



### MIGRANT LABOUR UPSKILLING – ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES:

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#### ABSTRACT

Today the world is moving towards skill and technology. All sectors are increasingly embracing skilled manpower. Employment protection and opportunity for better earnings are all possible with skilling. Labour productivity can also be achieved with skilling. It is critical from both the socio-economic and demographic points of view. It is an important tool for reducing poverty, enhancing competitiveness and employability and to promote the self-entrepreneurship among youths. However, majority of the workers are employed in the unorganized sector. Working in this unorganized sector provides not much scope for improvement. Migrants constitute a large segment working in the unorganized sector. It is also a well-known fact that because of their inherent drawbacks they are forced to work in the unorganized sector and are exploited. The system of finding work through agents and other means has its own misgivings. They are continuously getting exploited due to the intermediaries in the labour market. The migrant workers face lot of challenges in getting good education, skill training and employment. It is here that the government should step in, if at all they want to make use of the so-called demographic dividend. The government has no doubt taken a great step in this direction by setting up a ministry for skilling and training. Crores of money has been spent on training and placements but the vast majority are still unaware of this herculean effort. The major issue with unskilled migrants is that they are unable to work in the organised sector, which necessitates upskilling. India is not only poised for growth but is growing at a magical pace. When the world is reeling under financial crises, our country is the sun among stars. It is the human resources that has led us to this growth. While skilling and upskilling have all proved its relevance, the government has shown its commitment by enhancing the allocation to skill development initiatives in the present budget. The migrants



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have expressed their willingness to get trained if some of the bottlenecks are removed. They have stated that the most significant constraints they face are a lack of time after working hours and the possibility of losing daily wages. They are in favour of on-the-job training. However, the unorganized sector does not encourage such training facilities. The government has to bring about a big change in the reach aspect. Also, all these initiatives should be aggressively promoted in the rural areas.

**Key Words:** Migration, Skill development, Government Initiatives.

## INTRODUCTION

Today the world is moving towards skill and technology. All sectors are increasingly embracing skilled manpower. Employment protection and opportunity for better earnings are all possible with skilling. Labour productivity can also be achieved with skilling. It is critical from both the socio-economic and demographic points of view. It is an important tool for reducing poverty, enhancing competitiveness and employability and to promote the self-entrepreneurship among youths. However, majority of the workers are employed in the unorganized sector. Working in this unorganized sector provides not much scope for improvement. Migrant workers constitute a sizeable number of the working class and till date there has been only piecemeal solutions to address their issues. Excluding them from the mainstream would definitely lead to disastrous consequences in terms of various developmental policies undertaken by the government. Skilling the migrant population is one of the most viable alternatives to shift them to the organised sector. It is also a well-known fact that because of their inherent drawbacks they are forced to work in the unorganized sector and are exploited. The system of finding work through agents and other means has its own misgivings. They are continuously getting exploited due to the intermediaries in the labour market. It is here that the government should step in, if at all they want to make use of the so-called demographic dividend.

### Review Of Literature:

Uma, Madhu, and Habeeb (2013)<sup>7</sup> also emphasizes in their paper "Regional migration for inclusion" that the "majority of impoverished agricultural laborers' who migrate for a living are from marginalized groups" such as SCs. The push reasons for socially excluded castes are unquestionably more powerful than those for the state's socially dominant castes. One would expect that migration rates among socially excluded castes would be higher than those among socially dominating castes. Rural-to-urban migration is more common among the favored castes classified as General or OBC. This demonstrates that socially powerful castes frequently migrate from rural to urban regions in search of education and/or a better way of life. On the other hand, SCs and STs may migrate to work as wage laborers if they have extremely tiny landholdings or are landless laborers. While Sunita Sanghi's (2012) analysis indicates that the nation's unskilled labour force was characterised by low productivity and low skill. According to the authors, over the last two decades, all three sectors—agriculture, manufacturing, and service—have performed

successfully. However, in order to increase capacity and expand on a large scale, the quality of the education must satisfy global standards. When all stakeholders, including the government, industry, non-governmental organisations, and academic facilities pool their resources, this national endeavour has the potential to help India become the world's skill capital.

The essay "Skilling India: An Indian Perspective in a Global Context" by Manoj Kumar (2015) analyses the efforts made, recent trends, and key difficulties and challenges involved with Skill Development in India. Data from around the world show that India's skilled labour accounts for only 2% of the country's total working population. Employment, graduate status, economic growth and social development through skill development efforts, formation of successful learners, and the predicted practical benefits of higher education and technical education are only few of the subjects covered in this volume. Also included are many mechanisms, processes, and approaches for improving the results of industry-academia partnership in the pursuit of skills development activities for India's economy's sustainable and equitable growth and development.

## **MIGRATION IN INDIA**

In every economy the cyclical changes from agriculture to manufacturing and services is a natural occurrence and this sets a chain reaction of migration from rural areas to urban areas and from lower wages to higher wages. The term migration is a very dynamic word. People migrate or immigrate to gain financial stability and better future prospects. Migration happens for many reasons. Apart from the push and pull factors, the lure of higher standards of living in urban areas is very difficult to resist also higher or better education, famine conditions, harsh weather, obsolete occupations, domestic compulsions, and a host of personal considerations like marriage prospects for women lead people to migrate from their homelands.

An internal migrant is one who moves within the political boundaries of the nation and causes a change of place of residence from the place of birth. Based on this, internal movements within the political frontier of states or nation are classified as intra- district, inter-district and inter-state movement. These three categories of internal movements across and within states are together termed as internal migration.

## **REASONS FOR MIGRATION**

Uneven development among regions, social or economic oppression, threats from groups like Maoists and authorities, deforestation, depletion of natural resources, climatic problems and natural disasters are some of the reasons that trigger the movement of people across territories. The very concept of migration is highly induced by the push and pull factors. Push and pull factors are forces that entice (Ramirez,2014) people to move to a new location or oblige them to leave old residences. They can be economic, political, cultural and environmental factor. Economic factors are the dominant reasons causing migration. Research studies indicate that migration is primarily motivated by economic factors. Low agricultural income, unemployment and underemployment are considered basic factors pushing the migrants towards developed areas with greater

employment opportunities. The basic economic factors where migration may be further classified as ‘push factors’ and ‘pull factors’. Most of the literature on migration speaks of two main causes of migration, namely, those related to the “push factors” and those related to the “pull factors”.

Table1: Trend in reasons for migration in three census period in India

Reason for Migration	1991	2001	2011
Marriage	43.9	42.1	46.3
Moved with household	21.0	22.0	7.4
<b>Work/Employment</b>	<b>14.7</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>9.1</b>
Other	9.7	10.0	20.7
Moved after birth	6.6	9.2	14.5
Education	3.0	2.8	1.2
Business	1.1	0.9	0.8
	100	100	100

Source: Author’s calculation based on Census Data 1991 to 2011.

## TRENDS

The primary reasons for migration as per census data is provided in Table 1. Accordingly, Employment occupies as *third top most* reason for migration in India. Migration for work/employment was about 15 percent (1991) and it declined to about 13 percent at 2001 census period with a decadal decline of 2.0 percentage points further declined to about 9 percent to the in 2011 at (– ) 29 %. The latest trends indicate that the southern states like Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala are the hot spots of migrant destination and cities like Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai and Cochin are witnessing a surge in internal migration. The traditional migration corridors have undergone a change and they are wide spread and scattered all over the country. The major sectors which attract the migrants are Construction, Textile, Hospitality and Diamond. Men tend to migrate more to the cities and for females it is inter-district migration. Agriculturally and industrially developed states are the migrant receiving states. Flow of migration to states like Punjab and Haryana have declined.

## ISSUES OF MIGRANTS

Construction sector is the only sector which has absorbed most of the migrants. However, they are all plagued by miserable living conditions, lack of education for their children, medical facilities, nor any maternity benefits. They live in makeshift shelters and after their work they are forced to live in slums. There is no safe drinking water. They are deprived of the welfare schemes like subsidized grains and healthcare. They do not even have voting rights. They are continuously being exploited by their agents and contractors. A vicious cycle of debt is very common among seasonal and circular migrants. Illiterate and ignorant migrants fall into the hands of contractors and

middlemen from whom they have taken cash advances and are therefore more likely to be involved in debt-interlocked migration cycles. The contractors play a major role in this never-ending story of exploitation of migrants. They will always be under the mercy of these contractors who are hand in glove with the job providers and they are never paid fully fend for themselves.

## **SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

Skill development is the process of identifying the skill gap among youths and providing skill training and help them in placements. The government along with Non-Government Organizations (NGO) are taking major initiatives for making Indian youth and workforce in employability, jobs and creation of livelihood. In order to make use of the demographic dividend, Skilling occupies the centre stage. If the set targets for skilling by the Central and the state governments are met, it can provide skilled manpower to the growing labour market. Skill development helps in reducing unemployment and under-employment. It helps improve productivity and leads to a better standard of living. The ever-changing technology, demographic shifts, climate change, urbanization and globalization of value chains, the Pandemic are changing the nature of work and skill demands. In order to succeed, one needs to have a comprehensive skill set. Employability and productivity are closely related issues

## **SKILL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING MODELS**

Ministry of skill development and Entrepreneurship was created in 2014 to promote entrepreneurship and skill development. National Skill Development Council (NSDC) was set up in 2015 as part of a national skill development mission to fulfill the growing need in India for skilled manpower across sectors and narrow the existing gap between the demand and supply of skills. Under this campaign various initiatives were launched. They are National *Skill Development Mission, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Skill Loan Scheme and Rural India Skill*.

## ***MIGRATION AND SKILLS***

Migration can be a vehicle for responding timely and effectively to labour supply and demand needs. Migrants, at all skills levels, broaden the pool of available skills. Larger labour supply, in turn, may lead to better skills matching which translates into improved productivity. In order to gain access to employment, migrants not only need to possess relevant skills but also need to be able to signal and validate these skills to potential employers. Migration is an informal process of skill development and capability formation. Migrants when exposed to modernity gets adapted to the culture and learn a few skills to upgrade thereby paving way for higher earnings. In fact, the rural settings are to be blamed for their backwardness. If the policy makers are aware of all these nuances of development and take steps to create opportunities then things will go in the right direction. They learn new skills in new work places. On their return back to their origin they will

have acquired not only financial capital but also human capital which is a great asset to the society as a whole. Transfer of human capital like language, technical knowhow influences the mobility pathways of professional return migrants

### **Objectives of the Study:**

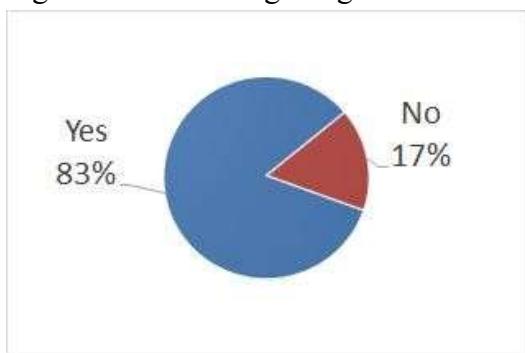
1. To understand the awareness level of government skill development programs.
2. To explore the difficulties faced by migrant workers in accessing government skill development programs.

Table 2: Awareness of any of the skill development initiatives by the government for workers?

	Yes (%)	No (%)
National Skill Development Corporation	8.9	91.1
National Council for Vocational Training	2.5	97.5
Karnataka Kaushalkar Mission	3.8	96.2
Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana	2.5	97.5

Table 2 shows that among the sampled migrant workers, less than 10 percent were aware of the National Skill Development Corporation, and less than three had heard of the other three training institutions through newspapers and public advertisements. Thus, there is a need for aggressive dissemination of skill development programmes by the government so that a larger proportion of the potential workers might be benefitted technically. Furthermore, commenting the appreciation of the importance of the training programmes when once they are aware abovementioned training institutions, 81 percent overwhelmingly appreciate the initiatives of the training institutions.

Fig 1: Interested in getting more awareness of skill development

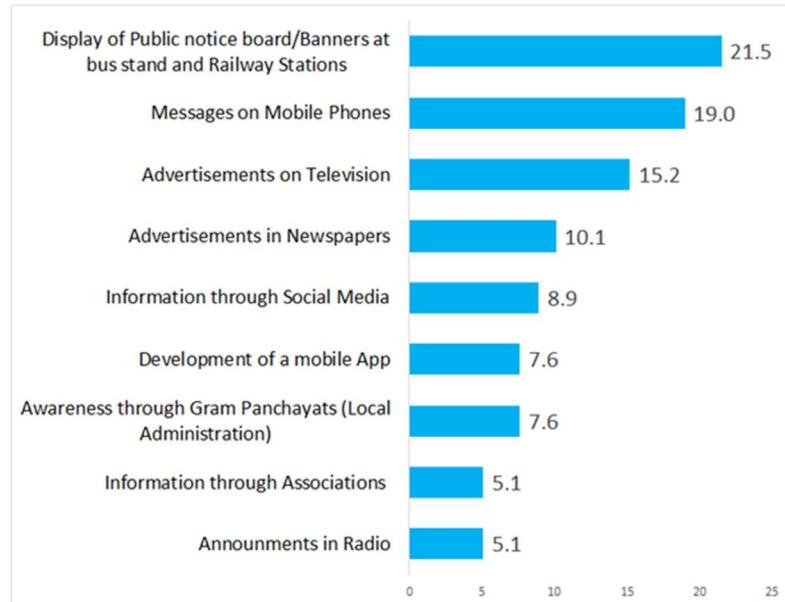


When asked if they really are interested in getting more awareness of skill development initiatives for migrant labourers, 83.5 percent (Fig 1) stated categorically that they are, while 17 percent stated that they are not interested in getting more awareness of skill development initiatives launched by the government.

Finally, when asked how the government could increase awareness and significance of skill development initiatives, 21.5 percent (Fig 2) preferred the traditional approach of dissemination

through public display hoardings or Banners at bus and railway stations, while 7.6 percent suggested channelling through Grama panchayats because many of them are from rural backgrounds. Approximately 10 percent preferred newspapers, 15.2 percent

Fig 2: Suggestion for the government to create more awareness



preferred television as a medium for dissemination, and 5.1 percent preferred radio and local associations. Among those who suggested modern methods of dissemination, 19.0 percent suggested the utility of mobile technology, and about 9.0 percent suggested social media as a means of communication. Interestingly, 7.6 percent of them proposed a mobile application that would only provide information and periodical updates on skill development programmes.

Table 3: Sectors to which the sample migrants employed and the level of awareness on skill development initiatives

**There is a relationship (dependency) between level of Awareness on skill development initiatives and type of sectors employed.**

	Awareness on Skill Development Initiatives (Percentage)			Chi-Square Test result			
	Aware	Not Aware	Total	Value	df	P-Value	
Sector	Aware	Not Aware	Total	Pearson Chi-Square	7.034	2	0.030*
Construction	4.5	95.5	100.0	Likelihood Ratio	5.830	2	0.054
Service & Others	10.9	89.1	100.0	Linear-by-Linear	2.533	1	0.112
Manufacturing	36.4	63.6	100.0	* Significant at 5 % level			

There is a statistical evidence to infer that percentage of migrant labourers operating in the construction, service, and manufacturing sectors have varying levels of awareness of skill development activities. However, despite a lower percentage of migrant labourers in the sample study are **aware** of skill development programmes, the manufacturing sector has the highest percentage (36.4%) of respondents aware of skill development initiatives. On the contrary, a large percentage of migrant workers across three sectors are still unaware of programmes.

When asked about the constraints they face as migrant workers in attending skill development programmes, nearly half stated unequivocally that a lack of adequate time after working hours is a major constraint (Table 4). According to migrant workers, the

Table 4: Constraints as a migrant labourer in attending the skill development programme for enhancing the employability

	Percent
No time availability after working hours	46.8
Family members do not support	7.6
Threat of losing the daily wages	30.4
Not able to travel to the training venue	15.2
Total	100.0

threat of losing their daily wages is the second most significant impediment and a lack of family member support is another impediment to attending the training programme. Finally, percent of the sampled respondents are most concerned about travel to the training venue, which may result in non-enrollment in the training course.

Fig 3: Constraints as a migrant labourer in attending the skill development programme



Table 5: Extent of significance of the need of skill development in enhancing better employability with present job?

	Percent
To a great extent	34.2
To some extent	48.1
Not at all	17.7
Total	100.0

When asked to rate the importance of skill development in attaining higher employability in preference to the current job, of the sampled migratory workers said that skill improvement training would benefit them to some extent in obtaining better employability. Furthermore, on whether the government should do to increase enrolment and make training programmes more successful, of respondents suggested that training be conducted near the workplace, with one-fifth (Table 6) suggesting that training be provided on weekends.

Table 6: Needs to be done by the government for more enrolments for the skill development programmes

	Percent
Provide residential facilities for women trainee	10.1
Training should be provided in weekends at the working place	20.3
Nearby Place (Location)	44.3
On the job training should be facilitated	25.3
Total	100.0

Women respondents (10.1 percent) requested that residential facilities be provided for those attending the training programme. Surprisingly, 25.3 percent of them suggested facilitating on-the-job training. In terms of the likelihood of attending skill development programmes if the government makes the necessary arrangements, approximately 90 percent stated that they are indeed likely to attend the skill development programme. Nonetheless, over a third of respondents (34.2 percent) believe that skill development is critical and will help them gain greater employability. However, 17.7% of respondents were negative about skill training, claiming that it would not improve their employability.

Table 7: Reasons of not useful of skill development initiatives

	Percent
No need for job Upskilling	34.1
Want to move back to native	4.5
No need for Job Enhancement	38.6
Because of limited Career Growth	13.6
I am very much satisfied in the present skill	4.5
Not interested in changing the current job profile	4.5
Total	100.0

Note: Only those respondents having opted ‘To some Extent’ and ‘Not at all’

The fact that 34.1 percent (Table 7) believe there is no need for job upskilling and 38.6 percent believe there is no need for job enhancement, and they appear to be very content with their job skill in the unorganised sector, supports the argument that skill development programs would be completely ineffective.

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### **CONCLUSION**

Providing the migrant worker with the necessary skills can go a long way in harnessing their potential and bring them to the mainstream of the organized sector thereby end their suffering to a greater extent. A synchronization of development of technology and trade should happen in all the rural levels thereby quickening the skill initiatives of the government which will inevitably be able to reap the dividends of demography. Even though various skill development initiatives have been undertaken at the central and the state level on war footing the majority of the workers are not aware of such skill training programmes. Most of the migrant workers have expressed their willingness to be skilled and it is the duty of the government to seize this momentum and race towards growth. . If the recommended loopholes are plugged, there is no doubt about the success of its programs. Thereby, the nation can boast of its success in all its vigour lest, the demographic dividend may turn out to be a demographic disaster. The crux of the issue lies in the fact that migrants are very well aware of their misery and are also willing to get out of this misery.