

Skill Development Programmes Nurture Entrepreneurial Spirit and Enhance Employability Among Youth

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Abstract

Skill development and entrepreneurship have emerged as crucial priorities in India recently, driven by the imperative to leverage demographic advantages and stimulate economic progress. India's diverse demographics, characterized by a sizable youth population and regional disparities, present both challenges and opportunities for initiatives aimed at enhancing skills. Government initiatives like Skill India are designed to impart job-ready skills to millions, spanning sectors from IT to traditional crafts and agriculture.

Entrepreneurship, particularly among young people and marginalized communities, is seen not just as a pathway to attain economic independence but also as a driver for inclusive economic progress. Programs such as Startup India aim to cultivate an entrepreneurial ethos by offering support for incubation, funding, and policy incentives. Nonetheless, obstacles persist, including limited access to capital, infrastructural deficiencies, and the necessity for robust mentorship networks.

The socio-economic outcomes of these endeavours vary across states and demographic segments, influenced by factors like educational attainment, urban-rural disparities, and gender gaps. Efforts to foster skill development and entrepreneurship are increasingly aligned with global trends in digital transformation and sustainable development, emphasizing innovation and adaptability in an evolving economic landscape.

Keywords: Skill India, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), PMKVY, PMKK, PMEGP, Mudra Loan, Agniveer, Skill Development, Entrepreneurship Development, Director General of Training (DGT), PM Vishwakarma Yojana, NAPS, Skill India Digital, NSQF, NSDC.

1. Introduction

India, renowned for its vast population and rich cultural diversity, embodies a complex interplay of economic, geographical, political, and social dynamics that profoundly influence various aspects of life, including education, employment, and workforce development. As the world's second-most populous nation, with over 65% of its population under 35 years old, India boasts the globe's second-largest workforce, comprising 487 million individuals engaged in diverse economic activities, second only to China. Despite this demographic strength, India faces persistent challenges such as rapid population growth, unplanned urban migration leading to urban poverty, high school dropout rates, widespread illiteracy, unemployment, and inadequate healthcare infrastructure. As of 2023, the country reported a

general unemployment rate of 7.1%, with youth unemployment at 12.9%, and nearly 23% of the population living below the poverty line.

Skill education plays a pivotal role in India's socio-economic advancement, particularly given its youthful demographic profile. Effective skill development aligns workforce capabilities with the evolving needs of industries, addressing significant skills gaps that contribute to high youth unemployment rates. Initiatives like the PMKVY empower marginalized communities by offering pathways to gainful employment and entrepreneurship, fostering economic independence. By enhancing productivity and adaptability, skill education equips individuals to navigate technological changes, enhancing India's competitiveness in the global market and promoting inclusive growth across society strata, crucial for sustainable development. To comprehensively address these challenges, the Indian government has launched strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing skill development and expanding employment opportunities. For instance, the PMKVY has trained over 15 million individuals, equipping them with essential skills for meaningful employment. Additionally, the Skill Loan Scheme under the Skill India mission has made vocational training more accessible through financial support. International collaborations with countries like Germany, the UK, and Australia further bolster these efforts, facilitating expertise exchange to improve skill training programs.

Historically, India's economy heavily relied on its handicraft sector, employing a significant portion of the population. However, industrialization brought profound changes, replacing traditional methods with modern technologies. Currently, the MSDE plays a vital role in coordinating and advancing national skill development initiatives. Its efforts focus on reducing the disparity between skilled labor supply and demand, improving vocational and technical training frameworks, and promoting innovation to address present and future job market needs. By 2025, the ministry aims to achieve balanced high-skills development across India, ensuring economic gains, social mobility, and substantial contributions to the nation's economy. Central to these initiatives is the Skill India Digital Hub, an advanced online platform designed to facilitate skilling, reskilling, and upskilling by connecting various stakeholders, including candidates, training centers, employers, and educational institutions, streamlining the skilling ecosystem for enhanced accessibility and efficiency. Backed by the NSDC, formed through a public-private partnership in 2008, India's skill development framework includes more than 58,914 training partners and 158,474 training centers. As of June 2023, the NSDC had provided training to over 34 million individuals through diverse programs. Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) play a crucial role in this framework, aligning training programs with industry requirements across sectors ranging from aerospace to textiles, ensuring a robust and standardized approach to skill development.

Looking ahead, India is set to have the largest working-age population globally by 2030. However, ensuring meaningful employment for graduates remains a significant challenge. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 addresses this by integrating vocational education into mainstream schooling starting as early as grade 6, equipping students with technical and soft skills aligned with industry needs to close the skills gap and prepare them for future careers. Emphasizing experiential and skill-based learning, the NEP 2020 promotes a well-rounded education that includes sports, languages, arts, and crafts, fostering lifelong learning and employability. In response to evolving economic needs, India's education system has aligned higher education with industry requirements through initiatives like the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), introduced in 2013. The NSQF integrates vocational training into higher education, offering degrees such as Bachelor of Vocation aligned with industry standards. These programs blend vocational training with general education, providing flexible entry and exit points to

enhance employability. NSQF certifications cover diverse specializations like Banking and Finance, Renewable Energy Management, Retail Management, and Hospitality, preparing graduates for both local and global job markets.

2. Review of Literature

Skill development in India has garnered considerable attention in recent research, focusing on understanding the landscape, challenges, and strategies for improvement. **Cabral & Dhar (2019)** [1] conducted a systematic review spanning 2004 to 2017, offering a detailed analysis of the existing knowledge in this domain, serving as a foundational resource for further exploration into skill development initiatives in the country. **Batra (2009)** [2] underscores the importance of examining new policy frameworks in education and skill development to propel India towards a knowledge-based economy. This aligns with the goal of enhancing human capital and positioning India as a global knowledge powerhouse. **Sharma (2018)** [3] discusses the implications and hurdles of skill development policies, emphasizing the critical need for investing in skill formation to cultivate a proficient workforce. **Prabhakar & Nimesh (2022)** [4] focus on skill development programs for women, illustrating how such initiatives can elevate socio-economic status and empower women. **Ghosh et al. (2022)** [5] highlights the socio-economic benefits of formal and informal skill development training for Indian youth. **P.M. et al. (2022)** [6] examine Kerala's Additional Skills Acquisition Programme (ASAP) as a case study, stressing the importance of practical skill acquisition in enhancing employability. **King (2012)** [7] explores the geopolitical implications of India's skill development ambitions, linking skill enhancement to economic and social progress. **Pilz et al. (2015)** [8] research into skills enhancement within the informal sector, particularly among street food vendors, promotes the implementation of customized skill development programs aimed at informal labourers. **Mullan & Rolleston (2020)** [9] exploring challenges in skill development within India's informal economy underscores the necessity for focused interventions. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 signifies a pivotal change in India's approach to higher education and skill enhancement. **Bhatnagar (2021)** [10] highlights NEP 2020's focus on skill development and comprehensive transformation of higher education, impacting millions of students across India. **Naskar and Chatterjee (2022)** [11] argue that NEP 2020 aims to integrate traditional knowledge with modern educational practices to foster holistic development. **Shrotriya et al. (2018)** [12] emphasize India's aspiration to lead in skilled manpower globally through innovative ecosystems and robust skill initiatives, crucial for aligning the workforce with industry needs and driving economic growth. However, **Malik (2024)** [13] identifies significant challenges in implementing vocational and skill development programs in Haryana, providing insights and recommendations for enhancing program effectiveness based on extensive literature review.

3. Statement of the Problem

Overcoming the challenges faced by youth in getting jobs and becoming entrepreneurs by developing skills is vital for supporting economic growth.

4. Objectives of this Study

The primary objective of this study is to understand how skill development programs promote entrepreneurship and enhance youth employability. The study concentrates on:

- Understanding the success and growth of skill development programmes.

- Identifying the existing government policies and initiatives in supporting and promoting skill development and Entrepreneurship.
- Identifying the challenges and barriers faced by youths for getting jobs.

5. Research Methodology

This study employs only secondary sources such as research publications, newspapers, government and non-governmental organization reports, etc.

6. Study Constraints: Sole Dependency on Secondary data sources.

7. India's Demography

India, a dynamic and culturally diverse subcontinent, has a population exceeding 1.4 billion people, surpassing China as the world's most populous country in 2023. As of mid-2023, India's population stands at approximately 1.428 billion and is projected to reach 1.7 billion by 2050. Reflecting its vibrant youthfulness, over 50% of the population is under 30 years old. With a life expectancy averaging around 72 years, women generally live longer than men. The linguistic landscape of India is incredibly diverse, with over 122 spoken languages, including prominent ones like Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Telugu, and Tamil. This diversity extends to religion as well, with India being a mosaic of faiths such as Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

As of 2024, the sex ratio is about 106.453 males for every 100 females, translating to roughly 743.39 million males and 698.29 million females, making up 51.56% and 48.44% of the population respectively. The median age in India is youthful, at 28.2 years. The population distribution is as follows: 26.31% are aged 0-14 years, 17.51% are 15-24 years old, 41.56% fall within the 25-54-year range, 7.91% are aged 55-64 years, and 6.72% are 65 years and older. The largest segment, comprising 66.98%, belongs to the working-age group (15-64 years).

India's employment landscape is challenging, with issues of both unemployment and underemployment. As of March 2023, the employment rate rose to 36.9%, with about two million individuals finding jobs. However, many of these jobs are low-paying or do not align with workers' qualifications, highlighting the issue of underemployment. The informal sector remains a cornerstone of the economy, despite ongoing efforts to formalize it, with many migrant workers moving across districts for work. Gender disparity is also notable, with female labour force participation at around 24% and significant gaps in executive roles.

8. Schemes Implemented To Promote Skill Development And Entrepreneurship

8.1 Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)

The m/o MSMEs has extended the PMEGP for an additional five years from 2021-22 to 2025-26, demonstrating its commitment to fostering employment opportunities and reducing nationwide unemployment. This initiative aims to support various beneficiary categories by adjusting contribution limits and subsidy rates to encourage entrepreneurship in both urban and rural areas. Beneficiaries in the General Category are required to contribute 10% of the project cost and receive subsidies of 15% for urban projects and 25% for rural ventures. For marginalized categories such as Transgender, Minorities, SC, ST, OBC, Ex-Servicemen, and those in the North Eastern Region (NER), the contribution is reduced to 5%, with subsidies increased to 25% and 35% respectively.

The PMEGP facilitates the establishment of new business ventures and upgrades for existing units, providing subsidized margin money applicable across manufacturing and services sectors. Maximum project costs are capped at Rs 50 lakhs for manufacturing and Rs 20 lakhs for services, with banks covering the remaining amount beyond the beneficiary's contribution. The program has set ambitious targets and achieved significant milestones in recent years, consistently surpassing goals from 2019-20 to 2022-23. These successes underscore the scheme's effectiveness in stimulating entrepreneurial growth and fostering economic development across diverse sectors and regions in India.

8.2 Entrepreneurship Development Program (EDP) under PMEGP

The EDP under the PMEGP plays a vital role in equipping aspiring entrepreneurs across India with essential skills and knowledge to establish and manage their enterprises successfully. Conducted by approved Implementing Agencies (IAs) under the guidance of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), EDP sessions encompass various topics such as business planning, market research, financial management, and legal considerations. These programs, varying in duration from days to weeks, cater to diverse demographics such as women, SC/ST/OBC/minority communities, and rural as well as urban populations. Participants benefit not only from practical entrepreneurial insights but also from eligibility to apply for PMEGP loans and subsidies to kick-start their ventures.

8.3 Mudra Loan

The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) provides unsecured institutional credit up to Rs. 10 lakhs to support small business ventures in manufacturing, trade, services, and agriculture, facilitated by SCBs, NBFCs and MFIs. PMMY comprises three schemes: Shishu, Kishore, and Tarun, offering varying loan limits. Under the Shishu scheme, loans are available up to 50 thousand rupees, under the Kishore scheme up to 5 lakh rupees, and under the Tarun scheme up to 10 lakh. Since its inception, PMMY has significantly bolstered small businesses, with a consistent rise in loans sanctioned and disbursed. In FY 2015-16, 3,48,80,924 loans amounting to Rs. 1,32,954.73 crores were sanctioned, growing to 6,23,10,598 loans disbursed amounting to Rs. 4,50,423.66 crores in FY 2022-23. As of February 9, 2024, PMMY has sanctioned 5,32,09,337 loans, disbursing Rs. 4,26,908.55 crores, highlighting its crucial role in promoting financial inclusion and economic empowerment across India.

8.4 Some States Schemes for Skill and Entrepreneurship Development

India's initiatives to foster entrepreneurship vary by state, with each developing programs tailored to support startups and small businesses while capitalizing on local strengths. In Maharashtra, the Maharashtra State Innovation Society (MSInS) and Maharashtra Centre for Entrepreneurship Development (MCED) provide financial support and training, particularly in rural areas. Karnataka's Elevate 100 program annually funds and mentors innovative startups, backed by the Karnataka Startup Policy. Gujarat's iCreate focuses on incubating startups in manufacturing and agriculture, supported by subsidies under the Gujarat Industrial Policy. Telangana's T-Hub offers infrastructure and mentorship, while Tamil Nadu's Startup and Innovation Policy supports women entrepreneurs and social enterprises through funding and training. Kerala's Startup Mission (KSUM) and Young Innovators Programme (YIP) nurture student entrepreneurship. Andhra Pradesh's Innovation Society (APIS) and State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) enhance skills through targeted training initiatives. Uttar Pradesh and other states have similar policies supporting rural and women entrepreneurs, fostering a vibrant startup ecosystem.

Skill development initiatives across states aim to enhance employability and drive economic growth. Maharashtra's Kaushalya Setu provides vocational training in sectors like healthcare and hospitality,

offering certifications such as Certificate in Information Technology (CIT) and Certificate in Soft Skills. Gujarat's Mukhyamantri Apprentice Yojana offers apprenticeship training with certifications like National Trade Certificate (NTC) and Craft Instructor Training (CIT). Kerala's Additional Skill Acquisition Programme (ASAP) provides certifications in IT and Tourism Management. Tamil Nadu's Skill Development Corporation offers certifications in Automotive Service Technician and IT Application Developer. These programs equip individuals with crucial skills for career advancement, contributing to sustainable economic development nationwide.

9. Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)

The MSDE was established on November 9, 2014, as a dedicated entity of the Government of India. Its creation was a response to the increasing demand for skill development and the promotion of entrepreneurship across various sectors nationwide. The MSDE's primary mission is to cultivate a proficient workforce capable of making substantial contributions to India's economic growth and overall development.

Key Responsibilities of MSDE:

- **Coordination of Skill Development:** Serving as the central coordinating body, MSDE oversees and harmonizes skill development initiatives throughout the country. It collaborates closely with industries, training providers, and state governments to streamline and enhance the effectiveness of these efforts.
- **Analysis of Skill Gaps:** MSDE conducts thorough analyses to identify skill gaps across sectors and regions. Based on these findings, it designs and implements targeted programs to bridge these gaps, ensuring that the workforce aligns with the evolving needs of the economy.
- **Development of Vocational Training Framework:** MSDE focuses on establishing a robust framework for vocational and technical training. It ensures these programs meet industry standards, thereby improving the employability and career prospects of participants.
- **Upgradation and Certification of Skills:** MSDE promotes lifelong learning by facilitating the certification and recognition of skills acquired through formal and informal channels. This validation enhances the workforce's competencies.
- **Promotion of Entrepreneurship:** MSDE supports aspiring entrepreneurs through training, mentorship, and access to resources, fostering innovation and the growth of small businesses.
- **Emphasis on Innovation and New Skills:** Recognizing the evolving nature of modern jobs, MSDE places a strong emphasis on innovation and developing skills relevant to emerging sectors. By staying abreast of industry trends and technological advancements, MSDE ensures the workforce is prepared for future challenges.

Major Initiatives of MSDE

- **Transformative Growth and Modernization of India's ITIs**

The Directorate General of Training (DGT) has embarked on a transformative initiative to rejuvenate India's ITIs, building upon a legacy rooted in skill training since the pre-independence era. Since 2014, 4,621 new ITIs have been established, bringing the total to 14,953 institutes by 2022, reflecting a notable growth of 47.77%. Concurrently, over 25 lakh new seats have been introduced for the sessions from 2021-2023, marking a 25% increase since 2014. The capacity for trainers has also significantly expanded, with 5,710 new seats added, representing a growth of 49.8% in total trainer capacity.

Furthermore, the introduction of 223 courses, including 150 Craftsmen Training Scheme and 55 Craft Instructor Training Scheme, highlights DGT's commitment to modernizing skill development. The establishment of 33 National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs), including 19 dedicated to women, and the signing of 13 MoUs under the Flexi MoU Scheme underscore DGT's strategic efforts to align vocational training with industry demands and promote inclusive growth in skill development across India.

- **Training and Certification to AGNIVEER**

On December 26, 2022, the DGT signed significant Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with the Army, Navy, and Air Force under its Flexi-MoU Scheme. This initiative aims to formally acknowledge the skills acquired by Agniveer personnel during their service in the armed forces. Upon completing their tenure, Agniveers will be awarded skill certificates reflecting their qualifications and practical learning gained from courses like Basic Training of Military, Trade Training, Security Training, and Service/OJT. These certifications will enable Agniveers, after fulfilling their four-year service commitment, to smoothly transition into various industries, thereby enhancing their job prospects and supporting their successful civilian career paths.

- **DGT's Strategic Partnerships in New Technologies Training**

Recently, the DGT has signed important Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with leading IT industry players to provide training in advanced technologies like Cloud computing, AI and ML. These collaborations involve Microsoft India, Wadhvani Foundation, Amazon Web Services, and ETS India. Through these collaborations, DGT aims to empower its workforce with the latest skills demanded by the industry, ensuring that trainees are equipped to tackle challenges and contribute effectively in the rapidly evolving digital landscape. These initiatives not only foster technological advancement but also strengthen the employability of individuals within the IT sector, aligning with India's vision of becoming a global leader in technology innovation and expertise.

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)**

Launched on July 15, 2015, under the Skill India Mission, the PMKVY is a flagship program aimed at providing short-term training opportunities to the youth of India. One of its key features is the Recognition of Prior Learning, which allows working individuals to get their existing skills formally certified. The primary focus of PMKVY is to boost employability across the nation by offering high-quality training that aligns with the NSQF and meets industry demands. As of December 13, 2023, approximately 1.40 crore candidates have been trained under this scheme. Notably, 42% of those who completed the Short-term Training found jobs across various sectors, resulting in 24.39 lakh placements out of 57.42 lakh certified candidates.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, PMKVY 3.0 introduced the Customized Crash Course Programme, training over 1.20 lakh individuals, with more than 83,000 certified for healthcare roles to support frontline efforts. In the Union Budget for 2023-24, PMKVY 4.0 was announced, aiming to provide training in advanced fields like Industry 4.0, AI, robotics, IoT, and drones. This new phase focuses on employability through more in-depth, tailored training programs. By December 13, 2023, 6,62,750 candidates had enrolled in PMKVY 4.0, with 3,42,500 completing their training. PMKVY 4.0 also includes customized courses, integrates vocational and academic education, and sets up Skill Hubs in educational institutions to expand training facilities and meet specific industry job requirements.

- **PM Vishwakarma Yojana**

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has launched the ₹13,000 crore 'PM Vishwakarma Yojana' to support and uplift artisans across India. This program aims to improve the quality and reach of their work by

providing them with modern tools and technology. It connects artisans to both domestic and global markets, offering them complete support for upgrading their skills to meet today's demands. The scheme includes formal training, updates to traditional skills, financial help, and opportunities to connect with the market, helping artisans succeed while preserving their crafts for future generations. It covers 18 trades such as carpentry, boat making, blacksmithing, goldsmithing, pottery, and tailoring. Artisans in the program receive a PM Vishwakarma Certificate and ID Card, along with a ₹15,000 toolkit incentive after their skills are assessed. They also get basic and advanced training with stipends, credit support, and rewards for using digital payments. Additionally, marketing assistance helps increase their market presence. Overall, the scheme aims to enhance the status of artisans, ensure they have sustainable livelihoods, and promote entrepreneurship in the artisanal sector.

- **Launch of Skill India Digital**

Skill India Digital (SID) is a modern online platform focused on skills and jobs, built on the secure and scalable India Stack Global framework. It uses advanced AI and ML technology to help users discover and recommend suitable skills and job opportunities. SID also features a digital job exchange for seamless connections between job seekers and employers. It provides digital certificates that can be verified online, ensuring authenticity. The platform integrates various government programs like Skilling Schemes, eShram, EPFO, NCS, Udyam, and others, along with economic indicators, to make it easier to access training, credit, and market opportunities. SID offers a Digital Skill Card for lifelong learning, accessible anytime and anywhere. It supports flexible learning through online courses, AR/VR/XR technologies, multimedia learning, and online assessments. Users can find courses and training centers through an interactive map, making access to resources convenient. Overall, SID enhances career and learning pathways through technology-driven recommendations, secure digital credentials, and integration with government schemes, fostering entrepreneurship, lifelong learning, and creating a vibrant skills marketplace for both domestic and international job opportunities.

- **Market-driven Skilling for Industry 4.0**

The Skill India Mission is focusing on teaching skills for the future, especially in high-tech areas like drones, IoT, robotics, EVs, AI, ML, 5G, mechatronics, cloud computing, blockchain, and XR, which includes AR and VR. These skills are expected to boost growth in manufacturing and services. To help young people learn these skills, the government has approved 146 special courses through the MSDE. They also encourage learning in advanced fields like precision farming, maintenance prediction, simulations, data analysis, and telemedicine.

Since 2014, the NSDC has set up over 32,700 training centers, training more than 21.4 million people, with many trained between 2014 and November 2023. To support these training centers, the government has provided over ₹1873 crore in financial aid at lower rates to more than 350 partners through loans, equity, and grants, distributing ₹1209 crore from June 2014 to November 2023.

In 2022, the Skill Loan initiative was started to make it easier to get credit for skills training. This program offered a Line of Credit to financial institutions and NBFCs, distributing ₹30 crore to 5 NBFCs, benefiting over 4,500 learners by November 2023. The MSDE has also quickly introduced drone training courses in over 500 ITIs, giving initial approval to 39 ITIs for NSQF-aligned drone courses and short-term drone training in 100 ITIs with good ratings.

- **Promotion of Apprenticeship Training**

Apprenticeships are one of the most effective ways to develop skills sustainably. Currently, around 709,000 apprentices are receiving training in various businesses across the country. By the end of

November 2023, the program had enrolled a total of 2,474,714 apprentices, with 182,057 businesses registered on the apprenticeship platform. It's expected that around 1.5 million apprentices will be taken on by businesses this fiscal year. The program provides hands-on training for recent graduates for 6 to 12 months and has undergone major updates, including changes to the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme, new trade courses, improved examination procedures, and more efficient online processes. So far, 925,260 apprentices have successfully finished their training. Since July 2022, a pilot Direct Benefit Transfer initiative has allowed over 241,000 transactions, distributing ₹35.02 crore directly into apprentices' bank accounts. This initiative was expanded across the country on August 11, 2023, disbursing ₹117.59 crore via DBT. This direct payment approach supports Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's goal to make apprenticeship training more appealing and to encourage the concept of "earning while learning," as emphasized in the National Education Policy (NEP).

- **Promoting Entrepreneurship**

Several initiatives are transforming the landscape of entrepreneurship across India:

- a) NIESBUD has expanded its presence by establishing 21 extension centers at NSTIs across the country, enhancing its nationwide reach.
- b) A collaborative initiative titled "Education to Entrepreneurship: Empowering Students, Educators, and Entrepreneurs" has been initiated through a three-year partnership involving the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, and Meta. NIESBUD has been awarded a Letter of Intent for this initiative. Over the next three years, Meta plans to train 500,000 entrepreneurs in digital marketing skills. Training will begin in seven regional languages using Meta's platforms, complemented by three short films detailing the collaboration.
- c) Recently, NSTI Plus conducted a foundation stone-laying ceremony in Bhubaneswar to enhance the skills of youth in Odisha. Under the DGT, NSTI Plus aims to train 500 instructors in Phase-1 through the Craftsmen Instructor Training Scheme. An additional 500 instructors will undergo upskilling and reskilling, positioning NSTI Plus as a pivotal hub for startups, an incubation center, and a prototype training facility for other states.
- d) NSTI Plus focuses on cultivating soft skills, providing hands-on training in emerging technologies, and fostering an enriching learning environment. These initiatives underscore the critical role of educators in shaping the future workforce.
- e) "UdyamDisha," an online e-mentoring platform, has been developed to support aspiring and existing entrepreneurs by offering online mentoring services to guide them through their entrepreneurial journeys.

10. Challenges Faced by Youth Entrepreneurs

- **Limited Skills and Knowledge:** Many young entrepreneurs lack essential skills in business management, marketing, finance, and technology, which are crucial for business success.
- **Age-Related Discrimination:** Young entrepreneurs often face biases due to their age, which can affect perceptions of their capabilities among investors and customers.
- **Smaller Business Networks:** Compared to established entrepreneurs, youth have limited professional networks, making it challenging to connect with mentors, industry experts, and potential collaborators.
- **Restricted Access to Financial Resources:** Securing capital is difficult for young entrepreneurs due to limited personal savings, lack of collateral, and risk aversion among lenders.

- **Inadequate Entrepreneurship Education:** Formal education systems often do not adequately prepare young people for entrepreneurship, lacking practical training and exposure to real-world business scenarios.
- **Market Barriers:** Entering competitive markets is tough for young entrepreneurs as established players dominate, making it hard to gain a foothold.
- **Lack of Work Experience:** Without prior work experience, youth may struggle to understand industry dynamics and customer needs, which are critical for business success.
- **Social Attitudes and Stigma:** Societal norms and attitudes toward entrepreneurship can discourage young people from pursuing entrepreneurial paths, favoring traditional career paths instead.

11. Suggestions to Foster a Conducive Environment for Entrepreneurship

- **Creating a Supportive Environment for Entrepreneurship in India:** To foster entrepreneurship, India needs a comprehensive strategy that draws lessons from successful initiatives in other countries.
- **Government Support:** India has launched initiatives like Startup India and Atal Innovation Mission, offering resources, mentorship, tax benefits, and regulatory assistance to help new ventures innovate and grow.
- **Access to Investment:** Access to venture capital funding is crucial for startups to expand. Increased investments from both domestic and international sources have allowed startups to scale up, invest in technology, and enter new markets.
- **Technological Advancements:** India's widespread adoption of affordable internet access, smartphone usage, and digital platforms has created a favorable environment for startups. This has led to the emergence of disruptive business models like e-commerce giants Flipkart and Snapdeal, as well as digital payment solutions such as Paytm.
- **Skilled Workforce and Cost Advantage:** India boasts a large pool of highly skilled professionals, including engineers, entrepreneurs, and business graduates. This diverse talent pool gives startups a competitive advantage in innovation and operational efficiency.
- **Collaboration and Innovation:** Promoting research and development, fostering collaboration between academia and industry, and incentivizing innovation-driven entrepreneurship are crucial steps to encourage sustainable growth and competitiveness in India's startup ecosystem.

12. Conclusion

India, with its expansive population and diverse cultural mosaic, encounters a range of challenges and prospects across sectors such as education, employment, and workforce development. The country's demographic advantage is evident in its predominantly youthful population, with more than 65% under the age of 35, positioning India as home to the world's second-largest workforce. However, alongside this demographic dividend, India confronts issues including rapid population growth, urban poverty resulting from unplanned migration, high rates of school dropout, widespread illiteracy, unemployment, and inadequate healthcare infrastructure. These factors have contributed to an overall unemployment rate of 7.1%, with youth unemployment notably higher at 12.9%. Approximately 23% of the population was living below the poverty line as of 2023. Skill education plays a pivotal role in India's socio-economic advancement, particularly given its youthful demographic. Initiatives like the PMKVY play a crucial role in empowering marginalized communities by offering pathways to employment and entrepreneurship. By aligning skill development with industry needs, programs like PMKVY aim to address the skills gap that

contributes to high rates of youth unemployment. These efforts not only enhance productivity and adaptability but also promote economic independence and inclusive growth, essential for sustainable development. To comprehensively address these challenges, the Indian government has launched strategic initiatives aimed at bolstering skill development and expanding employment opportunities. PMKVY, for instance, has already trained over 15 million individuals, equipping them with essential skills for employment. Moreover, schemes like the Skill Loan Scheme under Skill India and international collaborations with countries like Germany, the UK, and Australia further enhance these efforts by facilitating expertise exchange and improving training programs. Historically, India's economy relied heavily on the handicraft sector, but industrialization has brought significant changes, replacing traditional methods with modern technologies. The m/o MSDE now oversees national skill development initiatives to bridge the gap between the supply and demand for skilled labour. By 2025, the ministry aims to achieve widespread high-skills development across India, contributing to economic growth and social mobility. The Skill India Digital Hub, an online platform, streamlines the skilling ecosystem by connecting stakeholders for enhanced accessibility and efficiency. Looking forward, India is poised to have the world's largest working-age population by 2030. Initiatives like the NEP 2020 integrate vocational education into mainstream schooling to equip students with technical and soft skills aligned with industry needs. Aligning higher education with industry requirements through frameworks like the NSQF prepares graduates for both local and global job markets, enhancing their employability and contributing to economic growth. India's efforts in skill development and entrepreneurship, supported by initiatives like the PMEGP, EDP, and Mudra Loan scheme, are crucial in fostering job creation, reducing unemployment, and empowering individuals across diverse sectors and regions. These initiatives, alongside state-specific programs and the Start Up India campaign, have propelled India into a global leader in startups, driving economic dynamism, job creation, and innovation across various sectors.

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