

Transforming India's Skill Landscape

*Independence Day
Special Feature*

Why Skill India?

Skill India seeks to give all Indians, the opportunity to aspire and achieve a better future for themselves and their families. A combination of demographic, economic and social factors makes skill development an urgent policy priority for India.

The challenge is immense. 54% of India's population is below 25 years of age and over 62% of the population is the working-age group. Yet, only 4.69% of the Indian population has undergone formal skills training. By 2025, almost 1 in 5 of the world's working age population (18.3%) will be Indian. Recent skill gap reports suggest that over 109 million incremental human resources will be required in India alone, across 24 key sectors by the year 2022. 93% of India's workers work in the unorganised sector and acquire skills through informal channels and lack formal certification. How can India's skill training ecosystem be equipped to cope with these diverse challenges?

India's first Department of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship was established in July 2014 under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to specifically focus on addressing the above challenges. This Department became a full-fledged Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) in November 2014, when Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy was inducted into the Council of Ministers. The primary focus of MSDE is to develop a robust policy framework and programme of action for scaling up skill development efforts in India, at speed and scale, while ensuring quality outcomes. This article highlights some major initiatives taken over the past nine months by MSDE, in order to lay a strong foundation for the skill training and entrepreneurship ecosystem in the country.

Creating a Robust Skills Landscape in India: Key Milestones

MSDE's policy orientation for skill development is based on the following premises viz: *coordination, private sector participation, entrepreneurship*

linkages, equity etc. The first premise clarifies MSDE's role which would be to steer, coordinate and converge skill development programmes. The second pertains to catalysing private sector participation in the skill development sector through Public Private Partnerships and scaling up industry linkages with vocational training institutes. Skilling and entrepreneurship go hand in hand. Skill training initiatives need to create a pool of job seekers and job creators, to propel economic growth. Importantly, economically and socially disadvantaged sections of society must be prime beneficiaries of skill training initiatives. MSDE's activities over the past few months have been guided by these premises.

Establishing a Clear Policy Framework: Policy, Mission, Common Norms

As a new Ministry, one of MSDE's first tasks was to establish a clear policy framework for skill development in India. Three key policy interventions have been undertaken by MSDE. This includes the creation of a National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015, which articulates a framework for skilling at scale and speed while ensuring high quality outcomes; the establishment of National Skill Development Mission which seeks to converge, coordinate, implement and monitor skilling activities on a pan-India basis, and the creation of Common Norms for all skill development programmes across Central Ministries/Departments. All three policy documents have received Cabinet Approval. Policy and Mission have also been formally launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister on 15 July this year, as a part of the launch of 'Skill India'. India now has a robust policy framework to scale up skill development initiatives across the country. Having set out the policy framework, MSDE has also been working on developing a coherent programme of action.

Developing a Programme of Action: Pradhan Manthri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Revamping ITIs, Strategic Partnerships, NSDC and NSDA

Pradhan Manthri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) MSDE's flagship outcome-based skill training scheme, was formally launched by the Prime Minister on 15 July 2015. A pilot phase of the scheme was initiated on 25 May 2015. PMKVY aims to incentivise young people to enrol in skill development initiatives, by providing a monetary reward to every young person who successfully completes an approved skill training programme, with an affiliated training provider. PMKVY is funded by Government of India and implemented through National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). 24 lakh youth across India will be trained under PMKVY in the next one year, of which 14 lakh trainees will be

fresh entrants. 50,000 Persons with Disabilities will also be trained under PMKVY. In addition, youth who do not possess formal certification, will be assessed and certified through an initiative known as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in PMKVY. 10 lakh youth will be trained under the RPL initiative, over the next year. This will be an important effort to recognize the skills and open up new job opportunities for a vast majority of young Indians who acquire skills through informal channels or work in the unorganised sector. As of 31 July this year, 25 participating SSCs have already enrolled 2.12 lakh candidates for 196 Job roles in 29 states and 4 Union Territories across India, in PMKVY.

Industrial Training Institutes (ITI), which were formerly under Ministry of Labour and Employment have been transferred to MSDE in April this year. A number of initiatives are being undertaken to revitalise these organisations. This includes for example, upgrading their curriculum (in collaboration with industry experts), strengthening industry linkages, scaling up apprenticeships, modernising equipment and facilities within ITIs etc. In addition, 34 ITIs and 68 Skill Development Centres are also being established in 34 Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected districts to open up employment opportunities for youth in these areas. These initiatives are aimed at improving the quality of training in these institutions and ensuring that students who complete ITI courses are employable.

Strategic partnerships have also been undertaken between MSDE and other Ministries/Departments in the Central Government, to collaborate on scaling up skill training activities in specific sectors. MSDE now has strategic partnerships with: Ministries of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities), Health and Family Welfare, Steel, Mines, Railways, Defence and Chemicals and Fertilizers (Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals, Department of Fertilizers, Department of Pharmaceuticals). Public Sector Units (PSUs) within these sectors and related contractors will be encouraged to hire workers certified in job roles aligned to NSQF, utilize CSR funds for skill training purposes and set up Centres of Excellence in collaboration with DGT or NSDC, through these strategic partnerships. Ministers heading each of these Ministries/Departments, other Cabinet Ministers, several Chief Ministers and stakeholders from government, academia, industry organisations etc. also participated in the launch of 'Skill India' on 15 July and shared their commitment to partner with MSDE to skill India's youth. These partnerships will play an important role in scaling up skill training initiatives and ensuring that skill training takes place at high quality, in each of these sectors.

National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has been a key player in the skill development space, even before the Ministry was formed. NSDC is now MSDE's implementation arm. It works with a network of 235 training partners and 38 approved Sector Skills Councils. The entire NSDC ecosystem has trained over 55 lakh people as of July 2015.

National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) which is also a part of the Ministry plays an important role as a normative body. Its focus is on ensuring that skill training programmes are aligned to National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) and quality assurance mechanisms are operational. Till date, NSDA has approved 1226 Qualification Packs, across 28 different trades. NSDA is also playing an important role to develop a framework for RPL.

Together, NSDC and NSDA focus on scale and quality, which are two key pillars of MSDE's skill development mandate.

Moving forward, MSDE's focus will be on programme implementation, monitoring and ensuring that high standards and quality assurance systems are in place. It is vital that private sector, industry associations, training providers and government institutions play a proactive role and collaborate to scale up skill training efforts across the country. These initiatives are an important step towards meeting industry's human resource requirements and will boost growth. Importantly, they will also give India's aspiring youth access to stable employment opportunities and sustainable livelihoods.
