



Vocational Education and Training: Quality & Employability

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ABSTRACT

Vocational education system relates to programmes of study with job readiness. Though vocational education is non-formal in nature and focuses primarily on industry specific trade, occupation or vocational study enabling grass-root level people to acquire job specific skills based on hands-on-practice and/or training for their gainful employment. The Indian education system recognizes the role of vocational education, keeping in view the demand of highly skilled labour force both in the government as well as private/business sectors. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) set up by the Government of India plays an important role in co-ordination with its allied bodies like- National Skill Development Agency (NSDA), National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), Sector Skill Councils (SSC) and training partners for fulfilling the industrial requirements of trained and skilled manpower, besides skill up-gradation, and building of new skills not only for existing jobs but also aiming at jobs that are to be created in near future. Notwithstanding that there are many areas in which India is facing challenges to overcome problems in implementation of vocational education in regard to quality and employability, the paper intends to emphasize on some aspects of quality, employability and Government's role in vocational education programme implementation.

Keywords: Vocational education, quality, employability, skill development and implementation

About Vocational Education

Technical and vocational education is used as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences, and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life. Whereas for formal learning which includes

classes, training sessions, coaching, seminars and tutorials practice and learning on the job - gaining, applying and refining skills in the workplace, *etc.* the informal learning has well planned and pre-conceived community-based workshops, youth groups, playgroups.

However, getting trained for a particular vocation is always an added advantage for any job-seeker. Also, with vocational qualification one would have a better chance to be able to start working earlier, utilizing his/her learning skills in the same area with an opportunity to earn money. Whereas employability¹ of graduates coming out of our educational system is becoming a matter of great concern (owing to the present rate of graduate employability falling to just about 20%) and the world Economic Forum quite recently has stated that only 25% of Indian professionals are considered employable by organized sector, there has been ever-growing realization now in recent years on how to provide higher quality vocational and technical education to prepare today's youth for jobs.

Vocational education²⁻³ is therefore the need of the hour in India to supplement formal education and improve the employability of young India. India has the second highest population of the working age (15-59 years) individuals in the world. The skills set of this population group plays a critical role in the growth of the country. Vocational education can be arranged in multi-dimensional areas like hospitality & tourism, retail, health care, information technology, etc.

Govt. of India Policy on Vocational Training

The primary initiative being taken as a policy is to meet the challenge of skilling at scale with speed, standard (quality) and sustainability. It aims to provide an umbrella framework to all skilling activities being carried out within the country, to align them to common standards and link skilling with demand centre. Besides, laying down the objectives and expected outcomes, the policy identifies the overall institutional framework which will act as a vehicle to reach the expected outcomes. Skills development is the shared responsibility of the key stakeholders viz. Government, the entire spectrum of corporate sector, community based organizations, those outstanding, highly qualified and dedicated individuals who have been working in the skilling and entrepreneurship space for many years, industry and trade organisations and other stakeholders.

Thus, the policy links skills development to improved employability and productivity in paving the way forward for inclusive growth in the country. The skill strategy is complemented by specific efforts to promote entrepreneurship in order to create ample job opportunities for the skilled workforce.

The Indian education system recognizes the role of vocational and technical education. Vocational and technical education plays an important role in development of human resource of the country by creating skilled manpower, enhancing industrial productivity and improving the quality of life.

Vocational and technical education system in India³⁻⁶ can be broadly classified into three categories – central government funded institutions, state government funded institutions and self-financed institutions.

The agencies involved are:

1. Central Government

- ◆ National Skills Development Corporation
- ◆ Ministry of Human Resource Development

- ◆ Ministry of Labour and employment
- ◆ Ministry of Skill development and Entrepreneurship

2. State Government

- ◆ Directorate of Technical Education

3. Private sector & NGOs

National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT)

The National Council for Vocational Training as an advisory body was set up by the Government of India in 1956 (the then NCTVT). The main objective of NCVT was to establish and award National Trade Certificates in engineering, non-engineering, textile, leather and such other trades which were brought within its scope by the Government of India. The Council is also entrusted with the responsibilities of prescribing standards and curricula, methods of training and conducting tests in various trade courses. A new dimension in the line of vocational education has been given by NCVT.

National Skill Development Corporation

The National Skill Development Corporation was set up as part of a national skill development mission to cater to the growing need of skilled manpower across different sectors. The union finance minister announced the formation of the National Skill Development Corporation in the budget speech (2008-09) as a not for profit company with an equity base of ₹ 10 crore, of which the government of India holds 49% share and the balance 51% share by the private sector. The corporation is entrusted with responsibilities like upgrade skills to international standards through significant industry interface, development of frameworks for curriculum and quality assurance.

The important component of the scheme is institutionalizing skill component of vocational education using the modalities of Skill Knowledge Providers (SKPs) identified by the AICTE. The SKPs will be an integral component of the institutions which can be entrusted with this responsibility including engineering institutions, Polytechnics and UGC approved and University affiliated colleges.

The candidate shall complete the skill modules as required at various certification levels, one level at a time, shall acquire the necessary credits from the approved SKP, and submit the same to the Institute where he/she is registered for a Degree/Advanced Diploma/Diploma.

The SKP shall assess/evaluate the skills acquired by the student and award Skill Certificates along with vocational skill credits.

Problems for implementation of Vocational and Technical Education

The study of the prevalent vocational and technical education system in India has led to the identification of the following problems:

- ◆ Private and Industry participation is lacking. There is no evidence of incentive, are no such award or recognition for private sector industries to enter into the field of vocational education.
- ◆ Lack of opportunities for in-service employees for further training and skill up-gradation.

- ◆ Inadequate numbers of trained, experienced and qualified instructors / trainers to train students on vocational skills.
- ◆ Lack of awareness and knowledge within the youths in regard to vocational education training programmes.
- ◆ Vocationalization at all levels / sectors has not been successful. Poor quality of training is not in line with industrial standard.
- ◆ Vocational skills should be associated with basic academic knowledge. The present system does not emphasize general academic knowledge, hence the workers are facing problems in promotion and vertical mobility.
- ◆ Vocational education is not so familiar at secondary level leading to a high drop-out rate.
- ◆ Most of the vocational training institutes are ill-equipped with machineries and tools, outdated centralized syllabus that do not have much industrial interface.
- ◆ Absence of proper monitoring on account of quality and standards.
- ◆ In most of the vocational training institution, English is the medium of instruction. Students who are comfortable with other medium, find it very difficult to receive vocational education in English.
- ◆ Lack of proper co-ordination between coordinating bodies.

Apart from that there is a lot of variation among various programmes in terms of duration, eligibility, curriculum, award of Certification level, etc which has resulted in problems related to recognition of skill-qualification and equivalency.

CONCLUSION

Vocationalization should not be attempted in an unsystematic or haphazard manner. Rather the need of the hour is to understand the trainee's apprehensions and challenges regarding vocational education / qualification. There lies a huge scope for any vocational training institute to address to many of these challenges and make vocational educational programmes quite attractive and useful. This will, in turn, motivate the organizations willing to contribute to the vocational education market, and also, the students eagerly waiting to take up vocational courses to increase their employability.

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