakeholders.
- ▶ Enable effective coordination between different ministries, the centre, the states and public & private providers.

Skill Development Initiative Scheme:

- National Skill Development Mission
- National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015
- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)
- UDAAN
- STAR
- Vocationalization of Education

Major Outcome of Regional Workshop on Skill Development in Agriculture at Hyderabad:

- ❖ Major areas for skill training include: Nipping of tea leaves, Agri- warehousing, Organic Farming, Bee-keeping, Banana value-addition, Coconut climber and Mushroom production *etc.*
- ❖ Need for skilled manpower in micro-irrigation, soil testing & analysis, fertilizers & micro-nutrients application, IPM *etc.*
- ❖ Focus of skill training on farm mechanization, operation, maintenance, management and repair of farm machinery equipments.
- ❖ Skill development is required for farm level producers, input producers and distributors, service providers, and post-harvest operations and marketing of farm produce, whereas skills for electronic marketing, cold supply chain management, advisory and consultancy services *etc.*

- ❖ **Important areas of Training:** Agri-input dealership, Farm-advisory services, Nursery management Bio-fertilizers/ Bio-pesticides Production, Vermi- compost unit, Crop production technologies *etc.*
- ❖ Develop a comprehensive portal to link all the skill programs and target groups.

Table 1 Training Needs of SHG Members in Management Skills (N=290).

Training need area	Perceived mean scores and rank				
	Tamil Nadu (n=100)	Andhra Pradesh (n=100)	Odisha (n=50)	Bihar (n=40)	Overall perceived mean scores
Leadership	2.44 (X)	2.96 (VIII)	4.4 (II)	2.45 (IX)	3.06 (XI)
Planning	2.81 (IV)	4.59 (III)	4.06 (III)	3.09 (II)	3.64 (II)
Time management	2.94 (II)	4.79 (II)	3.56 (IV)	2.92 (VII)	3.55 (III)
Team building	2.77 (V)	5.0 (I)	3.42 (VI)	2.76 (VIII)	3.49 (IV)
Motivation	2.70 (VII)	5.0 (I)	3.46 (V)	2.30 (X)	3.37 (VII)
Decision making	2.58 (IX)	3.78 (VII)	5.0 (I)	3.59 (I)	3.74 (I)
Coordination	2.86 (III)	2.89 (IX)	5.0 (I)	3.04 (IV)	3.45 (VI)
Conflict management	2.34 (XI)	4.3 (V)	3.06 (VIII)	2.98 (VI)	3.17 (IX)
Accounting	3.07 (I)	4.5 (IV)	3.3 (VII)	3.05 (III)	3.48 (V)
Record keeping	2.67 (VIII)	4.3 (V)	2.92 (X)	1.93 (XI)	3.30 (VIII)
Handling meeting	2.72 (VI)	3.82 (VI)	3.02 (IX)	3.02 (V)	3.15 (X)

(Source: **Wason *et al.*, 2012**)

It is evident from the above Table 1, among the management skills, training needs in leadership assumed second rank for the SHG members of Odisha, while planning assumed second rank for the SHG members of Bihar (Table 1). Time management got second rank as training needs for the members of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and fourth rank in the case of Odisha. Training need in team building and motivation assumed first rank in the states of Andhra Pradesh, while decision making and coordination assumed first rank in Odisha. Training needs in “accounting got first and third ranks for the members of Tamil Nadu and Bihar, respectively. Based on overall mean scores across the states, the training needs according to their descending order of ranks were: decision-making, planning, time management, team building, accounting, coordination, motivation, record keeping, conflict management, handling meeting and leadership.

Table 2 Extent of Skill Development (N=120).

Skill competency	Tileibani block		Barkote block		Pooled score		Gap (%)
	Niktimal	Laxmipur	Mardang	Basalai	Adopted villages	Non-adopted villages	
	4.10	2.62	3.66	2.00	3.88	2.31	

(Source: **Nath and De, 2015 at Odisha, India**)

KVK was playing an important role in increasing the skill competency of farmers in adopted villages. The gap between the adopted & non-adopted villages was 68 per cent in skill competency sector only (Table 2).

Table 3 Distribution of Respondents According to Their Skill Improvement (N = 260)

Category	No.	%
Low (Mean – ½ S.D)	71	27.31
Medium (Mean ± ½ S.D)	128	49.23
High (Mean + ½ S.D)	61	23.46
Mean = 22.10	S.D = 2.34	

(Source: **Reddy *et al.*, 2012 at Chittoor, AP**)

Reddy *et al.* (2012) at Andhra Pradesh, found that there was high skill improvement only in agriculture (69.62%) followed by animal husbandry (59.23%) and horticulture (46.92%) areas. Only 23.46 per cent of the respondents expressed high skill improvement, followed by low (27.31%) and medium (49.23%) categories, respectively.

Table 4 Mean Score and Ranking for the Skill Improvement (N = 260).

Course content	Skill Improvement	
	Mean score	Rank
Agriculture	2.66	I
Horticulture	2.23	III
Animal husbandry	2.39	II
Sericulture	1.84	V
Fisheries	1.38	XII
Value addition	1.73	VII
Marketing management	1.72	VIII
Insurance & Banking	1.92	IV
Communication skills	1.76	VI

Group dynamics	1.55	IX
NRM	1.52	X
Social forestry	1.40	XI

(Source: **Reddy *et al.*, 2012 at Chittoor, AP**)

Agriculture was ranked first followed by animal husbandry and horticulture as the skill improved areas due to training programme. The other areas were ranked low with low mean values (Table 4).

Conclusion:

It can be concluded that there exists great demand for a skilled workforce, especially in the context of globalization and when Indian economy is growing at an unprecedented rate. Availability of such skilled workforce is closely associated with the kind of vocational education and training system existing in the country. Decision making skill secured first rank among different training need area of SHG members in management skills perceived by respondents. KVKs were playing an important role in increasing the skill competency of farmers in the adopted villages. About fifty per cent of the respondents expressed medium category of skill improvement followed by low and high skill improvement categories. Agriculture was ranked first followed by animal husbandry and horticulture among the skill improved areas due to training programme.

Continuing demand-supply gap leading to after school dropouts and regional imbalances in training capacities are found major challenges in skill development programmes & schemes. There is no doubt in it that it seems to be a good initiative of Indian government for providing skills to the people. As we all know that in India the working age of the population will be very high. This is the right time to improve physical and mental aspects in youth so that none of us remain unemployed and unemployment problem gets reduced.

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