

DO SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES ENHANCE EMPLOYABILITY?

A STUDY OF ASAP

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ABSTRACT

ASAP, the Additional skill Acquisition Program (ASAP) launched jointly by the Higher Education Department and Department of General Education aims at tackling the issue of low employability among youth of Kerala. This paper enquires into the role of ASAP in enhancing the employability among youth. The study reveals that respondents chose the course to secure a decent job immediately after completion of their education, to improve communication skills and to improve the job prospects. Further the study shows that only 10 percent of the ASAP trained have been employed while 70 percent have enrolled for further studies.

KEYWORDS: Skill Gap, ASAP, Enrollment, Education, Employability, Human Resources, Employment Status

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is a major hurdle in achieving the development goals of all nations especially developing countries. In India too this problem has assumed alarming proportions. The unemployment problem in Kerala compared to other states is colossal, particularly among educated youth. According to the census 2011, Kerala's literacy rate is 94% as against national the average of 73%. In spite of having attained remarkably good indices in human development indicators, Kerala has been struggling with high level of unemployment and low work force participation. Kerala also faces a unique problem of educated unemployment. It is highest among graduates 18% and more than 15% among diploma/certificate holder and people with post graduation and above level of education.

The real cause behind this educated unemployment is lack of skill. Skill gap is the grim reality which is indeed holding back our economy. Here skill gap is defined as the difference in the skill required and the actual skill possessed by the employee. The lack of quality trainers and training institutes created road blocks to growth and skill shortage affects the growth of every sectors of the economy. A skill-deficient state like Kerala has to skill its youth to overcome the existing skill gap among the educated youth.

The Kerala Government has initiated the State Skill Development Project, to be implemented jointly by the General Education, Higher Education, Labour (Employment & Training) and Local Self Government Departments. The project aims to cover 14.8 lack people over the Twelfth Five Year Plan Period. The project aims to focus on certain dream project in ten sectors including Hospitality, Organized retail, Health care, IT & ITES, Event Management, Business services, Median and Entertainment Industry, Banking and Finance Sector, Construction and Agriculture. The projects

comprise a preventive and curative component.

As a part of this flagship projects the Kerala state Skill Development Project, the Additional skill Acquisition Program (ASAP) was conceptualized, designed and launched jointly by the Higher Education Department and Department of General Education. The ASAP aims at tackling the issue of low employability among youth of Kerala, aged 15-24years by providing industry-related vocational training to students of Higher Secondary School and students of Arts and Science graduate stream. ASAP has a target of training 3.1 lack trainees from 2012 to 2017 with a budget of Rs.633.3 Cr. The program targeted to be implemented in 2100 Higher Secondary School and 575 Under Graduate Institute. Historically Kerala has been a prominent supplier of skilled human resources to the world, but now it became lesser than the changing world's needs. Even though Kerala has an amazing pool of human resources, as per the ASAP Project document, the overall employability of Kerala's youth is below 25%. Additional Skill Acquisition Program has been conceived as an effective remedy for this situation. The whole idea is that students will be given skill training, in additional their regular academic program or curriculum. These skill training will be conducted before and after school, college timing as well as during holidays and vacations. Thus when they complete their regular academic program, they will get an additional skill certificate. This will ensure them job opportunities immediately on completion of each stage of their academic programs and thereafter they can opt for part time or full time jobs In this background, this paper enquires into the role of ASAP in enhancing the employability among youth.

About the Study

The study is an attempt to know the role of ASAP in reducing the skill gap among youth of Kerala. The primary data collection is done by using structured questionnaire administered through telephonic interviews. Before launching the primary survey, a framework was designed to trace the students. Through the ASAP management information system, students mobile number and email Ids were collected. Using these information samples were collected through snowball sampling. The students who have completed ASAP skill course are included in this study A sample size of 70 students was drawn from two skill Development Centers in VadakaraTaluk of Kozhikode district in Kerala.

LITERATURE SURVEY

The review of literature revealed that the employment has been subjected to many empirical studies. Employability can be understood as the possession of basic 'core skills' or an extended set of generic attributes, or attributes that a type of employer (discipline-linked, sector-related, company-type) specifies.

Skills have a profound relationship with economic and social outcomes which are key to tackling inequality and promoting social mobility. Several studies have been undertaken on the measurement of employability and skill development. The following section summarizes the main empirical studies on measuring employability and skill development.

PRAKASH B.A. In his working paper 'Unemployment in Kerala; An Analysis of Economic Causes ' explained causes of growing unemployment and identified the excess supply of young labour force, the low growth for labour demand arising out of the declining economic growth of state economy etc. were the main causes of raising unemployment. But the study doesn't give correct explanation about the excess supply of young labour and what's the level of skill they have?

Another study he made on 'Educated Unemployment in Kerala: Some Observations' and found that unemployment among educated people is very chronic and acute.

GOPALAKRISHNAN NAIR N, in his discussion paper 'Measurement of Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment.' He classified population into employed, unemployed and not in the labor force. The study further scope to study disguised Underemployment at long intervals.

ANDERSON(2002) In his study titled "Employer's Expectations for the entry- level employee in Prince George's County, Maryland " assessed the perceptions of Prince George's County Maryland regarding the employment skills needed at the entry level employees of 21st century and also their perception whether the students possess those needed skills adequately.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Additional Skill Acquisition Programme currently provides training to students in skill courses across the following sectors ; Accounting, Agriculture, Apparel Automotive, BFSI, Beauty and Wellness, Capital Goods, Construction, Electronics Food Processing, Gem and Jewellery, Healthcare, Tourism and Hospitality, IT & ITeS, Logistics, Media and Entertainment, Plumbing, Printing, Retail, Telecom etc.

The study area mainly has seven skill courses in different skill development centers.

Table 1

Skill Course						
Global Business Foundation Skill course	Certification in Accounting Technician	Emergency Medical Technician Basic	Front office Associate	Craft Backer	Assistant Plumber	Other
16	20	5	9	12	5	3



Figure 1

Reasons to Enroll into ASAP

The respondents were asked about their reasons to enroll in ASAP. The table below highlights their reasons to take up the course. To secure a decent job immediately after completion of their education, to improve communication skills, to

improve the job prospects and to support interest in higher education have emerged as major reasons for the respondents for taking up the ASAP course.

Table 2

Reasons	
To secure a decent job immediately after my education	5
To improve my communication skills	22
To improve my chance to get a job	20
My teacher recommended the ASAP course to be good and appropriate	6
My friends were applying for the ASAP course along with me	7
To support my interest in higher education	10

Given that ASAP provides training to higher secondary students and first year college graduates, the question why respondents chose this programme was further sliced up by institution (Higher secondary and College students). However, the findings suggest that the aforementioned reasons were also the most prominent reasons among college and higher secondary students to enroll in this programme.

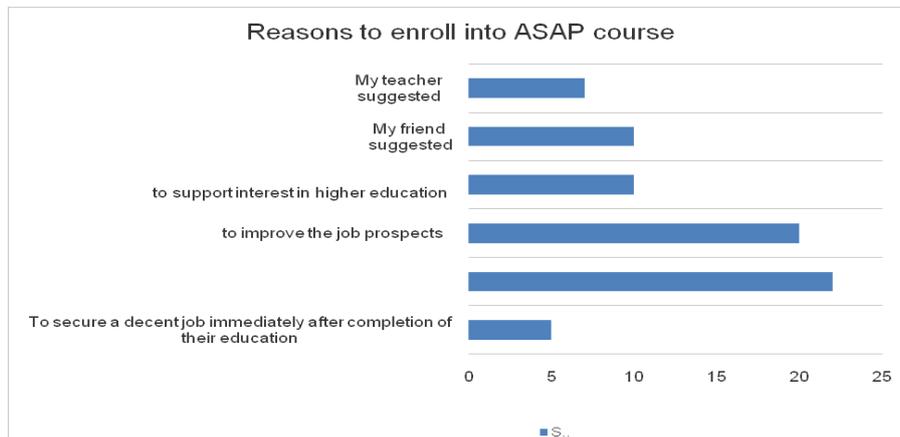


Figure 2

Current Status

ASAP graduates were asked to indicate whether they were currently wage/ salaried employee, self-employed, both wage employee and self-employed, partially employed (part time job), enrolled in further academic studies, enrolled in further academic study along with part time employment or neither working nor enrolled in any academic course. A snapshot of the current status of ASAP graduates are provided below.

Table 3

Current Status of ASAP Graduate at the Time of Survey	
Employed	7
Students enrolled in further academic studies	49
Neither employed nor enrolled in academic studies	14

The students who reported that they were neither employed nor enrolled in academic studies at the time of survey were further inquired about their status. It was found that most of the students across batches were awaiting for results of exams they had appeared or applying for further education.

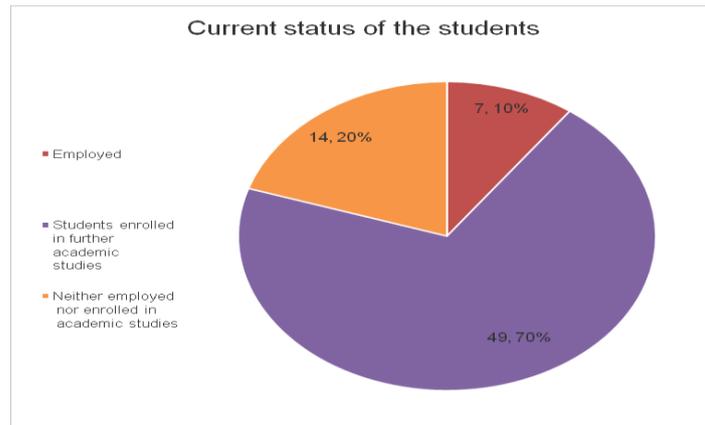


Figure 3

Employment Status

As described in figure, a total of 7 (10%) of ASAP trained graduates were employed at the time of survey, they were placed in different fields like Skill development executives, Front officers, and Air conditions Technicians, etc.

Table 4

Occupation			
Front Office Associates	Skill Development Executives	Air Conditioning Technician	Other Private Companies
2	3	1	1



Figure 4

How Soft Skill Helps in Interview

The survey inquired whether ASAP imparted soft skill to the students, 100% of the sample responded Yes and further asked how this soft skill helps them in an interview.



Figure 5

Communication Skill

Communication skills refer to the ability to actively listen, to communicate in oral, written, and nonverbal. The study enquired whether the communication level of the students has improved after ASAP course and all the respondents answered their communication skill has improved and they rated it themselves as above 90%, 61%-90%, 31%-90%, below 30%.

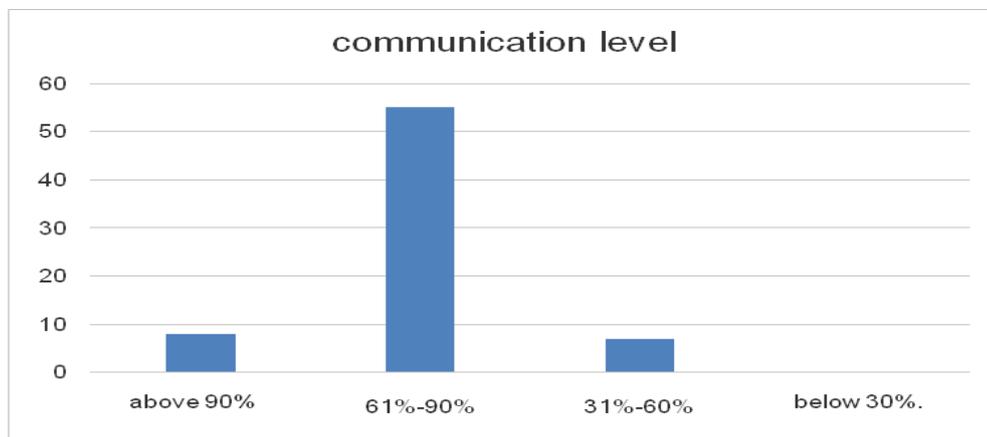


Figure 6

To analyze the communication level study enquired about the language they use to communicate with friends and teachers, most of them use mother tongue and at the same time they are comfortable with English language.

Table 5

Language Used to Communicate			
Language Used to Communicate With Friends		Language Used to Communicate With Teachers	
English	Malayalam	English	Malayalam
2	68	6	64

Employability Attributes

The study also observed that how well do the ASAP reflect in the intended eight domains of employability attributes of students undergoing ASAP course.

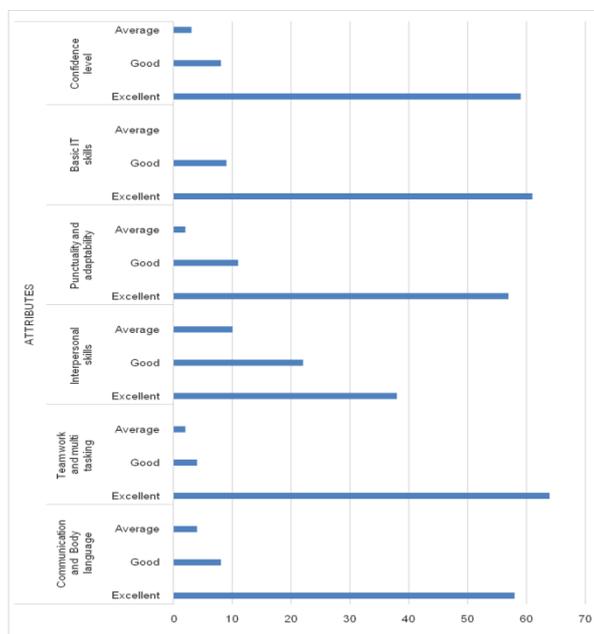


Figure 7

Satisfaction Level

The respondents have exhibited a high level of satisfaction for both foundation and skill course. On analyzing the satisfaction levels of the students across different batches, it can be observed that the overall satisfaction level (those who are “satisfied” and those who are “very satisfied”) across batches has remained somewhat constant. The proportion of students who were “satisfied” shows an increasing trend and the level of “dissatisfaction” has remained negligible further substantiating that across batches majority students (around 98%) are either satisfied or very satisfied with the skill courses offered by ASAP. The satisfaction level for foundation course shows a similar trend, as evidenced in the chart below.

Table 7

2015 Batch			2016 BATCH			2017BATCH		
Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dis satisfied	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dis satisfied	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dis satisfied
66%	33%	1%	52%	45%	3%	76%	22%	2%

CONCLUSIONS

ASAP is designed to acquire skills along with students’ studies that ensure employability in the sector in which they are trained and to become useful employable human resources at the end of their higher secondary and graduate study streams. ASAP also aims to create employment opportunities for the youth besides enhancing skill sets through industry linkages. National skill development mission has estimated that there is an increased demand for skilled man power to sustain the

industrial growth and thereby the economic growth of the nation. ASAP helps to create such a trained manpower, it is essential for the skill formation that will enhance their capacity to undertake gainful self-employment as well as access to better salaried employment in industries through identified skill sectors.

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