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**Jan Shikshan Sansthan - Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship,
Government of India Scheme for Non/Neo literates – A Case Study**

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Abstract

The Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) (translated into English as People Education Institute) is an initiative of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India to improve occupational skills and technical knowledge of non/neo literates and persons having a rudimentary level of education but not completing high school in rural and semi-urban areas. The initiative aims to increase efficiency, increase productive ability, and enhance livelihood opportunities for such individuals specially targeted towards underprivileged sections of society. With the transformation in the open economy and social setup of India over the years, this initiative has become important in the economic development of the population by imparting essential skills training, thereby enabling local vocational trades to grow, and creating new opportunities for the local communities. This case study will provide an overview of the JSS structure, setup of centers and institutions, popular courses, and success stories of the scheme. It will also provide insights into the scheme's promotion of self-employment and facilitation towards better financial inclusion. It will also highlight the importance of polyvalent educational institutions like JSS in the march towards the digital economy of India.

Keywords: adult education, vocational training, digital economy, rural adult education

Jan Shikshan Sansthan in Hindi-the national language of India stands for “Jan” meaning people, “Shikshan” meaning education or training and “Sansthan” meaning institute. Jan Shikshan Sansthan started as “Shramik Vidhyapeeth” translated into English as a worker's college in the city of Mumbai, India in 1967. The scheme was started under the purview of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India with a mission to provide vocational education and training to people. The scheme was launched in response to the steep growth in the working-age population in post-independent India, with cluster-based industrial development causing human resource migration from rural to urban areas and peripheral rural areas with links to neighboring urban agglomerations for employment, small businesses, entrepreneurship, and services. The scheme allowed for this migrant population to avail vocational and life skills training to address the socio-economic challenges of urban and semi-urban environments for illiterate and semi-literate populations who without occupational skills had daily wage labor as one of the limited earning options.

The scheme was renamed Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) in the year 2000. JSS was transferred from the purview of the Ministry of Education (erstwhile Ministry of Human Resource Development) to the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in July 2018. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) was established as the governing ministry for all skill development initiatives of the Government of India under a single umbrella, with K-12 and formal undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate education policy and

implementation being retained under the Ministry of Education (MoE). The mission of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship is to co-ordinate all skill development efforts across the country, remove the disconnect between the demand and supply of skilled manpower, build the vocational and technical training framework, skill up-gradation, building of new skills and innovative thinking not only for existing jobs but also jobs that are to be created (National Skill Development Mission, 2020). The premise of the ministry is to promote employability through education, skill development, competence upgradation and training. With total literacy campaigns leading to the emergence of a significant number of neo-literates, the charter of the JSS scheme has shifted from just the migrant urban and semi-urban workers to the numerous neo-literates and unskilled and unemployed youth and high school dropouts joining the “proverbial” workforce.

The JSS scheme is a key initiative for India in its journey towards becoming a \$ 5 trillion economy before the end of this decade. To achieve the same the skill disparity and the economic disparity in the populace needs to be addressed. The march forward will be difficult if a substantial portion of the adult population is unable to improve their self-marketability and digital skills to jump the rungs of the economic ladder. Youngman (2000) states that adult education is a powerful concept for promoting democracy, justice, gender equity, scientific, social, and economic development. Initiatives like the JSS scheme are key to economic rejuvenation, especially in developing economies. With a growing youth bulge entering the workforce, the neo-literate and semi-literate demography is at further risk of being left behind unless upskilled through JSS-like schemes and continuing adult education programs. The more this group strives for self-development, the greater the probability of productive activity in their immediate economic sphere. Hence the emphasis on vocational, digital, and soft skills as part of this training program. JSS addresses the need for a convergence between basic literacy, skill upgradation and remediation, introduction and integration with information and communication technology tools as a single integrated project with elements of the theory, practice, and fieldwork experience combined.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan Directorate

The Directorate of Jan Shikshan Sansthan (DJSS), a sub-ordinate office of MSDE is the governing body for the scheme. The JSS scheme is implemented through a network of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with 100% grant support from the Government of India. The Jan Shikshan Sansthans are registered under the Government of India Societies Registration Act, of 1860. The affairs of Jan Shikshan Sansthan are managed by respective Boards of Management (BoM) approved by the government. Each BoM consists of twelve members comprising of local government officials and local elected officials or their representatives, social workers, and key employers of the region. The directorate is responsible for the approval of the annual action plan, the release of grants, administrative and technical support services, supervision, and monitoring including site visits, curriculum development, and coordination with other skill development organizations under the umbrella of MSDE.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan Scheme

The scheme’s mission is to provide vocational skills in a non-formal mode to non-literate, neo-literates, and individuals with a rudimentary level of education. JSS is micro-adult learning in mission mode, with beneficiaries being trained at small centers or door-to-door mode

requiring minimal infrastructure and resources as represented in Figure 1. The scheme is aimed at marginalized sections of society. At present there are 301 JSSs in 26 states (provinces) and 7 Union Territories which are functional with the annual coverage of beneficiaries being around half a million, out of which 85% of the beneficiaries are women (<https://jss.gov.in>). The scheme identifies appropriate target areas and groups by developing socio-economic profiles based on the region it is serving. Some of the training programs and curriculums are geared towards local traditional skills with the overall focus on creating wage-based employment opportunities or self-employment opportunities.

Figure 1

A typical JSS Institute in rural India and training sessions (clockwise) in Interior Design and Decoration, Embroidery, Assistant Computer Operator, Motor and Transformer Rewinding courses



Note. From the photo gallery of the Jan Shikshan Sansthan website. (<https://jss.gov.in/staticPages>)

Target Demographics

The target demographics of the scheme include school dropouts post 8th grade in the 15-45 years age bracket. This bracket is indicative of two items, first, the formal age of labor in India by law is the completion of age 14 (The Child and Adolescent Labor – Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1986). Secondly, based on socio-economic conditions the highest percentage dropout rate in India is at the secondary level (grades 6 thru 10). Hence individuals ready to enter the workforce as unskilled labor tend to drop out of schooling at age 15 or later, most of them having completed eighth grade as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Average Annual Drop-Out Rate in School Education in India (In Percentage): 2014-15

Grade	Boys	Girls	All
Primary	4.36	3.88	4.13
Upper Primary	3.49	4.6	4.03
Secondary	17.21	16.88	17.06
Senior Secondary	0.25	NA	NA

Note. Adapted from Educational Statistics at a Glance (p 13), by National Institute of Educational Planning & Administration, 2018, Government of India. Copyright 2018 by Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The scheme is also targeted towards women as the key beneficiaries. The literacy gap between men and women in the fifteen and above category is 22% in rural areas and 12% in

urban areas as shown in Table 2. To address this disparity much of the curriculum and course training are geared towards women for employment-generating opportunities.

Table 2

Literacy Rates in India: 2014

Age	Literacy Rate					
	Rural		Urban		Rural& Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Age 5 & above	80.3	62.4	91	80.9	83.6	68.1
Age 7 & above	79.8	61.3	91.1	80.8	67.1	75.4
Age 15 & above	75	53.1	89.7	77.9	60.8	70.5
All Ages	72.3	56.8	83.7	74.8	62	69.1

Note. Adapted from Educational Statistics at a Glance (p 4), by National Sample Survey Office, 2018, Government of India. Copyright 2018 by Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

Courses

Courses under the JSS scheme are focused on improving the livelihood conditions for neo-literates, semi-literates, and illiterates who reside in isolated and neglected areas and are disadvantaged sections of the society because they could not be a part of the already laid educational system and thus could not take the advantage of the formal learning system due to their socio-economic conditions (Varma, 2020). Course training runs for 1-2 hours per day. JSSs now offer 50 courses in 23 sectors, which meet local market demand in the field. Popular courses include food processing, information technology, handicrafts and electronics and hardware. A detailed listing of the courses along with the syllabus can be viewed on the scheme's website (<https://jss.gov.in>).

Theoretical and practical training per the course requirements is prepared by experts and approved by the DJSS. In each course, planning for personality development, consumer protection, and health education is covered as subjects necessary for life improvement. In addition to sector and job role-based training, participants are imparted 60 hours of employability skills training which covers areas such as digital, financial, and legal literacy. It also includes topics on basic communication and customer service skills.

Participants successfully completing the course receive a certificate issued on behalf of the Government of India. This certificate acts as proof of the vocational training undertaken and becomes a stepping stone for organized employment and a gateway to demand higher wages based on skill. Upgradation programs are also provided to key resource persons, master trainers, and trainees during scheduled reviews and according to the changing needs of the updated programs and the needs of the neo-literates. There is also a provision for assigning knowledgeable people to help these new learners and taking feedback for changes in the course curriculum.

Benefits

The entire training program costs less than a dollar for the beneficiaries. The training allows beneficiaries to step up on the economic labor market as without the same they would be classified as daily wage workers which puts them at the lowest rung on the economic and wage ladder. The scheme allows for better financial inclusion with more skilled labor entering a growing economy and entry-level jobs.

Since such working adults cannot be a part of schools, colleges, and other higher institutions so there is a need for educational institutions such as JSS to provide for such adults

and adhere to their needs. These centers work by the idea that such adults are experienced and have practical knowledge and had already acquired certain skills in the due course of their jobs via informal means hence the main priority of these institutions is to provide market-oriented skills and knowledge to the adult learners (Varma, 2020). This means such skills are needed in the market for availing better jobs and such technical teaching which can help them to be more efficient and technically advanced in their respective fields. These learners always need to better themselves in all aspects so that they can create more lucrative livelihood options.

Challenges

The scheme though has benefits, has challenges to achieve its further potential due to scalability. The yearly number of approximately half a million beneficiaries represents less than 0.028 percent of the population of India, hence the true impact is the proverbial drop in the ocean. The scheme also suffers from limited program outlay. Figures for recent years are not available on the ministry website or are subsumed under other skill development budgetary outlays. The last data available from the financial year 2005-2006 shows a budgetary outlay of just 4.2 million Indian National Rupee (INR) to cover 1.7 million beneficiaries as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

JSS Funds outlay and number of beneficiaries: 2002-2006

Year	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Funds Outlay	2.33 M INR	2.58 M INR	2.78 M INR	4.20 M INR
Number of Beneficiaries	1,473,548	1,669,028	1,391,200	1,761,740

Note. Adapted from the Scheme of Jan Shikshan Sansthan: Report of Evaluation (p 7-8), by National Literacy Mission, 2009, Government of India. Copyright 2009 by Directorate of Adult Education, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

Other challenges include the limited outreach in rural areas where the need for such programs is even higher. Post-training placement and credit availability opportunities post-training also limit the full realization of the benefits (Munavar & Veerabhadrappe, 2017). There is limited literature available on studies on the economic upliftment achieved via the implementation of the scheme whereby data to influence policy changes and drive further benefits, including more courses, beneficiaries, and training partners is lacking.

Conclusion and Implications

As India has become the most populous nation in the world, and its government's focus is on the objective of empowering people through education, Jan Shikshan Sansthan's play a key role is bringing together the left behind. The scheme is key to adult education with its uniqueness in design and impartation. With a more camaraderie and community-based teaching method it is an important tool for providing vocational skills and practical information to neo-literates and semi-literates to bridge the digital and the skill formalization divide. The need is for further expansion and to cover a higher number of beneficiaries. Further research is required to establish firm evidence between the training imparted and the financial accretion achieved and its implications on the social position of the beneficiaries. Such data can drive future policy decisions of the government. The model has the further potential of being replicated across middle and lower-income countries with significant adult population classified as unskilled labor as a means for human capital value addition. The scheme also is a flagship example of continuing adult education tailored towards community needs.

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