

Role of ICT and Digital Communication for Skill Development in Rural and Urban Areas in the Changing Scenario

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Abstract

The rapid urbanization, globalization and digital explosion are leading to an unsteady increase in youth population in metropolitan and urban areas, particularly in developing countries like India. The impacts of Job and training availability, and the physical, social and cultural quality of urban environment on young people are huge, and influence their health, life-styles, and well-being. Besides this, globalization and technological developments are affecting youth in rural and urban areas in all parts of the world, both positively and negatively. The broader aim of this paper is to investigate successful practice principles for the information and communication related training and income generation opportunities for young people to promote youth entrepreneurship. It reviews the role of ICTs for vocational skill development and employability. It discusses the issues surrounding the development of the digital divide and emphasizes types and the importance of developing ICT initiatives targeting young people, and reviews some skills which are required and that offer opportunities to young people for learning, skill development and employment.

KEYWORDS: Skill development, Employability, Globalization, Digital divide, ICT

1.0 Introduction

The rapidly advancing information and communications technology (ICTs) helps in addressing social and economic problems caused by the fast growth of urban youth populations in developing countries. ICTs offer opportunities to young people for learning, skill development and employment. At the same time, there are over a billion young people between the ages of 15 and 24, of which 85 percent live in developing countries and mainly in urban settings were lack in having broad access to these new technologies. During the last two decades all around the world, these young people, as new workers, have faced a number of challenges associated with globalization and technological advances in labor markets. The continuous decrease in employment in the manufacturing domain has made many of the young people facing three options: getting jobs in the informal economy with insecurity and poor wages and working conditions, getting jobs in the low-tier service industries, or developing their vocational skills to benefit from new opportunities in the professional and advanced technical/knowledge sectors. In this condition, ICT plays an important role in the development of skill among rural and urban people.

2.0. Impact of ICT on Skill Development among urban and rural youths

ICT nowadays is inseparable with the youth, especially Generation Y, Z and baby boomers also known as savvy youth (e-born and intergenerational learning). New media is ubiquitous; technology affects everyone everywhere even if they don't use it directly (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002). Even as large part of our population is excluded from participating actively in the information society, another group has been privileged simply by being born in societies and under circumstances that make them especially knowledgeable about new technologies (Dralega et al., 2010). Even

in places where access is limited and the digital divide is exist; younger generations are more knowledgeable about technologies than their parents are.

Intergenerational interactions have value, and benefit the community at large as well as the participating generations. The older generation receives access to information and knowledge, while youth engage in civic activities that help them to challenge the discourse of apathy. Young people are the main users of the new ICTs, especially through smart phones application such as Face book, Instagram and WhatsApp the power of internet access has advanced and varies their ICT usage in terms of information seeking, sharing and communication purposes. Overall, the age pattern in some countries, such as China, Armenia, Bolivia, and Egypt, Kyrgyz Republic, and Indonesian youth is the largest Internet users starting with ages 15 and above (McKenzie, 2007). ICT use and ownership of the smart phone mainly from the urban communities which are also more educated and have higher household income.

Youth are most important population because they are shaping the future of a country. According to Pittman & Irby (1998), they have recognized six principles of Youth Development frameworks which are: 1) more than prevention; 2) enduring, comprehensive, and engages youth; 3) goes beyond the basics; 4) happens everywhere; 5) not just coordination - vision is required; 6) all youth are developing, have strengths, have needs, can contribute to their communities; and valued.

In the international stage, youth are growing force however they are underestimated. Statistic according to UN (2013), almost half of the world's population is under the age of 25. In addition, they found that issues and policies raised among young people are in dire need of attention. They have been overlooked and neglected the problems faced by young people while focussing on poverty reduction strategies. However, governments and the international community have increasingly recognized young people as a powerful agent of change, whose inclusion in politics is vital to improving democratic processes (UN, 2013).

3.0. The Role of ICT for Vocational Skill Development

The production and use of ICTs have become the influential force of change in the modern world. ICTs have dramatically reshaped employment markets around the world. The increasing importance of knowledge for economic development and the greater capacity to classify information and knowledge are rapidly increasing. The number of unskilled, semi-skilled and entry level jobs in a wide variety of sectors have reduced and the demand for relevant, often high-level, skills is growing. Large organizations both in the public and private sectors have shed millions of low skill required positions. For young people this has resulted in persistently high unemployment levels. Access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure and services in India is among the lowest in the world, particularly in rural and remote areas. The entry of private operators and aggressive competition in the mobile sector has resulted in increased coverage and access to telecommunications services. However, operators continue to roll-out second-generation (2G) mobile services, that is, basic voice and text, in rural areas rather than third and fourth generation (3G & 4G) or higher capacity networks that offer faster data transmission (mobile broadband). Thus, access is still limited in many rural communities, and services remain very basic [<http://www.worldbank.org> – Results 2014]. Fixed broadband penetration is below 5% of the population, and remains far beyond the affordability of average citizens and small businesses. Percentage of people using internet in India is under 30% and educational institutions

are yet to start using ICT as their major aid to quality education. Some of the main constraints to widespread broadband Internet development in India include:

- The high cost of international connectivity, due to capacity constraints as well as regulatory factors; and
- The lack of high-capacity domestic backbone networks.

4.0. ICT and Development

ICT has played an important role in young people's development especially to prominence on a global scale. Collaboration between International Telecommunication Unit (ITU) and UN-Habitat has highlighted that ICT has helped youth in mobilizing, collaborating and given them a voice where there was none before (UN, 2013). Furthermore according to the findings, ICT has brought them together in response to social concerns and has connected them across vast of geo-political barriers. Another research done by ITU and Broadband Commission has shown the benefits of ICT access across all major sectors which are in line with the major purpose of this study (ITU, 2008). Their findings on youth have discovered that access to information is very crucial towards better access to capital, markets and training (career or studies). Besides participation in political process increases, youth are recognizing as responsible citizens in the society presently. It is also found that youth entrepreneurship as a solution for youth employment, which the ICT have facilitated them in enhancing their access towards new field.

Ramli et al. (2015) highlighted the empowerment of networks for business will increasing income and strengthening marketing aspects which is in line with (Bashir et al 2011). Besides for advancing employment outcomes, networks often provide additional support, assistance, resources, and the opportunities to socialize with people who come from a different gender, age, and/or cultural background in terms of development of bonding networks. By building and strengthening the relationships between youth and community and between youth and institutions, it will results a positive impact on promoting civic engagement and volunteer work, and engaging in community development activities.

5.0. CONCLUSION

Rural youth's skill development is very essential as it will help to shape the future of rural youth into more positive direction. Indirectly, it will impact towards the development of rural communities if youth can make a difference, or at least gain return on investment (ROI) to the rural population in terms of economic and social advancement of the local community. In addition, rural youth who previously often relate with high social issues such as promiscuity between men and women, drug addiction, and crime would be reduced if the facilities provided at the rural area such as ICT fully utilized by them (London, 2010). In addition, by providing the ICT facilities in remote areas will provide opportunities for the youth to develop themselves in social and economic sectors in line with the national youth development policy (KBS, 1997).

Moreover, ICT is also as an agent in connecting the developed and developing countries to achieve the specific target or vision as stated in the actions planed of national development policy (KBS, 1997), providing people with understanding of the concept of universal (globalization) and the importance of their relationship with government agencies, private sector, youth organizations and non-governmental organizations and international networks. Without ICT, it is difficult for people to communicate with each other in sharing information and developments in various fields. ICT as a liaison or communication tools that plays a very important role in

community development. ICT can also bridge the gap between rural communities and urban communities, also known as the digital divide.

Galvanized within the broad field of ICT for development (ICTD), research emerging from these different spaces is theoretically diverse and multidisciplinary in nature. Theories and analytical frameworks emerging from computer science, political science, economics, information science, transnational studies, and many others continue to enrich our understanding on the role public access to ICT in promoting social change. However there are limitations and challenges which are: 1) resistance to empowering young people in the organizational and cultural, 2) difficulty of stepping back (opportunity for youth to lead), and 3) doubtful among youth whether they are being listened to in influencing the system.

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