

JUGGLING VET PROGRAMME: FORWARD APPROACH IN SKILL

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***Abstract :** Knowledge and skills are the forces that drive a country's economic growth and pave the way for social development. The economy tends to become more fruitful, inventive and competitive only through the presence of a skilled labour force. The level of employment and the growth in employment opportunities are the vital markers in the course of development in any economy. With globalization and technological advancement, there are ample opportunities for economic growth and new jobs. Thus, there exists great demand for a skilled workforce, when Indian economy is expanding at a tremendous rate. To garner such a workforce, it is necessary to strengthen our Vocational Education and Training (VET) system. This paper, apart from evaluating the existing system of vocational training, is an attempt to throw light on the need to upgrade the prevailing model to cater to the demand of the employability market. It also tries to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the VET programmes and suggests ways to seal the gaps in the area of skill development.*

***Key Words:** Vocational Education and Training, Government programmes, Skill acquisition, Industry participation, Collaboration.*

Globalization and technological advancement has created a great demand for a skilled work-force which is receptive to emerging economic environment and is well-equipped with updated knowledge. Knowledge and skills are the forces that drive a country's economic growth and pave the way for social development. With the unprecedented growth of the Indian economy over a period of time, it becomes imperative that the nation concentrates on improving and developing skills which are appropriate to the emerging market needs. Countries adept at better levels of skills adjust more effectively to the challenges and opportunities of globalization. The greatest challenge that the Indian education system faces today is to provide skill-based education to the youth. In connection with this, Vocational Education and Training (VET) is an important aspect of the nation's education initiative. For Vocational Education to play its part successfully in the changing landscape of economic advancement and for India to reap rich dividends, there is a pressing need to restructure the course of Vocational Education and Training.

Over the past few decades, there has been a gradual decline in the labour force market for skilled workers who do not hold higher educational degrees. Industrial sector, in the current scenario, demands workers to possess at least a graduate degree in addition to vocational training. A diploma holder undergoing vocational training desires vertical mobility and hits a road block after a few years. Thus, while the employers complain that the worker does not stay longer, the employee complains that he does not see growth in the current job. The ultimate result is a decrease in demand for skilled workers with lower degrees. Skills in India are largely acquired through two main sources: formal training centres and the informal or hereditary mode of passing on skills from one generation to the next. Nowadays, vocational courses are becoming quite popular among youth because it is believed that taking these courses would provide more and better employment opportunities than those provided by conventional and formal academic courses.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) basically consists of practical courses which enables one to acquire skills and experience which are directly linked to a career. Vocational education is generally offered at school, or to drop-outs at post-schooling level and sometime on-the-job. Vocational training is directly

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related with specific skills that many employers look for. Thus, VET has often been acknowledged for its service to national development by way of increased employability and productivity of individuals and profitability of employers. According to a National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) report, two types of vocational training are available in India – formal and non-formal. According to the NSSO report, vocational training is received by only 10% of persons aged between 15 and 29 years. Out of this, only 2% receives formal training, while non-formal training constitutes the remaining 8%. In case of formal training received by that particular age group, only 3% is employed. Vocational training in India is being undertaken by the Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET), under the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), Government of India (GoI). The DGET is the apex organization of development and coordination at national level for all programmes relating to vocational training, including Women's Vocational Training to the employable youth in the country and to provide skill manpower to the industry besides providing employment services.

DGE&T offers a variety of training courses catering to the needs of different segments of the society. The courses offered are Craftsman Training Scheme (CTS), Apprenticeship Training Scheme (ATS), Craftsmen Instructor Training Scheme, Advance Vocational Training Scheme, Women Training Scheme, Research and Staff Training, Instructional Material Development Programme and Hi-tech Training Scheme. The courses are available for persons ranging from school-drop-outs to instructors of the training institutes, industrial workers, technicians, junior and middle level executives, supervisors, women, persons with disabilities, ex-servicemen, retrenched workers and so on. Vocational training is also imparted through Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Industrial Training Centres (ITCs).

Vocational education Training evolved during the last five decades has its own Strengths which are listed below:

- ✍ Regular and increasing contribution to the stock of skilled manpower.
- ✍ The graduates of the system have made significant contribution to the improvement of productivity in Industry.
- ✍ The system has a large base for easy introduction of new emerging skill training courses/ new schemes uniformly at national level.
- ✍ The uniform curriculum, procedures, regulations, trade testing and certification, national coverage and credibility of the system ensures mobility of labour.
- ✍ A good structure having combination of institutional and apprenticeship training.
- ✍ Infrastructure available for providing skill training at various levels.
- ✍ Special focus on women vocational training and training schemes for the handicapped.

Though the total annual training capacity of VET is around three million students, with a wide spectrum of programmes offered by different ministries in terms of scope, target groups, curriculum, duration, and testing and certification, there is a lack of coordination among them. In many cases, a number of courses are offered in an ad-hoc manner and are need-based; however, more industry participation and demand-driven training programmes are required. Moreover, there are certain sectors where skill requirement is high, but there is no institutional mechanism involved in promoting such skills, for example, areas such as construction sector, IT-enabled services, consumer and retail sector, financial sector, etc.

While there remains a requirement for skilled professionals in the industry, and efforts are made by the government to equip them effectively, the supply for the same is hampered by:

- ✍ High dropout rate at Secondary level: Vocational Education is presently offered at senior secondary level but the students at this level aspire for higher education
- ✍ At present, the vocational system doesn't put much emphasis on the academic skills, resulting in lower incidences of vertical mobility.
- ✍ There is a lack of participation by private players in the field of vocational education.
- ✍ Vocationalization of education is not in tune with industry needs. There is mismatch between skills requirement of the world of work and skills produced by VET.
- ✍ The system caters mainly to the needs of traditional manufacturing sector, which represents less than 10 % of the total workforce. The requirements of modern high-tech industries and services sectors as well as those of unorganized sector are not properly taken care of.
- ✍ There is a lack of opportunities for continuous skill upgradation.
- ✍ There is no clear provision of certifications and degrees for the unorganized/informal sector.
- ✍ Challenges faced by ITCs and ITIs are poor quality trainers and outdated infrastructure. Inadequate budget provision for raw material, consumables and maintenance in most of the ITIs.
- ✍ Inadequate involvement of stakeholders in the design and implementation of the training

programmes.

- ✍ The emphasis over the years had been on quantitative rather than qualitative aspects. Inadequate budget provision for raw material, consumables and maintenance in most of the ITIs.

Vocationalisation should not be attempted in an unsystematic or haphazard manner. The need of the hour is to understand the trainees' apprehensions and challenges regarding Vocational Education and Training. Thus, there is a huge opportunity for vocational training institutes that can address these challenges. This will favour the organizations willing to enter the vocational education market as well as the students wanting to take up vocational courses to increase their employability. So, it is essential to modify and restructure the system of imparting vocational education and training so that it becomes more flexible, inclusive, relevant and contemporary. Some of the suggestions that would improve VET are:

- ✍ Retaining the aspects of general education in VET.
- ✍ Specifying entry requirements/qualifications
- ✍ Introducing courses devoted to skills training at the primary and secondary level in all schools.
- ✍ By making VET part of various literacy and adult education schemes.
- ✍ Providing more autonomy to the institutes.
- ✍ Developing quality assurance indicators. Teachers' training is an important aspect for ensuring quality education in vocational stream. Vocational Educational Qualifications should be insisted (eg. BVE). Higher salaries must be offered to attract skilled teachers
- ✍ Introducing modules relevant to market trends.
- ✍ Introducing specialization within different courses.
- ✍ Constantly updating curricula.
- ✍ Reviewing the skills and courses offered.
- ✍ Conducting teaching in English as well as local languages.
- ✍ Industry participation at all levels especially in governance, curriculum design, placements and monitoring outcome.

The industrial and labour market trends clearly indicate the necessity of strengthening of vocational education in India. A clear trail for vocational students to enter higher education is the way to move forward. Taking into consideration the current scenario with regard to skill deficiency in VET in India and the current initiatives at the government level, it appears that although there are various schemes and programmes dedicated to skill development in VET, there is a huge gap between demand and supply as the respective initiatives are happening in isolation. There is a great need to review the activities on skill development under various institutes and ministries and improve their coordination. There is also an urgent need for restructuring of courses of VET as the face of the job market is changing. Therefore, the courses should be designed in a manner that they are demand-driven, especially for emerging occupations in the area of ICT, services, green occupations, etc. Finally, the vocational institutes which run in an unstructured manner, presently, should be made performance-based with an eagerness for innovation and excellence.

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