

EMPOWERING YOUTH FOR CAREER GROWTH THROUGH VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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Abstract: Even though it has one of the largest skill labor resource in the world India currently facing a unique dilemma. The skilled workers involve only 5% of the total industrial workforce as compared to 85% in other South East Asian countries. More than 90% of Indian students drop out of the education system at various points adding to the 300 million strong unemployed and ill-educated populations. In a recent study, the National Skills Development Commission demonstrates that under the present framework India will produce only 3 million skilled workers against a total skilled manpower demand of 83 million by 2015. In order to fully utilize our manpower resource and to ensure that we do not throw away this key point of interest, the only solution is to produce the needed amount of highly skilled manpower at an quickened pace.

A majority of courses taught in our schools and universities focus more attention on generic knowledge development which is not enough for a young student to start his/her vocation and succeed in it. There is a requirement for joining vocational qualification that have knowledge and skill components related to specific career tracks in traditional school and colleges so that the student can position himself best to grab the new opportunities being created. This is the need of the hour to solve a unique problem wherein on one hand there is high growth with strong demand for skilled labour in India and on the other hand there is a large pool of labour, majority of which is unemployable due to absence of relevant and satisfactory skills.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Vocational education means training in some vocation at the higher secondary level along with general education. Indian Education Commission observed, "We visualize the future trend of school education to be towards a fruitful mingling of general and vocational education-general education containing some elements of the pre-vocational and technical education, and vocational education, in turn, having an element of general education..."

It is regularly concurred that education must be related to the needs and goals of the people. The most burning need of the country is to produce more man power. To achieve this end, one of the most important measures is to vocationalise education, especially at the secondary school level to meet, the needs of Agriculture, Trade and Industry. The concept of vocationalisation as stated by the Kothari Commission, means to provide a strong vocational

bias to secondary education, It does not mean that general and vocational education should be segregated, rather the two should be galvanized to deliver.

The need and significance of vocational education can be evaluated, and is further highlighted, by having a look at its various uses and advantages: (1) Vocational education aims at decreasing unemployment among the educated youth and thus helps solving the giant problem of unemployment; (2) It will involve numerous economic benefits. It means expanded productivity which brings economic prosperity to the people and to the country at large; (3) It suits individual aptitudes, and so, guarantees better results; (4) It imparts among the youth a sense of security and usefulness, which goes a long way to make them better citizens.

However, vocationalisation should not be done in an unsystematic or random way. Vocational education should be imparted in proportion to the labor requirements, otherwise it will result in a grave circumstance of unemployed technocrats, so far, very little advance has been made in the field of vocational education. Some of the reasons of the slow progress of vocationalisation are : (1) Planning and a rather casual attitude of the Centre or the States; (2) Mentality of individuals, considering vocational education as inferior education; (3) Lack of funds, workshops etc; (4) Obsolete vocations such as book binding and carpentry in this age of electronics and advanced technology; (5) No endeavor to sort out the training of teachers for technical subjects (6) Lack of sufficient co-ordination and co-operation between the different departments of the Government.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Vocational training, also known as Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Career and Technical Education (CTE), is all the training needed for a certain job. Vocational training doesn't apply to professions like medicine or law, but to trades such as auto repair, plumbing or even funeral services and retail. These programs generally focus on providing students with hands-on instruction in a specific trade, and generally allow them to forgo the general education courses associated with most postsecondary programs.

Vocational training can also give applicants an edge in job searches, since they already have all the certifiable knowledge they need to enter the field. A student can receive vocational training either in high school or at trade schools for adults.

WHAT MEASURES SHOULD BE ADOPTED TO VOCATIONALISE EDUCATION?

The Kothari Commission and the Secondary Education Commission recommended some measures. They be specified below:

- 1) Expansion of Vocational Education at the lower secondary and higher secondary stage.
- 2) Administration of vocational education by the States Government after bringing about a proper co-ordination between various State Departments.
- 3) Diversified courses, divided into seven streams.
- 4) Establishment of multipurpose schools where the diversified courses will be taught.
- 5) Introduction of vocational guidance services in schools and colleges.
- 6) Part-time vocational educations in leisure times or during vocation with specialized courses in agriculture, crafts and for girls and adults, both men and women.

The idea of Vocational education, as propounded by Kothari Commission is no doubt excellent. But the need of the hour is action, not contemplation and theorizing. Still, the pace of implementation is extremely slow. Recently some courses in computer programming and electronics have been started. But they have not been made part of vocational education. There is great need for increasing of the pace of progress in vocationalisation of education.

The best Vocational Training Centers offer a blend of courses which help students learn both the specific industry related functional skills as well as the soft skills. The courses equip the students with skill sets fine-tuned to industry/job requirements which empower them to grab the best jobs in shortest possible time.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO?

To acquire the skill set for that career of a lifetime, the student does not need to necessarily invest years! The best quality vocational courses will take only 3 months of training after which the student has a high chance of getting placement with leaders in the industry he/she has been trained in. For example, after an entry level course in retail the student can get a job as a Customer Service Associate in leading retail chains such as Shoppers Stop, Reliance etc or upon completing a Front Office certification as Steward/Front Office Assistant in a star hotel chain. The training not only helps students get a job, but also give the needed skills for them to adjust to the working environment and do well in the same. Most vocational training centers offer a range of programs that match the needs of both graduates and even those with just a school certificate to build a productive career.

The best training courses also have multiple levels, which imbibe qualities that enable a student to pursue a career instead of just getting a job. An entry level course can be followed up after a couple of years of work experience with a supervisory and thereafter a managerial level qualification that can help a Customer Service Associate move up the ladder to be a Floor Supervisor or Store Manager and the Front Office Assistant to get promoted as a Front Office Manager in 5 to 8 years, with substantial increases in responsibility and compensation. Vocational courses are thus not just for the fresh out-of-college students; those who are currently working in the industry can also study to improve their performance with supervisory and managerial qualifications to gain promotions which would not otherwise be possible without an MBA or a graduation.

The need of the hour is not just a broad based school or college education, but industry specific domain knowledge and skill. Even after a three year graduation, the youth often has to spend considerable amount of time job hunting, which becomes very frustrating. Vocational courses offer you a fast-track education that assures a job placement and growth in the workplace. Thus the student gets a job faster, is able to support & provide for his family and self, becoming a responsible citizen of the society instead of an unproductive burden. Many developed and developing countries like UK, Korea & Chile have successfully used the vocational training sector to provide employment for their youth. It is time this form of job centered and skills based vocational education is tapped by Indian society to unleash the productive power of youth in the country.

CONCLUSION

Government and many private Vocational Training Centres of national and international repute offers a wide range of courses that enables the student with industry and job specific skills required by the employers. This guarantees the student not just a salaried job, but an entry point to a career in some of the fastest growing industry sectors in India. With increasing globalization and the demand for professionally trained skilled manpower on the rise, the Vocational Training Centres provides the right blend of new courses that opens up new career opportunities.

India's fast economic recovery and overall development has opened up an unprecedented number of job opportunities in services sectors. Taking the retail sector as an example, the Retailers Association of India estimates that 2 million people will be required in the next two years. Even in the current size the industry is facing a huge labour shortage only due to low quality of skilled labour available. Sectors such as BFSI, Hospitality and Security Management require very specialized trade knowledge related to the industry as well as good soft-skills such as customer relations, English language communication and individual adequacy expertise sets.

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