

Novel models can help skill more people

Allowing corporates to invest in skillsets that benefit them can bring better outcomes, writes **Monisha Banerjee**



ship Program, the scheme needs to be relooked to make it more attractive to the services sectors. Nothing like providing youngsters with an opportunity to learn on the job!

Schooling matters most

It is however more important for the youth of the 21st century to develop foundational skills that are imperative for jobs across sectors. Globalisation and disruptive technologies are surely and steadily impacting job roles across sectors.

According to an EY report on the future of jobs, the adoption of exponential technologies by different industries could potentially disrupt job roles across sectors; a few sectors such as IT and BFSI will see maximum disruption and other sectors such as manufacturing, and apparel and leather lower.

Highly unorganised sectors such as transportation, maintenance and food services could transform into organised ones, increasing the share of the organised sector in the economy and creating new jobs. Learners and young students thus must be equipped to work in an extremely disruptive and agile environment.

The New Education Policy (NEP) supports the vocationalisation of education by intending to expose 50% of students to vocational skills by offering around 10 subjects at the school level. If implemented, this would allow students to get exposed to different vocations and career choices.

However, what the current public schooling system is unable to give—teaching students how to learn—needs to be fixed. Curiosity, communication, learning discipline and problem-solving are core skills that students must be encouraged and supported to hone. Only then will learning happen, and help students contribute to the demographic dividend that India can reap the benefits of.

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The importance of skilling in India was understood only in the last two decades or so and became a national agenda with the 'Skill India Mission' getting widely publicised. Alongside, the Companies Act of 2013 mandated that corporations spend on social causes as defined by the Act. The surge of capital for skilling in India thus was high and consistent.

After nearly 15 years of experimentation with different models, the country is still trying to find solutions to have an impact at scale. According to International Labour Organisation (ILO), based on current trends, India is staring at 29 million unskilled youth by 2030. Accenture predicts a loss to the tune of \$1.97 trillion in the next 10 years as an outcome of the unaddressed skill gap. Action needs to be taken to bring in change with agility and scale.

The approach to skilling has to be two-fold, both in the school system and in the pre-employment skilling system that exists.

Boosting skilling eco-system

■ **Industry-led training:** The best-developed talent emerges when the people who need the skills invest in building it for their own consumption. The industry needs to take the lead in creating the talent pool pipeline for their sector by supporting curricula, providing infrastructure and creating a trainer pool. This does not mean that this external training would necessarily be a substitute for

the post-hiring training that most industries offer to their freshers. The difference would be in expanding the talent pool by creating more resources who can be part of the sector. Thus the training should focus on the core skills that are needed for an untrained person to make it to the selection stage and prepare him to acquire the skills needed to learn on the job. Skilling programmes are run in isolation by NGOs which are funded by corporates that act just as donors. The NGO puts together content and trains them. These programmes are often not recognised by recruiters. An industry-led program implies that corporations invest in building a talent pipeline for their own consumption; when this happens the quality of training and therefore employment outcomes are sharper.

■ **Change CSR guidelines:** Currently, guidelines do not allow CSR investments to benefit the Corporation. By being allowed to invest in skill sets that would benefit the sector, corporates would be invested heavily in churning better outcomes since it would impact businesses directly. Corporates could work in close partnership with NGOs of their choice. Current CSR guidelines allow corporations to invest in programmes which do not benefit them directly or indirectly. Hence cor-

porations do not see a business value in running these programmes. CSR is often undertaken just for compliance purposes and may be seen as a cost centre for the entity. If CSR guidelines allow organisations to hire from the skill development programmes they sponsor, the investment and outcomes of these programmes will significantly change for the better.

■ **Investment in trainers:** One of the reasons that skilling programs in the best facilities have failed is the absence of skilled trainers. Industry-led certifications carry weight. For instance, CISCO and AWS provide a gold standard of what the best in the domain can look for in the IT industry for trainers. If corporations can use their internal resources to double up as master trainers or invest in online content and assessments to certify trainers, sectors can then have trainers who are equipped to develop a talent pool externally. This will help amplify the success rates of placements of youth. It is important to have standardised salary bands for certified trainers that make training an attractive and lucrative career choice.

■ **Apprenticeship/internships:** These need to become more of a norm than an exception. While certain sectors such as manufacturing have gained from the National Apprentice-

