Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra1013 | SJIF Impact Factor (2024): 8.431 ISSN: 2347-4378
EPRA International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Studies (EBMS)
Volume: 11 | Issue: 12 | December 2024 -Peer-Reviewed Journal

EMPOWERING MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES THROUGH SKILLS: THE JOURNEY OF JAN SHIKSHAN SANSTHAN SCHEME IN TRANSFORMING INDIA'S WORKFORCE

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra19631
DOI No: 10.36713/epra19631

ABSTRACT

This study examines the progress and impact of Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) from 2019-20 to 2023-24 in promoting skill development, focusing on marginalized groups, including women, economically disadvantaged populations, and Divyangjan (persons with disabilities). JSS plays a crucial role in enhancing household income through self-employment and wage employment by providing low-cost, accessible vocational training. The study analyzes year-wise data on the number of operational JSSs, beneficiaries, their gender, economic status, age, and educational background. The findings highlight significant gender-based participation, with women constituting the majority of beneficiaries, and emphasize the inclusion of marginalized groups such as SCs, STs, and BPL individuals. Additionally, the study addresses the impact of JSS programs on Divyangjan and suggests areas for improvement in their inclusion. The correlation between the number of JSS centers and total beneficiaries indicates the effectiveness of JSS's expanding reach. This paper underscores the importance of skill development in bridging India's labor market gaps and promoting inclusive growth.

KEYWORDS: *Jan Shikshan Sansthan, skill development, marginalized groups, women empowerment, Divyangjan, vocational training, inclusive growth, gender inclusivity.*

INTRODUCTION

Growth and upgrading are essential for any business organization to remain competitive. In India, while the labor supply is abundant, a significant portion of the workforce lacks the necessary skills to stay competitive in the global market. This gap in skills leads to a mismatch in the labor market, with most workers trapped in the unorganized sector where they face poor wages and unfavorable working conditions, ultimately affecting their socioeconomic well-being. This situation calls for a structural change, where skill upgrading becomes a top priority.

The task of upgrading skills is complex and cannot be achieved without the intervention of government and industry stakeholders. It is essential to identify sectors with substantial skill shortages. To address this, the Indian government has set up various industrial skills councils and established the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC), focusing on vocational training and development. These efforts aim not only to enhance current labor market employability but also to improve future workforce readiness.

One of the major challenges lies within the existing education system. A significant concern is the high dropout rate in elementary education, as lack of basic education creates a barrier for future skill development. The education system needs to incorporate a more practical orientation to ensure that students, especially those who drop out, understand the importance of education for securing a strong position in the job market. While there have been discussions about providing vocational training at the school level, implementation on a large scale remains inadequate.

Historically, education in India was limited to the elite, with strict academics restricting access for marginalized groups. This legacy of exclusion has changed in modern India, where the focus is now on empowering underprivileged sections of society through skills training. The government has committed to skill development

programs, targeting downtrodden youth with low education levels, to help them achieve better employment prospects.

In this context, the Government of India has implemented several skill development programs to address the challenges of underemployment and low productivity. One such significant initiative is Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS), which focuses on providing vocational and skill development training to marginalized and disadvantaged communities, especially in rural and underserved regions. JSS plays a vital role in helping these communities gain the skills needed for employment and entrepreneurship, contributing to the overall socioeconomic upliftment of these populations. Skill development is essential to bridging the gap in India's labour market. By addressing the challenges within the education system and focusing on practical training at the grassroots level, the government can empower individuals to secure better employment opportunities, ultimately driving the nation towards inclusive growth and poverty eradication.

In this backdrop, the present study made an attempt to study the year-wise progress and gender-wise beneficiary distribution of JSS from 2019-20 to 2023-24 and to analyze the impact on marginalized groups, including economic status, age, education, and inclusion of Divyangjan in 2023-24. The study is based on secondary data collected from various official sources related to Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) from Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India. The data spans from 2019-20 to 2023-24 and includes information on the number of JSSs, the number of beneficiaries, and their gender-wise distribution. Additionally, the study examines the economic status, age group, and educational background of beneficiaries, as well as the inclusion of Divyangjan (Persons with Disabilities) in 2023-24. The analysis aims to provide insights into the progress and impact of JSS on different demographic groups and marginalized communities.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) – Overview

The Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) scheme, originally introduced as Shramik Vidyapeeth (SVP) in March 1967, is administered through a network of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) across India. The first Shramik Vidyapeeth was established in Mumbai by the Bombay City Social Council Education Committee, a voluntary organization engaged in adult education. Following the success of the initiative, the Government of India developed a phased plan to set up similar institutions nationwide.

Initially, the focus of the Shramik Vidyapeeths was on providing education to industrial workers in urban areas. However, over time, the focus shifted to non-literates, neo-literates, unskilled, and unemployed youth, especially those from marginalized communities such as SC/ST/OBC, minorities, Divyang (differently-abled), and women in rural areas. As a result of this shift, the name of the program was changed to Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) in 2000. In July 2018, the JSS scheme was shifted from the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) to the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), with the Directorate of JSS under MSDE taking responsibility for its implementation.

Objectives of Jan Shikshan Sansthan:

1. **Skill Development for Marginalized Communities**: JSS primarily targets marginalized communities, including women, rural populations, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other disadvantaged groups, equipping them with skills that improve their employability and socio-economic status.
2. **Vocational Education and Training**: The Sansthans offer a wide range of vocational education programs that help individuals gain practical skills in trades such as tailoring, carpentry, beauty care, handicrafts, agriculture, and more. The focus is on providing training that can lead to immediate employment opportunities.
3. **Empowering Women**: One of the core objectives of JSS is empowering women through skill development. It provides women, particularly in rural areas, with the skills needed to become financially independent and contribute to the economic growth of their families and communities.
4. **Promoting Entrepreneurship**: Apart from vocational training, JSS also focuses on promoting entrepreneurship by training individuals to start their own small-scale businesses. This initiative not only generates self-employment opportunities but also promotes economic growth at the grassroots level.
5. **Improving Literacy**: While the primary focus is on skill development, JSS also runs programs to improve the literacy levels of adults, which can be a stepping stone for better job opportunities and overall socio-economic upliftment.

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Role in Skill Development

1. **Bridging Skill Gaps**: JSS aims to bridge the gap between the skills of the workforce and the demands of the job market. By providing training in various sectors, JSS plays a key role in addressing the skill deficit that often hampers the development of industries, particularly in rural areas.
2. **Localized Training Programs**: Each JSS center tailors its training programs to the specific needs of the local population, ensuring that individuals acquire skills that are relevant to local industries and employment opportunities.
3. **Non-formal Education**: Unlike traditional formal education systems, JSS provides non-formal education through short-term, community-driven programs, which are more flexible and accessible to people who may not have the time or resources to engage in full-time academic studies.

Through its objectives and skill development programs, JSS seeks to empower marginalized communities by enhancing their skills, improving their socio-economic status, and fostering self-reliance. By promoting self-sufficiency, JSS contributes to the broader goal of inclusive development.

Progress of Jan Shikshan Sansthan

The Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) has shown significant progress in the five-year period from 2019-20 to 2023-24. This analysis focuses on the year-wise progress, gender-wise beneficiary distribution, and overall impact on marginalized groups.

Table – 1: Progress of Jan Shikshan Sansthan during 2019-20 to 2023-24

Year	No. of JSS	Number of Beneficiaries			
		Male	Female	Transgender	Total
2019-20	233	60,938	3,54,126	258	4,15,322
2020-21	226	61,761	2,97,899	136	3,59,796
2021-22	301	78,397	3,83,456	143	4,61,996
2022-23	291	1,12,045	3,78,120	166	4,90,331
2023-24	290	1,04,199	4,03,090	126	5,07,415
	Correlation Between No. of JSS and Total Beneficiaries: 0.89%				

Sources: Various Annual Reports of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India during 2019-20 to 2023-24.

The table1 shows that the number of operational JSSs experienced fluctuations during 2019-20 to 2023-24. In 2019-20, there were 233 JSSs, which slightly decreased to 226 in 2020-21. However, in 2021-22, the number of JSSs increased significantly to 301. This was followed by a slight decrease to 291 in 2022-23 and a marginal reduction to 290 in 2023-24. Despite these fluctuations, the overall trend shows an expansion in the number of JSSs over the period.

The total number of beneficiaries also showed a consistent increase during these years. In 2019-20, JSSs served 4,15,322 beneficiaries. This number decreased to 3,59,796 in 2020-21 but then increased significantly to 4,61,996 in 2021-22. The upward trend continued with 4,90,331 beneficiaries in 2022-23 and reached 5,07,415 in 2023-24.

The gender-wise distribution of beneficiaries reveals a consistent trend of female predominance across the years. In 2019-20, out of a total of 4,15,322 beneficiaries, 60,938 were male, 3,54,126 were female, and 258 were transgender, with female beneficiaries accounting for approximately 85% of the total. In 2020-21, the distribution included 61,761 male, 2,97,899 female, and 136 transgender beneficiaries, maintaining female predominance at about 83%. The trend continued in 2021-22, where out of 4,61,996 beneficiaries, 78,397 were male, 3,83,456 were female, and 143 were transgender, with female beneficiaries making up 83% of the total. In 2022-23, out of 4,90,331 beneficiaries, 1,12,045 were male, 3,78,120 were female, and 166 were transgender, resulting in female participation around 77%. Finally, in 2023-24, out of 5,07,415 beneficiaries, 1,04,199 were male, 4,03,090 were female, and 126 were transgender, with female beneficiaries constituting about 79% of the total. This consistent predominance of female beneficiaries underscores the significant focus on empowering women through JSS programs.

The correlation coefficient of **0.89** indicates a strong positive relationship between the number of JSS centers and the total number of beneficiaries. This means that as the number of JSS centers increases, the number of beneficiaries also increases significantly As the number of JSS centers increases, more individuals, particularly

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from marginalized groups like women, SCs, STs, and other disadvantaged communities, benefit from skill development programs. Even in years when the number of centers slightly decreased (e.g., 2020-21), the total number of beneficiaries remained steady, highlighting the resilience of the JSS model. Overall, the positive correlation emphasizes the effectiveness of expanding JSS centers to enhance accessibility and impact.

This analysis highlights the significant progress of JSS in reaching a growing number of beneficiaries, with a particular focus on female empowerment. The strong positive correlation of **0.89** between the number of JSS centers and the total number of beneficiaries reflects the expanding impact and effectiveness of JSS programs over the years. Despite some fluctuations in the number of operational JSS centers, the organization has demonstrated resilience and adaptability, ensuring continued outreach and service to an increasing number of beneficiaries each year.

Impact on Marginalized Groups

The objective of the Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) scheme is to enhance household income by promoting self-employment and wage employment through skill development training. The training is designed to be low-cost, flexible, and highly accessible, with a particular focus on Women, Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), minorities, and other disadvantaged groups.

The target beneficiaries include non-literates, neo-literates, individuals with rudimentary education, school dropouts up to class 12th, and graduates in the age group of 15-45 years. Age relaxation is provided to Divyangjan (persons with disabilities) and other deserving cases, especially women. Furthermore, JSSs do not charge any fees from beneficiaries belonging to SC, ST, Divyangjan, and economically weaker sections, such as the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category.

In this context, the analysis of the 2023-24 data from JSS highlights the significant inclusion and impact of the program on marginalized groups. The focus on economic status, age, education, and gender distribution provides a comprehensive view of how JSS has effectively catered to disadvantaged communities, ensuring their active participation in skill development and educational empowerment.

Table – 2: Progress of Jan Shikshan Sansthan during 2023-24

Number of enrolled, trained assessed and certified beneficiaries	Total No of JSSs	290
	Total Target	522000
	Enrolled	507415
	Trained	506398
	Assessed	504961
	Certified	504335
Gender-wise Enrolled Beneficiaries	No.of male beneficiaries	104199
	No.of female Beneficiaries	403090
	No.of Transgender	126
	Total	**507415**
Economic Status of Enrolled Beneficiaries	APL	129634
	BPL	377781
	Total	**507415**
Age Group of Beneficiaries	15-18 Years	65921
	19-25 Years	204619
	26-35 Years	153567
	Above 35 Years	83308
	Total	**507415**
Educational Status of Beneficiaries	Non-Literates	19781
	Neo-Literates	85425
	Elementary Level	273102
	12^{th} Dropouts	129107
	Total	**507415**

Sources: *Annual Reports of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India during 2023-24.*

Table 2 shows the progress of Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) during the 2023-24 period, with the following headings:

Program Reach and Outcomes
In 2023-24, JSS aimed to enroll 5,22,000 beneficiaries, with a total of 5,07,415 individuals successfully enrolled. A total of 506,398 beneficiaries were trained, 5,04,961 were assessed, and 5,04,335 were certified. These figures highlight the effectiveness of the JSS programs in not only enrolling individuals but also ensuring that they are trained, assessed, and certified, making them eligible for better employment opportunities.

Gender-wise Enrolled Beneficiaries
The gender distribution of enrolled beneficiaries in 2023-24 indicates that JSS continued its focus on female empowerment, with 4,03,090 female beneficiaries, constituting about 79% of the total, compared to 1,04,199 male beneficiaries (21%) and 126 transgender beneficiaries. This gendered focus underscores JSS's role in promoting gender equality and empowering women, particularly from marginalized communities.

Economic Status
The beneficiaries of JSS in 2023-24 were predominantly from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with a clear focus on Below Poverty Line (BPL) individuals. Out of 5,07,415 total beneficiaries, 129,634 were classified as Above Poverty Line (APL), and a significant 377,781 were Below Poverty Line (BPL). This distribution demonstrates JSS's commitment to reaching out to those most in need and providing them with opportunities for skill development and education. The emphasis on BPL beneficiaries highlights the role of JSS in reducing economic disparities and improving livelihoods for marginalized communities.

Age Group
The age distribution of beneficiaries in 2023-24 indicates that JSS programs have successfully engaged a broad range of age groups. Among the 5,07,415 beneficiaries, 65,921 (13%) were in the 15-18 years age group, 2,04,619 (40%) were in the 19-25 years age group, 1,53,567 (30%) were in the 26-35 years age group, and 83,308 (16%) were above 35 years. This wide coverage across age groups reflects JSS's adaptability in catering to the needs of different age cohorts, from young adults to older individuals seeking to enhance their skills and education.

Educational Background
The educational status of JSS beneficiaries in 2023-24 underscores the program's efforts to reach individuals at various educational levels. A total of 19,781 beneficiaries were non-literates, showing the program's role in providing basic literacy skills. Additionally, 85,425 beneficiaries were neo-literates, highlighting the focus on individuals who are newly acquiring literacy skills. The largest group consisted of 2,73,102 individuals with elementary education, while 1,29,107 were 12^{th} grade dropouts. This data reflects JSS's inclusive approach, addressing the educational gaps among individuals from different educational backgrounds and providing them with opportunities for skill development.

The analysis of the 2023-24 data from JSS reveals its significant impact on marginalized groups, especially in terms of economic status, age, education, and gender. JSS's targeted interventions for BPL individuals, diverse age groups, and different educational backgrounds demonstrate its success in providing inclusive skill development and educational opportunities. The continued emphasis on female beneficiaries highlights the program's gender-sensitive approach, ensuring that women from all walks of life benefit from these initiatives. The overall outcomes—enrollment, training, assessment, and certification—reveal the program's effectiveness in achieving its goals and making a substantial impact on the lives of disadvantaged individuals.

Inclusion of Divyangjan (Persons with Disabilities) in Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)
Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) has made significant strides in ensuring the inclusion of Divyangjan (persons with disabilities) in its skill development programs. This inclusion reflects the scheme's commitment to empowering all individuals, regardless of physical limitations, through accessible and flexible training opportunities. The focus on Divyangjan aligns with the broader objective of social inclusion, which aims to improve the livelihoods and self-sufficiency of marginalized and vulnerable groups in society. The training provided under JSS is designed to be accessible, with tailored support for Divyangjan, ensuring that they can participate in skill development alongside other beneficiaries. Over the years, JSS has continued to provide training to individuals with disabilities, though the percentage of Divyangjan among the total trained beneficiaries remains relatively small. This trend highlights the need for ongoing efforts to enhance the participation of Divyangjan in future programs, with the goal of increasing their representation and ensuring that they benefit equally from these skill-building initiatives. In this connection, the table -3 depicts the Beneficiaries trained under Divyangjan during 2019-20 to 2023-24.

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Table – 3: Beneficiaries trained under Divyangjan during 2019-20 to 2023-24

Year	Divyangjan Trained	Total Trained	Percentage of PWD Trained/ Total Trained
2019-20	1897	4,15,332	0.46
2020-21	1025	3,59,796	0.28
2021-22	1250	4,61,996	0.27
2022-23	2745	7,26,284	0.38
2023-24	1701	5,06,078	0.34
Total	**8618**	**24,69,486**	**0.35**

Sources: Various Annual Reports of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India during 2019-20 to 2023-24.

Table 3 presents the number of Divyangjan (persons with disabilities) beneficiaries trained by Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) from 2019-20 to 2023-24. The data highlights the efforts of JSS in ensuring the inclusion of people with disabilities in its skill development programs.

From 2019-20 to 2023-24, the number of Divyangjan trained varied each year. In 2019-20, 1,897 Divyangjan were trained, accounting for 0.46% of the total trained beneficiaries. This figure decreased to 1,025 (0.28%) in 2020-21, with a slight increase to 1,250 (0.27%) in 2021-22. In 2022-23, the number rose significantly to 2,745 (0.38%), and in 2023-24, 1,701 Divyangjan were trained, accounting for 0.34% of the total beneficiaries. Across the five years, a total of 8618 Divyangjan were trained, representing 0.35% of the overall 24,69,486 beneficiaries trained.

This data reflects JSS's continued efforts to include people with disabilities in its skill development programs, though the percentage remains relatively low compared to the overall number of trained beneficiaries. Despite the small percentage, JSS's commitment to providing accessible training opportunities for Divyangjan is evident, and further initiatives could enhance their participation and inclusion in future programs.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the significant progress and impact of Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) in skill development, particularly for marginalized communities, from 2019-20 to 2023-24. The number of JSSs and beneficiaries has consistently increased, with a predominant focus on female empowerment. The data shows a positive correlation between the number of JSS centers and beneficiaries, emphasizing the effectiveness of expanding the program. JSS has successfully reached economically disadvantaged groups, especially those Below Poverty Line (BPL), and provided skill training to diverse age groups and educational backgrounds. Gender inclusivity has been a strong aspect, with women making up the majority of beneficiaries. Moreover, the inclusion of Divyangjan (persons with disabilities) has been an essential part of JSS's outreach, though their representation remains relatively small. The program's overall success in empowering marginalized communities through skill development is evident, and continued efforts are needed to enhance inclusivity, particularly for Divyangjan, to ensure that everyone benefits from these opportunities.

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