

Vocational Education And Training System : A Future Perspective

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Introduction

India is the second most populous country in the world, second only to China. Its population is around 1.30 billion. The proportion of population living in rural areas has been steadily declining, but it is still about 60%. Demographically, India has an advantage as it has large youth population. About 242 million are in the age group 10-24 years. This is the target group for which the system is proposed.

The economic development of the country in general and the process of industrialization have intensified the pace of change in practically all sectors of the economy impacting on manpower needs to fill the wide variety of positions in different sectors. The need for introducing new technologies to keep pace with the rest of the world and to remain competitive in the world market is a must for Indian economy.

For meeting these challenges, Government of India has developed a National Skill Development Policy [2009]. The premise is that skills and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development; and hence a major effort in this direction was needed. A comprehensive system for this purpose was developed and implemented by establishing National Skills Development Council, National Skill Development Corporation, National Council for National Skills and Developing a National Skill Qualification Frame Work [NSQF]. Participation from industries, business groups and from agencies concerned with other economic sectors was the major step in these efforts. This was followed by forming various Sector Skill Councils, each looking after the interest of its area e.g. Automotive Sector Skill Council, Agriculture Sector Skill Council etc. These Sector Skill Council have identified job roles at various levels in their sector and developed Qualification Pack [QP] and National Occupational Standards [NOS] for each Job-Role. An independent Ministry for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship was established to coordinate all these activities and the institutional arrangement required.

The Concern

The above steps taken by the Government of India are laudable and are definitely going to increase the pace of economic development in the country by providing competent skilled manpower for the industry and other sectors of economy.

However, these initiatives have come a bit late – much water has flown through Ganges between the recommendation made for developing skilled manpower and the initiative “Skills India”. The earlier efforts for providing vocational education to large number of children and youth coming out of schools, [as per recommendation of Kothari Commission 1964-66] were half-hearted attempts. In spite of the fact that there has been considerable development in Technical and Professional education within the country, the present scenario as far as workforce is concerned, as also the requirement for providing skills [through Vocational Education and Training] to school leavers remain practically same, as was about two decades back [may be because of the population growth over the years].

The workforce in India consist of about 47 crores, of which about 39 crores work in unorganized sector [2016-17]; the reality is that even in future a large proportion of workforce will continue to work in the unorganized sector. Less than 5% of the present workforce in the age group of 19-24 received any formal vocational education and training. Every year quiet a large number of children and youth dropping out of schools at different stages join this workforce without having acquired any employable skills. With the provision for free and compulsory education [RTE] upto the age 14, [Class-VIII] enrolment of children in schools has gone up. However, significant proportion of these enrolled children begin to dropout after grade-V and especially after grade-VIII. The number of such children are more in rural areas as compared to urban area.

Government of India under centrally sponsored scheme had provided financial assistance to State Governments for implementing Vocational Education and Training Programme in schools at + 2 level, as well as to introduce pre-vocational courses at class-IX and X, with the consideration that work education, pre-vocational education and vocational education at + 2 level could form a continuum, giving students a clarity to choose vocational courses as per their interest and need. But, the efforts did not yield the desired results, One reason that was observed was that the school administration was not committed and did not took it seriously, the principals of the schools, who were from academic stream, were not aware of the needs of running vocational courses, in terms of space, infrastructure linkage with local industries and networking with other technical and professional institution with in the area.

In view of these problems, there is need for re-imagining Vocational Education and Training System – to provide meaningful and sustainable vocational education and training as alternative pathway to all those youth who do not intend to continue in academic stream; for providing opportunities for gainful employment and entrepreneurship development; thereby to meet the challenges of skill human resources required for various sectors of economy at local, district, state and national levels.

Vet As Alternative Pathway

The proposed VET System will target the youth in the age group 14+ to 25 years, to enhance their employability. These may fall in one of the following broad categories :

- Students after graduating from class-VIII in the schools, who wish to opt for an alternative system of education which shall be relevant to their aptitude, attitude, interest and needs.
- Young men and women who have dropped out of the school system at various levels.
- Young men and women who do not enroll in higher education courses after class-XII.
- Others who World like to comeback for institution based training to upgrade their skills.

Suggested Strategies

- Establishing vocational education and training institution at the Block, District and State levels; and net working with other resource institution.
- Vocational courses, modular as well as long duration [one to three years] to be offered in these institution in a flexible mode.
- Vocational courses offered at block level will offer competence based courses for developing skilled manpower needs of the area covered within the block. Similarly, special manpower needs of a district will be considered by offering vocational courses at District Level Vocational Education and Training Institutes. These institution may also offer other relevant vocational courses at higher level to provide opportunities for up-gradation of skills for those students who aspire for up-gradation of skills.
- The same approach will be adopted for State Level vocational education and training institutions.
- Courses in entrepreneurship development that enhances self-employment capabilities should necessarily be offered. This is particularly required as enough jobs may not be available to absorb the graduates from these vocational institutions.
- The vocational education and training institutes at district and State Level will also act as resource centers for development of curriculum, training of instructors and for forging links with industry, and service sector and community at large.
- Skills in advanced and new technologies will be offered at District as State level vocational institution.
- For managing a flexible and comprehension system an appropriate management structure at State, District and Block levels need to be established.
- Since, various sector skill councils have developed QP and NOS for specific job roles, these can be used if they match with the job-roles identified at different levels in these vocational institutions.

Institutional Mechanism Suggested

- Vocational Education and Training Institutions at three levels are required. This is necessary because :
- Each Block within a district may have different resources and may need different skilled manpower thus, Block level vocational institutions are proposed.
- At District Level, there may be skilled manpower requirement for some specialized industry, or other sectors of economy. In addition, there will always be need for up-gradation of skills of youth trained at block levels, for handling new technology or, for acquiring additional skills at higher level – a provision for vertical mobility.

Such institutions may be called District Vocational Institutions.

- In the same way, Advanced Vocational Education and Training Institutions at State level need to be established – covering skills at higher levels [Level-V, VII], creating opportunities for career mobility. Providing industries and business organization manpower for jobs at higher levels.
 - VETTs – Block Level
 - District Vocational Institutions – District Level
 - Advanced Vocational Education and Training Institutions - State Level

This comprehensive vocational education and training system as an alternative pathway from academic education, if implemented will ensure.

- Trained and skilled manpower to serve manufacturing and service sectors of a State's economy [from Block to Districts].
- Enhance employment opportunities for youth, by providing them skills matching with jobs available at different levels.
- There is a provision for up-gradation of skills, as also for vertical mobility and career advancement. This will meet the aspiration of youth and add to their confidence, self respect and dignity.
- Reduce migration from rural areas, as youth will be able to get employment in their own areas.

Remarks :

Vocational Education and Training System suggested should be looked as Human Resource Development which plays a crucial role in the development of a nation. Development of people's competences will help them to apply these competencies to improve their own lives and those of others with skills acquired opportunities for employments [job or self employed] will enhance, and hence increase in their earning capacity. This will give self-respect and dignity to an individual. At the same time availability of a properly trained manpower at all levels for villages to cities, will ensure quality services and products to people at large.