Imparting skills to uplift

A public-private sector partnership is trying to impart basic employment skills to youth living below the poverty line. The initiative hopes to leave them employed rather than employable, says rahul dasgupta

INDIA is working in overdrive to bridge the massive gap between demand and availability of a skilled, industry-ready workforce in new and emerging business sectors like tourism and hospitality, electronics and information technology, private security and construction as part of creating a skilled workforce of 500 million people by 2022. To achieve this goal, the government, its affiliate organisations such as the National Skill Development Corporation — a one of a kind public-private partnership venture and many private players are working on imparting skills to people especially from poor sections of society.

It has been observed that all these efforts, though directed at a common goal, are scattered because of a lack of integration among the various stakeholders involved. With most stakeholders working individually at the moment, the impact of their work to uplift the masses is limited. There can be a massive impact if the Central and state governments, private players such as NGOs and a number of training centre partners spread across various parts of the country, join hands with industry partners to offer people not just employability skills but also good employment.

The Government of India needs to proactively create an environment that is conducive for all stakeholders to work together to create a better future for people. Even as it imparts skills to people below the poverty line in various states, they still need to migrate for employment as there is no uniform expansion of industries across the country. Labour migration does not help the cause of uplifting the poor because after they pay their dues for living somewhere else, they are left with very little to use for a better living.

Apart from becoming a pressure on the local economy of a particular industry-intensive state, this phenomenon jeopardises the political stability of states from where workers migrate. The government should create more jobs at the local level in each state to stop workers from migrating.

This can be achieved by encouraging industries to move out of big cities to expand uniformly across the country. Authorities must also sensitise the youth in poor places to seriously consider vocational training as a career path. The Central government should create awareness about various certification programmes that have been implemented for rural sections and how these programmes can help them shape a better future. Change must begin at a policy level.

For example, a recent rider by the Chhattisgarh government under the leadership of Dr Raman Singh makes it mandatory for all engineering and polytechnic students to take up vocational training. Such policies can create a world of difference at sensitising the masses about the benefits of vocational training.

NGOs and various training centres responsible for teaching various skills must chalk out a uniform training module with government agencies so that the youth can be trained with world-class skills. Corporate bosses must also move out of their offices and visit rural areas to reach out to trainees who would in time be employed by them.

Corporate connections can encourage the youth to take up vocational training more seriously since it would require them to interact directly with their future employers. Moreover, it would create a sea of change in how vocational certification is perceived in India. This can only be done with time through rural counselling.

One can hope that with various players working together at creating a skilled workforce and a level playing field for employment-centric training, it won't be long before every part of the country becomes industrially developed at not just providing jobs but also ensuring a better future for millions of workers working in those industries.

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