

# SKILL SHORTAGE

## a big opportunity for IT sector

The National Skill Development Mission has given Indian IT industry the right platform to assist in—and reap benefits of—upgrading the technical prowess of the country's talent pool

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**T**HE recent launch of the National Skill Development Mission by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has enthused the Indian information technology (IT) industry as the programme gives the sector a platform to partner the government in various training initiatives on a large scale while also deriving the benefits of a skilled workforce base.

The \$146-billion IT industry has constantly spoken about the need for skill upgradation, not just of the people employed in the sector, but also to extend the benefits of technology to a wider population so as to make it more inclusive.

The skill development not only encompasses the IT and ITeS industry, but also the hardware, electronics and semiconductor industry as, currently, there is a severe mismatch in terms of the skills required and their availability.

Bhaskar Pramanik, chairman, Microsoft India, said, "The launch of a skills mission of this scale will make training efforts more systematic and ensure a workforce that is professionally skilled and meets industry needs. We believe that private sector participation can complement the government's skill development mission."

According to Pramanik, Microsoft's digital literacy, skill building and entrepreneurship programmes have touched 5 crore people in 20 states across India over the last decade. It will also soon commence a large-scale digital literacy project under the global Microsoft YouthSpark programme for marginalised communities, with a special focus on girls and young women. This programme will run across 70 YouthSpark-Project Jyoti centres and is expected to train more than 35,000 young people in the next 18 months.

The Indian IT industry, which employs 3 million people directly and provides employment to another 9 million indirectly, has been one of the biggest job generators for the economy, absorbing fresh engineering graduates. However, there are a few challenges.

The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), a public-private partnership (PPP) set up to facilitate the development and upgrading of the skills of the growing Indian workforce through skill training programmes, in its report on the IT sector, noted that engineering graduates who join the IT and ITeS sector



lack basic knowledge and skills of information technology, programming, etc, and companies invest significant time and effort to equip fresh graduates with necessary skill-set.

NSDC has recommended that summer internships be made an integral part of the curriculum and colleges reach out to more and more industry experts to have them as guest faculty. This would help students develop an understanding of the actual work in the industry and also get to know the link between curriculum taught in classroom and work in the industry.

Rahul Patwardhan, CEO, NIIT, said, "To aptly leverage our young population to the best advantage, we need to provide them with necessary skill-sets and make them employable, and this policy aims to do just that. The challenge that we are faced with is not just the quantity of fresh skilling and re-skilling required, but also meeting global quality standards to ensure that the Indian industry is competitive."

NIIT Yuva Jyoti, a joint venture of NIIT and NSDC, has enrolled 1,550 students under the pilot phase of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), across three sectors — telecom, retail & IT in Northeast, Jammu & Kashmir and Jharkhand.

Shrikant Shitole, MD, India, Symantec, said, "This outcome-based approach would help create conducive ecosystem for blended and continuous learning and re-skilling where needed; standardised certification against relevant curriculum; and ultimately, creating real job opportunities."

Symantec recently partnered with Nasscom to train 50,000 world-class, certified cyber security professionals, leading to employability, especially for the youth and women.

Even the labour intensive electronics and hardware industry welcomed the skills mission. According to India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA), the proportion of working age population in India will increase steadily over the next two decades, contrary to most countries. Over 15 million people enter the labour market every year in India. Over 30 million are employed in the organised sector and over 450 million in the unorganised sector.

Vinay Shenoy, chairman, IESA, said, "The existing capacity falls way short of skilling these people. This initiative, in tandem with 'Make in India', should result in good diversity in skills and high employment outcome via a public-private partnership."



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