



Textile Technology Training (T3) Center: A Study on Initiatives for Enhancing Youth Employability

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Abstract:

Textile is one of India's oldest industries and has a formidable presence in the national economy in as much as it contributes to about 14% of manufacturing value-addition, accounts for around one-third of our gross export earnings and provides gainful employment to millions of people. The fundamental strength of India's textile industry lies in its robust production base, encompassing a wide range of fibers and yarns. Reviving Green Revolution (RGR) Cell has established a skill development center for providing textile technology to underprivileged youth in Tirupur. Thus, creating youth employability options and addressing the sectoral gap of poor availability of workers.

The current study focuses on several key aspects. It examines the candidate mobilization strategy, training quality standards maintained, job opportunities offered to trainees upon completion, and delves into the challenges encountered by the Center. To gather insights, monthly reports have been systematically analyzed through vertical statement analysis. Additionally, the study engages in face-to-face interactions with individuals involved in the project, including mobilizer and trainers. Their constructive feedback is documented within this paper. This study presents a comprehensive overview of both the potential achievements and the challenges faced by mobilizers and trainers within the T3 Center. They firmly believe that the T3 Center has the potential for broader promotion and expansion, thereby ensuring enhanced employability opportunities for underprivileged youth. The training program offered free of charge, whilst providing opportunities for the target group has also, created a reduced commitment from a few trainees and their parents. Addressing this challenge was imperative to ensure quality standards and effectiveness of the training program is maintained. Finally, this paper highlights various strategies implemented to facilitate project success and discusses challenges encountered during training and job placements.

Keywords: Skill Development, Textile Lab Technology, Merchandising, Training, Employability, Underprivileged, Job Placements, Tirupur

1. Introduction

It has been experienced and foreseen that skill development is essential for the economic growth of India. The 2015 report on the National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship estimated that only 4.7% of India's total workforce had undergone formal skill training, in contrast to 52% in the US, 80% in Japan, and 96% in South Korea. A skill gap study conducted by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) between 2010 and 2014 indicated an additional net incremental requirement of 10.97 crore skilled manpower in 24 key sectors by 2022. Additionally, the 29.82 crore workforce in the farm and non-farm sectors needed to be skilled, reskilled, and upskilled.

Throughout many centuries, India's textile sector has remained one of the oldest industries in the country's economy. The India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF) report (2023) emphasizes that the fundamental strength of India's textile industry lies in its robust production base, encompassing a wide

range of fibers and yarns. These include natural fibers like cotton, jute, silk and wool, as well as synthetic and man-made fibers such as polyester, viscose, nylon, and acrylic. During a baseline study conducted by the Reviving Green Revolution (RGR) Cell, a non-profit organization initiated by TATA TRUSTS, it was identified that there was a gap in the textile industry concerning trained textile lab technicians and merchandisers.

To address these gaps for textile industries located in and around Tirupur, various job types were assessed to determine the most attractive and essential training program which met the textile industry requirements and enhanced youth employability. Thus, the “Textile Technology Training (T3) Center” was established in July 2022 in the heart of Tirupur City, Tamil Nadu. The T3 Center initiated its training program with two courses i.e. Textile Lab Technology and Merchandising focusing on job roles of Textile Lab Technician and Textile Customer Care Executive, respectively. This study is primarily focused on the Textile Technology Training (T3) Center.

2. Literature Review

Painter (2005) emphasizes that developing the skills of the workforce in the garment and textile industry is crucial in the context of increasing global competition. Constructive programs are required. For example, Bangladesh's garment industry introduced specific development programs for training front-line managers. With effective training of front-line managers, these individuals will be responsible for developing the unskilled labour force in their own enterprise through on-the-job training activities, leading to improved productivity in their enterprises.

Allwood, J et al (2006) discussed that the clothing industry is a high-value sector, globally worth over one trillion dollars, employing approximately 30 million people and supporting numerous economies and individual incomes around the world in 2006.

The National Skill Development Corporation (2022) revealed skill gaps, including inadequate knowledge of both textile manufacturing and chemistry, an insufficient ability to translate buyer requirements into quality parameters, and a limited understanding of quality parameters.

Tara and Kumar (2016) have highlighted the critical need for creating an encouraging environment for skill development in India. Interview excerpts from S. Ramdorai, Chairman of the National Skill Development Agency, reveal that public-private partnership models have succeeded in unleashing a significant amount of entrepreneurial energy in skill development.

Jain et al. (2018) view skill development as critical for escaping the unemployment trap in developing countries.

3. Objectives of the study

- 1.To understand the various strategies used for mobilizing candidates for the training programs.
- 2.To assess the quality standards of the course materials developed and used at the T3 Center.
- 3.To gain insight into the strategies employed for creating job opportunities for trainees upon course completion.
- 4.To identify and comprehend the challenges faced by the trainers at the T3 Center in ensuring its smooth operation and to solicit suggestions from them for system improvement.

4. Research Methodology

In this study, an exploratory research design was employed. Both primary and secondary data sources were utilized. Primary data was gathered through personal interviews with trainees at the T3 Center. Secondary data was collected from the center's monthly reports, books, journals, research papers, articles, government data, websites, and various published government sources.

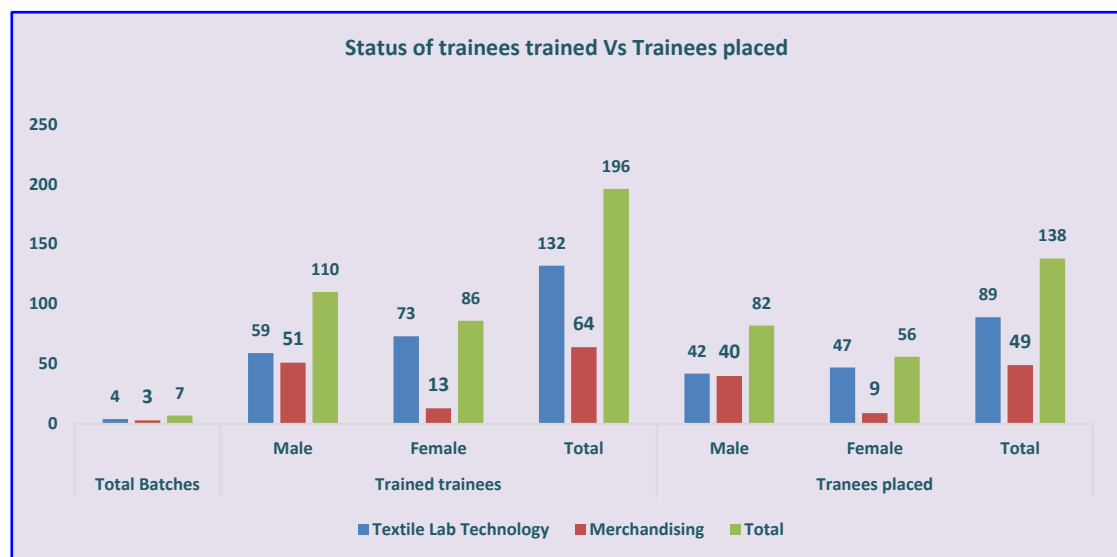
A systematic stratified random sampling approach was adopted to select the study units. The researchers conducted physical visits to ten companies where the trainees, after their training, were placed in and around Tirupur. During these visits, the researchers engaged in structured interviews with alumni of the T3 Center, using prepared questions related to training inputs, available facilities at the T3 Center, teaching aids, industrial visits, practical sessions, and guest lectures facilitated by the T3 Center. The information gathered during these interactions was recorded in a separate notepad with the consent of the participants.

Furthermore, the researchers collected data on the trainees' family income status both before and after attending training at the T3 Center.

5. Results

5.1 At the T3 Center Level (Through personal interviews and reports)

It was observed from the data and records available at the T3 Center that the center was established on 19th July 2022, with each batch having a duration of three months. As of now, the center has successfully completed seven batches, consisting of four batches focused on 'Textile Lab Technology' and three batches centered around 'Merchandising'. A total of 196 trainees have successfully completed their training program, with 132 trainees in 'Textile Lab Technology' and 64 trainees in 'Merchandising'. Out of these 196 trainees, 138 individuals (70.40%) have secured employment in 84 different textile companies.



5.2 Through personal interviews with the mobilizer and the trainers of the Center

5.2.1 On Mobilization

The mobilizer of the Center shared that mobilization efforts were carried out using a variety of strategies. These strategies included reaching out to college heads to explain the courses offered at the Center, approaching panchayat presidents and Self-Help Group members to inform them about the available courses, visiting the Government's Social Welfare department, and participating in job fairs organized by the government of Tamil Nadu. Additionally, the Center also developed a brochure and a mobilization kit that included detailed information about the Center's activities, from classroom instruction to the recent job placement profiles of trainees.

5.2.2 On Training Structure

The Center employed two trainers, each specializing in training for 'Textile Lab Technology' and 'Merchandising' courses. The trainers provided documents showcasing the development of three distinct course materials tailored for these trainings. These course materials were organized with a day-by-day teaching syllabus that was strictly adhered to. Each batch consisted of twelve weeks in total. For trainees in 'Textile Lab Technology', the first eight weeks were dedicated to classroom training

with external involvement from six guest lecturers and an Industrial Visit to a textile company. The remaining four weeks were allocated for practical sessions at the Textile Laboratory of Intertek in Tirupur.

On the other hand, for trainees in 'Merchandising', all twelve weeks were devoted to classroom inputs. This included external engagements comprising nine IVs and nine guest lectures throughout the duration of the course.

Additionally, the trainers mentioned that every Friday was dedicated to 'Soft Skills' training, with a total of twelve soft skill modules being taught to the trainees.

5.3 Practical Sessions at Intertek

During a personal interaction with the Human Resource (HR) head, it was revealed that the trainees from the T3 Center were divided into two groups. One group of trainees was sent to the 'Textile Lab,' while the other group was assigned to the 'Analytical Lab' for their practical assignments. This arrangement was rotated every fifteen days. During their time in these labs, trainees initially observed the operations for the first couple of days and were subsequently allowed to work alongside the existing staff members at Intertek to gain hands-on experience with the testing machinery.

5.4 Internal and External Examinations

In discussions with the trainers, it was explained that there were two internal examinations conducted by the trainers. These examinations took place at the end of the first and second months of the course and served to evaluate the progress of the trainees. At the end of the three-month training, an external examination was conducted for each batch by an evaluator from 'Methods Apparel Consultancy India Private Limited,' which was an authorized certification body recognized by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).

5.5 Convocation for the Trainees

The trainers shared that convocation ceremonies were organized for every batch of the Center. Special guests from external organizations were invited to participate in the ceremony, where they distributed certificates to the trainees and addressed the graduating trainees.

5.6 Job Placements

Inquiries were made regarding job placements, and the trainers explained their approaches. They directly engaged with textile laboratories and textile industries, providing information about the T3 Center and the availability of trained personnel. Given the labour needs in these laboratories and industries, the trainers collaborated with the responsible individuals in these organizations to arrange interviews for their trainees who successfully completed the training. Furthermore, the trainers continued to provide continuous support to their trainees after they secured employment. For trainees who left their jobs for valid reasons, the trainers also offered support to help them find suitable employment opportunities within appropriate companies.

5.7 Interview with the Trainees: Through personal interviews (Telephonic conversations and direct interactions)

The researchers collected contact details of the trainees who had completed their training at the T3 Center and subsequently contacted them to inquire about their job situations and the level of job satisfaction. The researchers conducted 150 telephonic conversations with 113 trainees who had completed their courses at the Center, and they also directly met with the remaining 46 trainees for in-person interactions, discussing topics related to the Center and the nature of their current jobs.

The trainees expressed that, during the pandemic years of 'Corona,' many of them were pursuing their undergraduate degrees through online classes. They found the three-month course at the T3 Center

exceptionally valuable because it offered them classroom instruction and practical laboratory sessions. A significant 75% of the trainees shared that despite being born and raised in and around Tirupur, they had never previously had the chance to enter a textile industry or laboratory. The Center provided them with their first opportunity to gain access to textile industries and laboratories, allowing them to learn about the operations carried out in these companies.

It was found that 86% of the trainees who were employed in various companies expressed satisfaction with their current positions. They expressed their intent to continue working in these companies for several more years to further enhance their knowledge and adapt to the working culture. In contrast, the remaining 14% of the trainees were only partially satisfied with their current job situations. They were actively exploring opportunities in other companies due to factors such as unfavorable working hours, long distances from homes, and unsatisfactory salaries.

The researchers also observed that some trainees who had not joined any company provided various reasons for their decision. These reasons include their marriage, relocation and work-related reasons like, unsatisfactory salaries, industries far away from homes and inconvenient working hours in the industries.

5.8 Interactions with the reporting persons of trainees in their respective companies

Random sampling was used to select ten companies, which were then visited by the researchers who interacted with the reporting persons of the trainees. Below is the list of industries and laboratories visited by the researchers and had interactions:

S. No	Name of the companies visited	Location	No of trainees employed
1	SGS	College Road, Tirupur	5
2	Texqual Testing Services	Kumar nagar, Tirupur	4
3	Premier Testing Services	Valipalayam, Tirupur	2
4	TUV Rheinland (India) Pvt Ltd	Sabapathipuram, Tirupur	1
5	Dixcy Textiles Pvt. Ltd	Poosaripalayam, Chengapalli, Tirupur	1
6	Azo Textile Testing Laboratory	Valarmathi, Tirupur	3
7	G-Lab	Gandhinagar, Tirupur	4
8	Network Clothing Company Pvt Ltd	Andipalayam, Tirupur	5
9	The South India Textile Research Association (SITRA)	Aerodrome Post, Coimbatore	1
10	AAA Textiles Pvt Ltd	Karumathapatti, Coimbatore	2

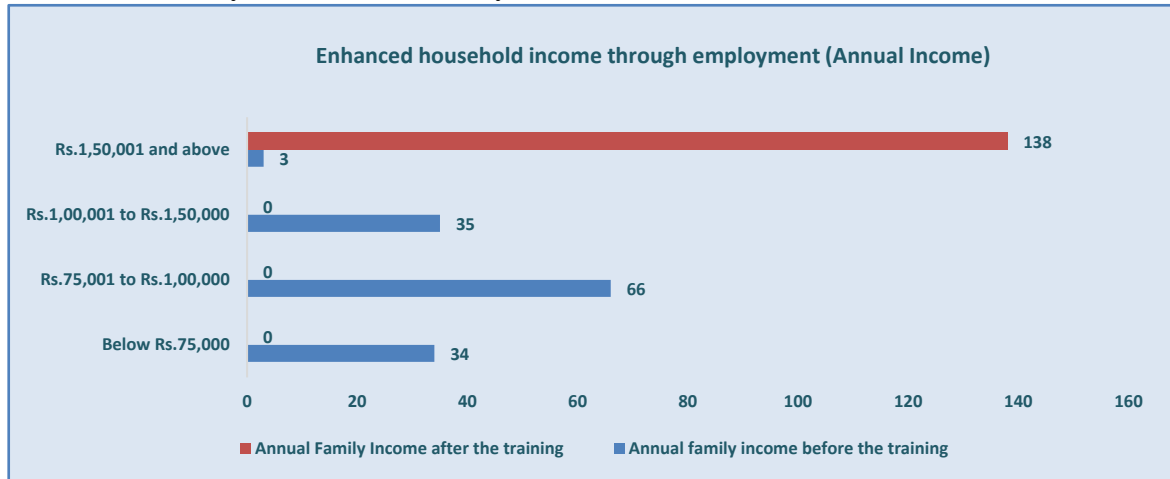
The following are key observations gathered from the feedback provided by the reporting persons:

- Employees recruited from the T3 Center exhibited comparatively higher levels of knowledge and displayed a quicker grasp of their assigned tasks.
- Time-bound targets were consistently met by these recruited employees.
- Employees from the T3 Center consistently adhered to their work schedules and rarely took unnecessary leaves.
- Employees from the T3 Center fostered positive working relationships with their colleagues, contributing to a conducive and peaceful work environment.
- It was reported that some of the employees were requesting increments within first two to three months of their employment which was not in line with industry policy.

6. Outcomes generated towards better impact

The T3 Center, has imparted skills in Textile Lab Technology and Merchandising to 196 underprivileged youth and facilitated job placements for 138 trained youth, has significantly improved the financial stability of their families.

The chart above clearly illustrates an analysis of how the annual incomes of these families have



experienced a remarkable increase, with most families now having incomes above 1.51 lakhs. All the 138 families have shown significant positive changes in their annual incomes. It is also noted that the 34 families whose annual family incomes were less than Rs. 75,000 were doubled after the job placements.

7. Challenges faced by the T3 Center

- Many of the candidates who applied for the training did not join and instead took underemployed jobs, causing concern of better knowledge and further employability options.
- Some trainees who initially joined the training dropped out because they found menial job opportunities in the industries.
- Trainees who completed their training at the T3 Center were hesitant to attend interviews with companies that were not located near their homes.
- The center encountered challenges in obtaining approval from textile industries for industrial visits for the trainees.

8. Suggestions for improvements in the system:

Diversify Guest Lecturers: To provide a broader perspective to trainees, consider expanding the pool of guest lecturers to include representatives from big and multinational companies located in Tirupur. This can expose trainees to a wider range of industry insights and practices.

Enhance Industrial Visits: Increase the variety and number of industries covered during Industrial Visits (IVs). This can provide trainees with a more comprehensive understanding of industrial activities related to textile laboratory and merchandising.

Signed Commitment Letters: Implement a policy where both parents and trainees are required to sign commitment letters upon joining the course. These letters can serve as a binding agreement to complete the course and meet certain attendance or performance requirements.

Job Preferences: Explore the possibility of establishing job assurances from textile industries for trainees who graduate from the T3 Center. Collaborate with organizations like the Tirupur Exporters' Association (TEA) and the State Government to create employment opportunities for your trainees within the textile industry.

Expand Counseling Services: Continue providing individual counseling to students in need, but also consider offering group workshops or seminars on topics such as career development, communication skills, and personal growth. Additionally, extend family counseling services to parents of trainees

facing problems or confusion to create a supportive environment for trainees and enable course completion.

Overall, these suggestions aim to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the T3 Center's training program, providing trainees with a comprehensive education and support system to succeed in the textile industry.

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