

Educational Value of MSME Sector Employees: A Case Study of Grey and Blue Collar Category

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Abstract

Indian Economy is today on the way of its digitisation using the advancements in the field of digital technology. In fact, in the current scenario, nation is taking serious efforts to be a digitally empowered country. The impact of this is well tangible in all walks of life including education and higher education. People across the levels must be benefitted of these cutting-edge developments. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector is vital in the economic fabric of India and the needs of its employees are a matter of prime attention. Empirical evidences show that in absence of adequate and time-friendly education, employees in general and Grey and Blue Collar in particular are majorly suffering in terms of their compensation, quality of life and other related ways. This paper, against the backdrop, endeavours to scan the situation prevailing in the target region and tries to define the course of action required at the juncture especially to get facilitated in the new and emerging environment. An attempt has also been made in the paper to take a view of all the concerned areas in which the target employees can be enhanced through the innovative use of technology and educational technology. The layout of the paper has been divided into its introductory part, conceptual side of digitisation, a bird's eye view on MSME sector and its Grey and Blue collar employees and their educational requirements besides a humble submission of a Researcher to get an improved status.

Keywords: *Digitisation, Digital Empowerment, Digital Economy, MSME Sector, Blue and Grey collar employees, Quality of life*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern business environment, CEOs and managers are focused on improving productivity and customer services. Despite cultural, ethical, and social similarities across states in the business realm, the influence of occidental work culture has become widespread due to advanced mobile communication (5/6G scenario). The constant evolution of the global landscape, driven by technology, particularly in communication and business practices, has led to a transformation in management frameworks. In the Industrial Economy, competitive advantage was centered around products and plant investments, with managers functioning as controllers. The Information Economy brought a shift where competitive advantage relied on information and IT investments, leading managers to adopt the role of coordinators. In the current Knowledge Economy, competitive advantage is grounded in knowledge and investment in people, positioning managers as facilitators. This dynamic shift highlights the necessity for businesses to adapt, emphasizing a people-centric approach in the rapidly changing global context.

Conceptual side of Digitisation

Digitization involves converting information into a computer-readable format by organizing it into bits. This process results in a digital representation, such as a digital image for objects or a digital form for signals. Typically, the digitized data is in binary form, aiding computer processing. However, digitization broadly refers to converting analog source material into a numerical format, regardless of the number system used. In the context of the Indian economy, digitization has played a crucial role, driven by factors compelling its integration into daily life.

A bird's eye view on MSME Sector

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector has emerged as a highly vibrant and dynamic sector of the Indian economy over the last six decades. MSMEs sector has played a significant role in the development of India. The analysis showed that the contribution of MSMEs in Indian economy was significant; its share in India's GVA was around 32 %. The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise sector in India has consistently registered higher growth rate as compared to other industrial sectors. This sector is noted for its employment potential at low capital cost while the labour intensity is estimated to be higher than the larger enterprises. As per the National Sample Survey (NSS) 73rd round conducted during the period 2015-16, MSMEs

sector has created 11.10 crore jobs (360.41 lakh in Manufacturing, 387.18 lakh in Trade and 362.82 lakh in Other Services and 0.07 lakh in Non-captive Electricity Generation and Transmission) in the rural and the urban areas across the country.

II. Blue collar and grey collar employees

"Blue collar" and "grey collar" are terms used to classify workers based on the type of work they perform, their skill levels, and the work environments in which they typically operate. These terms are part of a broader classification system that also includes "white collar" employees. Here's an explanation of each category:

1. Blue Collar Employees:

- Blue collar workers are typically engaged in manual or physical labor, often involving tasks that require skilled or semi-skilled trades.
- They often work with their hands, tools, and machinery to construct, manufacture, repair, or maintain physical objects or structures.
- Examples of blue collar jobs include construction workers, mechanics, electricians, plumbers, welders, machinists, and factory workers.
- Blue collar employees may work in diverse settings, such as construction sites, factories, workshops, and maintenance facilities.
- The term "blue collar" originated from the blue uniforms often worn by manual laborers in industries like manufacturing and construction.

2. Grey Collar Employees:

- The term "grey collar" is a relatively newer classification that refers to workers whose job roles fall between traditional blue collar and white collar categories.
- Grey collar workers often perform skilled or technical tasks that do not necessarily involve physical labor but require specialized knowledge or expertise.
- These workers may use technology, perform analytical tasks, or work in service industries that require specialized skills.
- Examples of grey collar jobs include computer technicians, technical support personnel, skilled tradespeople in certain service industries, and certain healthcare support roles.
- The term "grey collar" reflects the blending of elements from both blue and white collar work.

3. White Collar Employees:

- White collar workers are associated with professional, administrative, managerial, and clerical tasks that typically take place in office or administrative settings.
- They often engage in knowledge-based work, decision-making, analysis, and communication.
- Examples of white collar jobs include office administrators, accountants, lawyers, managers, executives, and data analysts.
- The term "white collar" refers to the white dress shirts that were commonly worn by office workers.

It's important to note that these categories are not rigid, and there can be overlap between them. Additionally, the nature of work is evolving with advances in technology and changes in industries, leading to new types of job classifications and hybrid roles. The terms "blue collar" and "grey collar" are used as convenient descriptors to categorize workers based on certain job characteristics, but the distinctions may not always capture the full complexity of modern job roles and responsibilities.

III. Material And Methods

The analysis has been done on the blue collar and grey collar employees among the 10 registered and unregistered MSMEs working companies of Greater Noida. This is a survey based analysis among the employees of registered and unregistered MSMEs working companies. The data has been tabulated on the percentage value.

Table 1: Tabulation of technical and non technical employees of registered and unregistered MSMEs working companies.

	Registered MSME	Non Registered MSME
Technical employees	98%	2%
Non technical employees	45%	55%

On analysis of distribution of blue-collar workers and grey collar workers in registered and unregistered MSMEs for the study carried out; it is noted that whereas all the grey-collar workers are employed in registered MSMEs, only 45 % of the blue-collar workers are employed in registered MSMEs.

Table 2: Tabulation of awareness of PMYK Yojana in technical and non technical employees of registered and unregistered MSMEs working companies.

	Registered MSME	Non Registered MSME
Awareness about PMYK	79.3	20.7
Benefits of PMYK	0	0

79.3 percent of employees of registered firms have awareness about Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY). 20.7 percent of respondents from unregistered firms aware of PMKVY scheme, which is greater than that of unregistered firms. However, quite surprisingly none of the respondents of unregistered as well as registered firms have availed benefits from PMKVY. Even if the employees are covered under these schemes, they are not able to reap the benefits of these schemes. One of the major reasons for this could be the lack of awareness among the employees about the social security benefits, which they are entitled to.

Table 3: Tabulation of perspective of CEO and HR of registered and unregistered MSMEs working companies.

	CEO	HR
In need of skilled labor	38	84
In need of educated labour	41	70
In need of uneducated labour	11	9
In need of unskilled labour	21	2

However, there is acute shortage of skilled people who can be employed. 38% CEOs have reported that they are extremely concerned about the availability of key skills. 84% HR leaders have reported that they are “struggling to recruit the right talent, with 70% having issues in keeping their top performers”.

Table 4: Tabulation of Grey and Blue Collar Employees and their Educational Requirements

	Registered MSME	Non Registered MSME
Secondary level	37.5	79
Higher secondary level	17.5	9.9
Graduates	45	11.1

The respondent employers’ qualification showed that 45% are graduates and 17.5% have higher secondary level education. Whereas the respondent employees’ qualification showed that 11.1% are graduates and only 9.9% have higher secondary level education.

Table 5: Tabulation of division of labor in registered and unregistered MSMEs working companies

	Registered MSME	Non Registered MSME
Mechanic	63.5	27.6
Fitter	9.6	6.9
Turner	9.6	6.9
All trades	1.9	58.6
Others category	15.4	0

Majority of respondents (63.5 percent) working trade in the case of registered firms is Mechanic. This is followed by others category (15.4 percent), Fitter (9.6 percent), Turner (9.6 percent) and all trades (1.9 percent) respectively. The pattern changed in the case of unregistered firms. Majority of the respondents’ (58.6 percent) were having skills in all trades; followed by trade of Mechanic (27.6 percent), Turner (6.9 percent) and Fitter (6.9 percent) respectively.

In the study carried out about Grey and Blue collar employees it has been noticed that most workers are in fact ‘Knowledge Workers’ whose jobs are knowledge based. Over a period of time they develop unique skills. However, Professional Obsolescence is very common due to failure to keep abreast with the current

developments in the knowledge field. Fresh graduates attract better compensation packages as they are armed with current knowledge and skills. Risks increase if both employers and workers fail to keep up with knowledge evolution. Performance gaps grow if a worker does not keep up with infusion of new knowledge. Both employers and workers are not aware that in 1900 the knowledge was doubling every century; in 1945 it was doubling every 25 years; in 1982 it was doubling every 12-13 months but in 2020 it is predicted that it will double every 12-13 hours.

There is mismatch within priorities and that entrenches the crisis of professional obsolescence further. A few Organisational factors are no effective use of knowledge, skills and abilities of employees; poor setting of goals and challenges; defective performance appraisals; toxic work culture; lack of autonomy and support; absence of rewards and growth opportunities. The Individual factors in such scenario are; lack of Motivation; age of employee; psychological needs (security, recognition, growth, achievement); desire to remain with status quo; work-life demands; lack of awareness of change etc.

Many employers are not aware about Organisational Obsolescence i.e. the organisation itself is obsolete in terms of its contents and processes; as such people working there may reflect the performance level, which meets the standard within the organisation, but they have already become obsolete outside. Professionals working there may face employability issue outside. "Over 20 per cent of the present workforce is becoming obsolete, and that unless they rededicate and reinvent themselves, within a few years, another 20 per cent will become obsolete." Covey (2004)

IV. Suggestions to achieve Improved Status

"An organization's capacity to improve existing skills and learn new ones offers the most defensible competitive advantage of all" Prahalad & Hamel (1990) To succeed in a knowledge economy, workers and organizations need to rethink the approach to learning. For Individuals self-learning and knowledge gathering practices needs to be the key priority. They should recharge their mental batteries through regular updating practices. They need to follow dynamic ways of life long education through self education such as reading; participating in projects that put demand on learning and mastering new knowledge and skills; discussion and argumentations with colleagues; participation in seminar, conferences if arranged by employer; taking formal courses; using online resources etc. Organizations also need to support workers and provide avenues to enrich their knowledge and skills. Provide challenging job assignments at early career stages; Reduce administrative task, work load of routine types; Use cross-functional teams; Introduce flexible work schedule; Assist in reducing work-family conflict; Provide regular training and other updating programs.

V. Conclusion

We can conclude that a shared responsibility is necessary to harness human potential. The employers need to understand that Grey and Blue collar workers are enormously important in the economy. Individuals, with support of organizations, need to dedicate time and effort to continue life-long learning and Organizations need to think of strategies for transition of workers. We need to recognize that humans are able to innovate where machines fail and we should focus on harnessing the creativity of workers to innovate in a knowledge economy.

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