



SDG 4 & SDG 8 in context of skill development and vocational education

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Abstract:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015, offer a comprehensive framework to address global challenges by 2030, focusing on eradicating poverty, safeguarding the planet, and ensuring peace and prosperity for all. Among these, SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) are intrinsically linked, with education serving as a foundational driver for sustainable economic growth and productive employment. However, despite global efforts, significant gaps remain in both educational access and employment opportunities—especially in developing regions. Skill development and vocational education emerge as crucial bridges between these two goals, enabling youth to gain industry-relevant competencies and enhancing employability. In the Indian context, various national initiatives such as SamagraShiksha, National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF), Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and the Skill India Digital Hub illustrate the government's commitment to strengthening vocational education and fostering a skilled workforce. This paper explores how the convergence of skill development initiatives can simultaneously advance SDG 4 and SDG 8, contributing to a more inclusive and resilient future.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, SamagraShiksha, Vocational Education, Skill Development

Introduction:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been adopted by United Nations in 2015 and is also known as Global Goals which resolves to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all humans enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals targets balanced social, economic and environmental sustainability for a better present and future life.

Discussion:

The SDG 4 is related to Quality Education and specifies “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” and SDG 8 is related to Decent Work and Economic Growth and specifies- “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”. The two goals are reciprocally related to each other as Quality Education (SDG 4) can lead to Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8) and better economic growth will enhance more opportunities for quality education.

The SDG 4 needs special attention as without special provisions, by 2030, 84 Million children and youth will be out of school, 300 Million students will lack basic numeracy/literacy skills, only 1 in 6 countries will achieve universal secondary school completion target. Although, primary and secondary school completion rates are increasing, but this is taking place unevenly and at a much slower pace, developing and under-developed countries are facing financial crunch in facilitating universal education.

SDG 8 will serve to aid 2 Billion workers who do not have job security, 25 % youths who are not in the stream of education, employment or training with the situation of females being more grave. It is being projected that without additional aids, the unemployment at global level will be more than before pandemic.

The concept of skill development and vocational education serves an important link between the two SDGs.

The SDG 4 with target 4.3 stresses on equal access to affordable technical, vocational and higher education and with target 4.4 stresses to increase the number of people with relevant skills for financial success including technical and vocational skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

“Skill development is a process of acquiring, improving, and enhancing skills and competencies to meet industry demands and support personal and professional growth, aiming to create a skilled workforce.” (National Skill Development Corporation of India)

The skills are developed in more structured mode through Vocational Education.

The scheme of SamagraShiksha of Central Government of India is vocationalising education at secondary and higher secondary level which is facilitating students to acquire skills thus enhancing their employability and entrepreneurship abilities and making them capable of having career options immediately after school years. National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) is facilitating availability of vocational courses to the students at secondary and higher secondary level as compulsory elective subject.

NSQF is also providing skill-based education at higher education level due to initiative taken by University Grants Commission. UGC further provides for apprenticeship/internship in degree

programme through the guidelines mentioned under Section 22 (3) of the UGC Act, 1956. This will further provide practical experience and enhance the employability opportunity of the graduates.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKY) is yet other initiatives of the Government to provide free short duration skill training to youth in accordance with the demand for the industrial demand for the skilled workforce which was launched in 2015.

The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is a public limited company under section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956, (now corresponding to section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013) under Public Private Partnership model under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). It supports vocational training and provide funds, loans at concession and other financial aids. It is the knowledge partner of Skill India Mission.

The colleges approved by AICTE and registered facilitators are providing skills for employment through Skill Development Cell which is running various schemes in this direction, like- Major schemes are- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana for Technical Institutes (PMKVY-TI), Employability Enhancement Training Programme (EETP), National Employability Enhancement Mission (NEEM), AICTE-Startup Policy, Skill Assessment Matrix for Vocational Advancement of Youth (SAMVAY), Leadership Development Programs, etc.

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India is responsible for coordination of all initiatives for skill development across the country. The Ministry with a vision of 'Skilled India' is augmenting skilled workforce, setting up training framework, skill enhancements, development of new skills not only for the present jobs but also for the ones to created in the future.

An online training platform has been developed which will act as a link between the skilled workforce and employers known as 'Skill India Digital Hub'. It has the objective to combine various skill training programs to enable people to pursue courses for development of skills and get employment.

Conclusion:

Achieving the dual objectives of SDG 4 and SDG 8 is essential for ensuring a future that is both inclusive and sustainable. The interdependence of quality education and decent work highlights the importance of integrating skill development and vocational education into mainstream education policy and practice. India's multifaceted approach—through government schemes, institutional reforms, and public-private partnerships—provides a promising model for creating a skilled and employable workforce. These initiatives not only empower individuals with relevant skills but also contribute to national economic growth and social equity. As the world approaches the 2030 SDG deadline, focused investment in skill-oriented education and vocational training will be instrumental in overcoming educational and employment disparities, thereby enabling individuals to thrive in an evolving global economy.

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