



THE ROLE OF ASAP KERALA PROJECT IN SKILL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING

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Abstract

Historically, Kerala has been a prominent supplier of skilled human resources to the rest of the world but the overall employability is considered to be below standards. The major hurdle in ensuring a readily employable talent pool is the lack of sufficient training infrastructure in the state. Needless to say, if Kerala has to build a good work force, basic skills need to be imparted at a very early stage in the education. The realization of the fact that its unemployed population kept swelling despite having a rich talent pool, made it think and devise ways to counter the trend. ASAP has been conceived as an effective remedy for this situation where the university and high school students will be given skill training, in addition to their regular academic curriculum, in the crucial sectors as being demanded by the industry following innovative educational practices. ASAP is successfully running in this sector focusing on technology enhanced and fun filled learning methods. The study focusses on the impact of ASAP project in skill development and the usefulness of technology enabled learning tools.

Statement of the Problem

An analysis of unemployment rates among different sections of the young population of the State has revealed that it is the highest among those who have completed Higher Secondary followed by graduates, postgraduates and the technically qualified. The young people coming out of schools and colleges swell the number of the unemployed year after year. The number of registrants for jobs in the employment exchanges of the state has already crossed 43 lakhs. Due to lack of attention, the common workforce and the rural populace are not provided with low end skills which are now-a-days needed for better work performance at ground levels. There is an unseemly rush of migrant labor in those level and it warranted immediate intervention by the government. The government responded with a comprehensive Additional Skill Acquisition Program(ASAP) to be jointly implemented by the Departments of general education, higher Education, Labor (employment and training) and local self-governments to enhance the employability of students passing out of higher secondary schools as well as Arts and Science colleges in the state.(1).

Even after claiming the title of a major human resource supplier the overall employability is considered to be below 25%.The major hurdle in ensuring a readily employable talent pool is the lack of sufficient training infrastructure in the state. Needless to say,if Kerala has to build a good work force, basic skills need to be imparted at a very early stage in the education. ASAP has been conceived as an effective remedy for this situation where the students will be given skill training, in addition to their regular academic curriculum, in the crucial sectors as being demanded by the industry. These skill training sessions are conducted before and after school or college timings as well as during holidays or vacations. The advantage offered by ASAP to students is that by the time they complete their regular academic programs, they will also be given a skill certificate. This will ensure them job opportunities immediately on completion of each stage of their academic program.

The program is implemented in Government and aided educational institutions. In each institution, the program is coordinated by Specially Trained Program Managers appointed by the ASAP secretariat that functions under General and Higher Education Departments. The students are trained by professional and well trained Skill Development Executives. There will also be a lifelong learning management system to ensure continuous knowledge and skill updation by Program managers, skill development executives and trainees. They will form a higher layer of professionals with advanced skills in the related areas. Their service can be made use for other developmental activities of the staff as well. This will be an added advantage.

Scope of the Study

Kerala is proposing a grand plan to not only skill its young people but also provide related know-how to other parts of the country. This is being taken up as part of the Prime Minister's initiative for imparting skills to 50 crore young people by 2022.

A concept note prepared by the State labour department projects states that, on a proportionate basis, Kerala will need to skill 1.35 crore youngsters by 2022. This means that over the next six-year period, the State would need to target on an average 15 lakh young people for skilling every year. This represents an eight-fold increase in the numbers that the State is averaging concurrently, concurrently. This is a challenge but it can help not just itself but also other skills-deficient States such as those in the Northeast; Jammu and Kashmir; Odisha; Chhattisgarh; and Jharkhand. The state will be able to supply skilled manpower within the country and to the world outside, especially West Asia and emerging countries in Africa.



There is a need to develop a State Skills Plan focusing on skills required within Kerala and across India, even globally. This would include the scope of promoting the State as a skills training destination. This research is significant in this regard. (2).

Limitations

- The feedback collected from the response group may be subject to bias.
- As far as trainee respondents are considered the sample taken may not be a representative of all respondents in the state, a wide census study is required for collecting information about their perceptions.

Objectives

- To find out the impact of ASAP project towards skill development among youth.
- To analyze the impact of technology enhanced learning in skill education.
- To identify the challenges faced by ASAP.
- To provide suggestions for improving the performance of ASAP in skill development.

Methodology

Both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires (printed as well as online). Secondary data was collected from Websites and other reports issued by Higher Education, General Education and Local Self Government Departments of Kerala.

State Skill Development Project

The number of registrants in the employment exchanges bears testimony to the gravity of unemployment problem in Kerala. The students are not equipped with adequate skills keeping abreast with the latest trends in labor market; therefore they lose out when it comes to employment. Dwindling population of working hands in different sectors of the economy is a cause of serious fret and the result is mounting number of migrant laborers in the state. Job providers perceive that there is a dearth of acquiescent skills sets among students. One of the main hurdles in ensuring a readily employable talent pool is the lack of sufficient training infrastructure in the State. To root out these problems Departments of Higher Education, General Education, Labor and Local Self Government in the state have come up with 'State Skill Development Project'. In order to effectively alleviate the unemployment problem in the state, the project combines both preventive (Additional Skill Acquisition Program) and curative approach (Additional Skill Enhancement Program). On the preventive side, the General and Higher Education Departments together has implemented an Additional Skill Acquisition Program (ASAP) to amplify the working hands in different sectors of the economy, by providing additional skill sets to students along with their regular courses. In the curative part, Additional Skill Enhancement Program (ASEP) is envisaged to encompass skill development and grooming initiatives for the 43 lakh unemployed persons registered in the Employment Exchanges across the State.(3)

Why Opt for ASAP?

- Industry driven skill development programs with Public-Private partnership.
- Cluster of skill centers across the state.
- Industry experts as trainers or industry trained trainers.
- Integrated Communicative English and IT modules along with skill courses.
- Learner centered training.
- Incentive linked fee structure to help the deprived students.
- Course timings which do not hinder regular classes.
- Judicious combination of theoretical and practical subjects, wherein a minimum of 55% of the entire syllabus is devoted to practical.
- Skill parks identified in each constituency with state-of-the-art technology to pilot new teaching and learning experiences.
- Moodle based lifelong learning system.

Moodle is a learning platform designed to provide educators, administrators and learners with a single robust, secure and integrated system to create personalized learning environments.

- Designed to support both teaching and learning
- Easy to use
- Always up-to -date
- Free with no licensing fees
- Moodle in your language



- All in one training platform
- Highly flexible and fully customizable
- Extensive resource availability
- Backed by a strong community

Other Reasons

- **A Sprint to Success:** For an institution to be successful, it is important that the students do well. ASAP partner institutions has become the cynosure of all eyes, as the students are offered quality skill courses resulting in enhancement of employability skills and overall development of students, hence the development of the institution.
- **Infrastructural Support:** ASAP is leaving no stone unturned in providing necessary infrastructure in running the courses. Students can learn the courses in smart classrooms with white boards, projectors, laptops, net connection, Jefferson chairs, cameras for monitoring classes etc.
- **Unique Placement Proposition:** The USP of ASAP is that all students are trained to be valuable "Human Resource". Job fairs are organized by ASAP to successfully align talented job-seekers with organizations that are conducive for their skills and expertise.
- **Proactive role in Educational Transformation:** Breaking all known restrictions of the conventional educational system, ASAP ensures access to job-oriented skill training. ASAP urges the institutions to play proactive role in the ongoing unprecedented transformation in the Kerala's educational scenario, so that it would ensure the overall development of our children and our country as well.(4)

The following methodology is used in this program:

1. Brainstorming
2. Experience sharing
3. Story analysis
4. Lecture method
5. Discussion method
6. Exercise Method
7. Role – play
8. Panel discussion
9. Games / Group exercises / Questionnaires / Quiz
10. Individual and small group work and presentations

The training consists of lectures, exercises and workshops designed to increase efficiency in the participant's Communication and IT skills.

Table 1: Gender

Particulars	Number
Male	120
Female	480
Total	600

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 show that, majority of the respondents are females.

Table 2: Traditional Versus Technology Enhanced Learning Methods

Mode of Conducting Classes	No of Respondents	Percentage
Traditional way of learning is better	60	10
Skill oriented asap is better	540	90
Total	600	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 reveals that the majority of respondents (90%) are of the opinion that ASAP has more effective and impressive mode of conducting classes while the remaining 10% are interested in traditional way of learning.

Table 3: Inculcation of Technology Based Learning by ASAP and its Effects

Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
Effective	570	95
Not Effective	30	5

Source: Primary Data

The table shows that almost all respondents are of the opinion that ASAP has successfully inculcated technology based learning.

Table 4: Role of ASAP in Skill Development

Skill Development	No of Respondents
Communication skill	182
Leadership skill	54
Technical skills	34
Employability skill	280
Others	50
Total	600

Source: Primary Data

Highest number of trainees has regarded development of employability skills as the main aspect of ASAP.

Table 5 – Effectiveness of Teaching Methodologies

Particulars	No of Respondents	Percentage
Effective	582	97
Not Effective	18	3
Total	600	100

Source: Primary Data

97% of the respondents are satisfied by the way the ASAP teaching methodologies while the remaining 3% are not satisfied with it.

Table 6: Mode of Teaching – Satisfaction Levels

Item	O.v	Weight	W.v
Highly Satisfied	120	5	600
Satisfied	460	4	1840
Neutral	20	3	60
Dissatisfied	0	2	0
Highly dissatisfied	0	1	0
Total	600		2500

Source: Primary Data

Table 6 shows that majority of the respondents are satisfied with the mode of teaching.

Table 7 - Satisfaction Level towards Governmental Support and Facilities

Satisfaction Level	O.v	Weight	W.v
Highly satisfied	100	5	500
Satisfied	440	4	1760
Neutral	40	3	120
Dissatisfied	20	2	40
Highly dissatisfied	0	1	0
Total	600		2420

Source: Primary Data

Table 7 shows that facilities provided by the govt. institutions are satisfactory.

Table 8 Perceptions Regarding Existence of Gap in Skill Sector

Particulars	No of Respondents	Percentage
Gap still Exists	980	98
Non existence	20	2
Total	1000	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 8 shows that almost all respondents are agreeing to the fact that there is a gap in the skill sector for getting employed.

Findings

- The majority of the respondents are females
- Majority of the respondents (90%) are of the opinion that skill oriented ASAP is equipped with more effective and impressive modes of conducting classes.



- Almost every respondent are of the opinion that ASAP has successfully inculcated technology based learning.
- Among the skills gained and developed, employability skills stand out.
- Major share of the respondents (97%) are satisfied by the way the ASAP classes are conducted.
- Majority of the respondents are satisfied with the mode of teaching.
- Facilities offered by the government are satisfactory.
- Almost all respondents are agreeing to the fact that there is still a big gap in the skill sector for leading to unemployment.

Suggestions

- Awareness programs should be initiated about ASAP for providing an insight to the public about the course structure, mode of conducting classes and placement opportunities.
- Training should focus on quality enhancement and employability skills for a better placement options.
- At least one or two skill courses in ASAP should be a part of the regular academic syllabus.
- The course needs restructuring of time schedules so that there is no clash between normal working hours and skill course conduction.
- As many Institutions are forming part of ASAP year by year, more number of SDE's and program managers needs to be recruited.

Conclusion

The study conducted on "The role of ASAP Kerala project in skill development through technology enhanced learning" reveals that ASAP is successful in inculcating the skills required for the employability of the students graduating from regular academic courses. Necessary steps should be taken while launching the program on a large scale so that it could be conducted in a more effective manner. The students are not much aware about the advantages that the course may bring and hence awareness programs should be conducted so as to attract more students to this great endeavor initiated by the State of Kerala.

The government has invested a lot towards this ambitious project so as to equip our students with skill sets that create employability among the youth. It is expected that the project will be more fruitful in the upcoming years.

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