

CHAPTER 4

VOCATIONAL AND SKILLS EDUCATION

STATUS IN INDIA

4.1 Introduction

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is an important element of the nation's education initiative. In order for Vocational Education to play its part effectively in the changing national context and for India to enjoy the fruits of the demographic dividend, there is an urgent need to redefine the critical elements of imparting vocational education and training to make them flexible, contemporary, relevant, inclusive and creative. The Government is well aware of the important role of Vocational education and has already taken a number of important initiatives in this area.

As education has been considered the most effective tool of developmental strategies our government is trying to educate almost all the people mainly living in rural areas through the massive programme of Adult Education. The idea behind this is that through education unskilled workers will be skilled, peasants will be trained in new cropping, they will be able to adopt new methods of farming and educated persons after achieving new methods and skills will evolve strategies for self employment. Although the idea of rural development through education has been existing in the country since the beginning of the century, yet no satisfactory response could ever be achieved. Mahatma Gandhi raised the slogan of literacy during 30's he motivated our country men to propagate and extend the slogan of mass literacy into interior parts. He bestowed the idea of Basic education with a view to enable our rural youth for self employment. Since the achievement of Independence, literacy and education have been gaining importance as a means of country's development strategies were formed by the Government and voluntary agencies, but no concrete and satisfactory outcome could be seen.

Table 4.1: Literacy Rate in India (1951 to 2001)

Census year	% Literate (Total)	Male	Female	Male-Female Gap in literacy Rate
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.30	40.40	15.35	25.05
1971	34.45	45.96	21.98	23.98
1981	43.57	56.38	39.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	65.38	75.85	54.16	21.69

The progress of literacy rates in India since 1951 is listed in the above table while the rates for the years 1951, 1961 and 1971 census related to the population in the five years plus Category, those for 1981, 1991 and 2001 relate to the population which is seven years and above. The literacy rates for the country as a whole increased from 18.33 percent in 1951 to 65.38 percent in 2001, with literacy rate for male at 75.85% and that for female at 54.16 percent. The literacy rate recorded an increase of 13.17 percentage points from 1991 to 2001, the highest increase in any one decade. An encouraging feature is that the growth rate of literacy has been higher in case of females at 14.87 percent then for male 11.72 percent during this decade. The gap in male-female literacy rates has decreased from 24.84 percentage points in 1991 to 21.70 percentage points in 2001. The rate of growth of literacy in the decade ending 2001 has been higher in the rural areas, at 14.7 percent as compared to the 7.2 percent increase in urban areas despite these improvements; literacy in urban areas was 80.3 percent and that in rural areas 59.4 percent.

The industrial and labour market trends clearly indicate the necessity of strengthening of vocational education in India. The introduction of vocational education at secondary level through bivalent schools and SSC (vocational) will enable us to broaden the vocational education base at secondary level of

education. A clear pathway for vocational students to enter higher education streams is the way to move forward.

Government role and initiatives for skill development in India

Only in recent years has the government realized the enormity of the challenge and endeavored to overcome the same through various initiatives. Under the Prime Minister's National Skill Development Mission, the government has launched an initiative to train 500 million people by the year 2022. Further, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was created in order to streamline the identification and mapping of skills requirements, facilitate private participation through grants, gap funding, etc.

1) NSDA: The NSDA comprises the PM's National Council on Skill Development (NCSD), the National Skill Development Coordination Board (NSDCB) and the NSDC. It oversees and directs the efforts taken vis-à-vis skill development by both the government and the private sector, in a bid to fulfill the skilling target set under the 12th Five Year Plan.

2) Sector Skill Councils (SSC): SSCs are initiatives born out of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). In addition to facilitating capacity building, the SSCs also define the structure, levels, and benchmarks of training for each industry. This will help achieve consistency in the imparted training, aside from ensuring an ease of employment, and a portability of skills.

3) National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF): The NVEQF is a recently-launched initiative which is to be implemented in polytechnics, engineering colleges, and other institutions, across the country. A seven level certification program, starting from 9th standard/grade, will be initiated in the various vocational training disciplines, culminating in a degree at the end of the seventh year. Since this framework is sector-specific, special focus is given to high-employment generating sectors like IT, Media and Entertainment, Automobile, Construction, Retail, Tourism, etc. The program is expected to cater to at least five million students. This model is followed by most countries which have a robust vocational training infrastructure and where vocational training skills are accepted by the masses.

4) Aligning Secondary and Vocational Education: This initiative, in conjunction with the NVEQF, provides greater mobility to students through providing multiple points of entry and exit, and flexibility in choosing modules (of vocational education), according to the students' aptitude. For the pilot phase in 2011, Haryana was selected with the target of benefitting 4,000 students across 40 schools in the state. Since its introduction, this scheme has reached about 1 million students in 9,619 schools.

5) PPP Model: In 2007-08, the Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET) proposed the upgrading of 1,396 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) through PPPs. However, the impact of the scheme is yet to be ascertained.

6) The Modular Employable Scheme (MES): It is being implemented by the Ministry of Labor and Employment as part of their Skill Development Initiative (SDI). The key objective of MES is to recognize and certify the prior learning of existing workers. MES offers short-term modular courses to school dropouts and existing wage earners and facilitates certification for skills and learning gained informally. The key features of MES include the identification of a "minimum skill set" that can ensure gainful employment, the utilization of existing infrastructure, the creation of flexible delivery mechanisms, and the certification of skills acquired informally. MES targets training 1 million people over the next five years, using around 200 modules to meet industry demand.

7) National Service Scheme (NSS): The NSS has been proposed as an agent of change which engages students in skill development projects alongside other stakeholders in the society like academia, industry, and social organizations like NGOs and foundations. The pilot is expected to cover 30,000 students over a three-year period, eventually impacting 3.2 million students across universities, colleges, and secondary schools in the country.

8) National Skill Awards (NSAs): The NSDA is proposing the launch of NSAs, or Rashtriya Kaushal Puraskar, to incentivize youth and make vocational training aspiration. These awards will also recognize skill

development initiatives by such institutions as Central Ministries, State Skill Development Missions, Training Institutions, Public and Private Enterprises, and lending institutions.

Key Highlights of the Year 2012-13: Both the government as well as apex bodies within the vocational system have taken several positive steps in the right direction, and achieved such milestones as:

- The NSDC approved 42 project proposals worth INR 617.82 Crore
- The cumulative NSDC funding stands at INR 1859.45 Crore for 100 projects
- 25 SSCs were set up
- An incentive of INR 10,000 will be given to individuals, who have completed their training successfully, corresponding to an annual budget allocation of INR 1,000 Crore
- Advocacy was the major agenda in terms of making vocational training an aspiration, and much has happened in this space. A yearlong advocacy campaign on skills will be run by the advertising agency O&M
- Vocational training has been brought into the negative list of service tax to make it more affordable
- INR 500 Crore has been allotted in the budget for fiscal 2014 towards skill development
- A Special Industry initiative, Udaan, was started in Jammu and Kashmir, to train 40,000 employees within 5 years.

As of September 2013, 1,850 trainees have joined the training program

- District-level skill-gap studies were commissioned in 13 states
- Third-party monitoring was introduced to ensure a reliable inflow of information from private partners

- World Skills Competition was brought into the limelight to reward people excelling in the field thereby making vocational training aspiration
- The NSDC engaged with the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank to make them participate in skilling India

The target of skilling 7.3 million people in fiscal 2013-14 was accepted by various Central Government ministries, and also by the NSDC. However, by the end of June 2013, only 10% of the target was achieved.

PM's Initiative

After 'Digital India' and 'Make in India', the NaMo Government is to launch yet another programme. This one is a revised version of programmes launched earlier under the skill development policy. This new programme, called 'Skill India', is supposed to be a multi-skill programme. It will be launched in March 2015. Like all other programmes, 'Skill India' too is a dream project of Mr. Narendra Modi and the work to launch this programme has already been initiated.

Objectives of 'Skill India'

The main goal is to create opportunities, space and scope for the development of the talents of the Indian youth and to develop more of those sectors which have already been put under skill development for the last so many years and also to identify new sectors for skill development. The new programme aims at providing training and skill development to 500 million youth of our country by 2020, covering each and every village. Various schemes are also proposed to achieve this objective.

Features of 'Skill India'

- The emphasis is to skill the youths in such a way so that they get employment and also improve entrepreneurship.
- Provides training, support and guidance for all occupations that were of traditional type like carpenters, cobblers, welders, blacksmiths, masons, nurses, tailors, weavers etc.

- More emphasis will be given on new areas like real estate, construction, transportation, textile, gem industry, jewellery designing, banking, tourism and various other sectors, where skill development is inadequate or nil.
- The training programmes would be on the lines of international level so that the youths of our country can not only meet the domestic demands but also of other countries like the US, Japan, China, Germany, Russia and those in the West Asia.
- Another remarkable feature of the ‘Skill India’ programme would be to create a hallmark called ‘Rural India Skill’, so as to standardize and certify the training process.
- Tailor-made, need-based programmes would be initiated for specific age groups which can be like language and communication skills, life and positive thinking skills, personality development skills, management skills, behavioral skills, including job and employability skills.
- The course methodology of ‘Skill India’ would be innovative, which would include games, group discussions, brainstorming sessions, practical experiences, case studies etc.

How is it different from the previous skill development policies?

It's not that we do not have any skill development programme already. The Government of India has always considered skill development as a national priority. It is just that since the ministry is new, the approach taken for skill development is also new. Earlier, the emphasis was on traditional jobs. But this time, all kinds of jobs will be given equal emphasis. Earlier, the responsibility was divided among various ministries, but this time, these are being clubbed together. The ministry of skill development and entrepreneurship will be the principal ministry which is going to coordinate with other ministries and organizations.

According to NaMo, Skill India won't be just a programme but a movement. Here, youth who are jobless, college and school dropouts, along with the

educated ones, from rural and urban areas, all will be given value addition. The new ministry will be the certifying agency. Certificates will be issued to those who complete a particular skill or programme and this certificate has to be recognized by all public and private agencies and entities, including overseas organizations. Skill India is a programme for the entire nation.

Advantages of Skill India

The idea is to raise confidence, improve productivity and give direction through proper skill development. Skill development will enable the youths to get blue-collar jobs. Development of skills, at a young age, right at the school level, is very essential to channelize them for proper job opportunities. There should be a balanced growth in all the sectors and all jobs should be given equal importance. Every job aspirant would be given training in soft skills to lead a proper and decent life. Skill development would reach the rural and remote areas also. Corporate educational institutions, non-government organizations, Government, academic institutions, and society would help in the development of skills of the youths so that better results are achieved in the shortest time possible.

To sum up

What shape 'Skill India' will take and what it will do only time can tell. But no doubt it seems to be a good initiative – providing skills to people, especially because **India** is one of the few countries all across the world whose working age population will be very high, few years down the line, going by its ever-increasing growth of population, as per the World Bank.

It is also high time now measures are taken to improve the physical and mental development of the youths of the country so that none of them remains unemployed and the country's unemployment problem also gets reduced. It is time to open up avenues by which the youth accepts responsibility and no one remains idle because an idle youth is a burden to the economy. The economy should concentrate on job creation and social security schemes. With this new approach towards skill development, India can definitely move forward towards its targeted results.

Participation of Private Player

Some private organizations have been in the space for a long time. Among these, the more noteworthy are Nettur Technical Training Foundation which has 19 training centers, and trains over 10,000 students annually and Gedee Technical Training Institute which offers Certificate and Diploma Courses in Coimbatore. Of late, thanks to realizing the enormity of the opportunity, many new initiatives have been floated, including AISECT skills Ltd, IL&FS Skill Development Corporation, IIJT, GRAS Academy, NIIT-IFBI, Vidyanta Skill Institute, ICICI Manipal Academy, Apollo Med Skills Ltd., Centum Workskills, Hero Mindmine, CII-Edexcel, NIIT Yuva Jyoti, Future Sharp, etc. Certain international institutions are also looking to foray into India primarily through partnerships or JVs.

While the opportunity is undeniably attractive, the biggest challenge is to put together a financially viable and sustainable venture that can align business and social needs. Unlike a consumer products business, here, the raw material, production pipeline, and consumer are all scattered. Further, since each of them is an independent, thinking human, it is not easy to find them on common ground, especially when the output is as diverse as human skills. The changes happening at the structural level, towards making business easier, have their own lifecycle, but the time has arrived to take advantage of this opportunity and get a head start. Although the dynamics in the current scenario are very different and will evolve rapidly, the expectation is that things will gradually get easier.

Financial Concerns

Capital Expenditure

As any educational setup requires huge investment, this is the biggest deterrent for most entrepreneurs with great ideas. The solution can be to either lease spare capacity from existing educational institutions, or franchise the business, thereby reducing not only the investment but also the operational micromanagement required in running one's own setup. This also facilitates rapid up-scaling, which is the key to participating in this business. The decision

also depends on whether the business is to be established closer to industrial hubs where, while economies of scale can be realized, recruiting learners can be a challenge. The alternative to this is going to the learner, through a spread-out model, in which case it would be easier to reach the masses but would be an uphill task to place them in suitable industry positions and get them to migrate.

Operating Expenditure

Education is known to be a negative working capital business, primarily because the student pays before the education provider incurs expenditure on training him. In this case though, a fair amount of preoperative work is required before the training cycle sets in. Also, given the low price points for such training, the default on training fee is unaffordable. Even if the training is funded or subsidized by the government in certain cases, the institute will need a robust process to maintain the funds flow.

Operational Concerns

Recruitment

Recruiting a student is among the biggest initial challenges. The first task would be to break through the mindset that work which requires manual skills is ordinary. Next, the student will need counseling on the utility of the training in terms of providing a prosperous and productive future. Even in the semi-urban regions of the country, we can see people waiting for years in the hope of getting a desk job. In such circumstances, it is essential for businesses to find a model which inspires credibility and trust in what the institute is delivering.

Connections with the Industry

In practice-oriented vocational training, the industry connect is the strongest pillar. It can help in not just saving capital expenditure in practical labs, via working out an apprenticeship/trainee arrangement with local industry participants, but can also be a good source of part-time trainers. However, this culture is not as prevalent in India, due to which entrepreneurs targeting this area will have to be prepared to establish such connections themselves.

Trainers

Trainers being central to a training business, sourcing a good trainer, deploying him/her at the required location, and creating an environment conducive to training is the third challenge. In traditional academics, it may be difficult to think of a trainer being paid more than his/her counterpart in the industry but, in this case, this may well be a reality. At the same time, the advantage in this stream of education is that it does not take years to create a trainer and part-time trainers, sourced from the industry, can also be deployed.

Capacity Utilization

Education is similar to manufacturing in the sense that unutilized capacity is a sunk cost. There are many factors which come into play while scheduling training sessions, e.g. the availability of trainers (especially part-timers), the employment of students while undergoing training, the parallel operation of multiple streams and batches, the optimum utilization of theory, practical infrastructure and jobs. With scarce resources, ensuring the highest churn is the key to operational efficiency.

Content

The content for vocational training is highly contextual in the sense that it varies in every country, industry, and trade. Therefore, unlike other streams of education, this content cannot be easily replicated from other sources. Even if the content is taken from an existing source, a significant amount of effort and money will have to be invested in making it relevant for the desired skills in an alternate scenario.

Assessment

In order to recruit trainees from institutes, every industry needs to know the relevance, and level, of the skills imparted. Institutes need to devise an independent, impartial skills assessment mechanism which accurately reflects learners' skill levels. The absence of a fail-proof mechanism can prove unsuccessful in terms of inspiring the recruiting industry, making the business unsustainable in the long run.

Placements

Placements are the ultimate benchmarks of an institute's success. It is debatable whether this should also be the case with institutes of higher education, wherein the focus needs to be on academic excellence and rigor. But in the case of vocational training, where the sole objective is to provide employability and a productive future, the relevance of placements cannot be emphasized enough. A robust and relevant placement mechanism, which succeeds in satisfying the recruiting industry as well as the student, will be the ultimate test of the business.

The many innovations occurring foster the building of successful vocational training business models. Increasingly, training companies are exploring ways of sourcing, training, and placing students in the industry, and thereby subsidize training costs through recruitment commissions. Also, gram panchayats and other locally influential organizations and NGOs are being tapped into by organizations to promote the acceptability of their training.

There are a few givens in the entire story, i.e. the scale of the opportunity is unparalleled, and there is space for several players operating simultaneously. The ecosystem will evolve over a period of time; efforts have begun in that direction already. Many different players are working on various models and it will be some time before a model proves itself.

Conclusion- The sphere of vocation education has developed its own ecosystem of publicly-privately funded training programmes for the needful candidates. The whole cycle of centre setup-mobilization-training-certification-placement has brought a productive change in the roll-out figures and especially in the quality of skilled individuals. The Private players have proven themselves working abreast the government agencies and have successfully delivering constant success. In the chapter to come, an overview of Indian Vocation Education has been explained.