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Skill Development: Imperative for India's Growth

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Abstract: *It is time to take a relook at the education paradigm and the consociate it has with employment and employability. Though these are two attributes, we need to address them with poise and equanimity since the demographics points outthat more than 50 per cent of the population is slanted towards the younger generation in the nextten odd years whose fire in the belly and yearning can conflagrate a Nation on the move. Lack of education and lack of skills is a pestilence that we need to overcome in our current system and the faster we do this, the better for all concerned. Education certainly opens the doors to lead a life of liberty meaningful by allowing one to achieve prosperity.*

Successs does not come through magic. It needs necessary skills to succeed. This universal truth is equally applicable for the young generation. Youth energy can be the driving force for social and economic development of any country provided it is channelized effectively. The Indian employers have been struggling with acute shortage of skilled manpower despite India having the largest pool of young population in the world. Reason Lack of required expertise for specific job. As per the Labour Bureau Report 2014, the current size of india formally skilled workforce is only 2%. This apart, there is also the challeng of employability of large sections of the conventionally educated youth. The indian education system has been churning out brilliant minds but lacking in skill sets required for specific jobs. The Skill India mission launched by the government aims to provide a solution to this problem through creation of a job ready and skilled workforce by equipping it with employable skills. The mission aims to skill over 40 crore people by 2022 and enhance their employability by training them in skill sets of their choice.

Keywords: *Skill,employment,education,entrepreneur,workforce.*

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I. Introduction

Skill may be defined as an ability ,potentiality and efficiency which can make a person to do something well. Skill can be developed through experience,practice, training and study.The government has already set the ball rolling. It has relaxed FDI norms to encourage both domestic and foreign companies to manufacture in india and sell their products abroad. Make-in-India is expected to increases manufacturing activity across various sectors as well as enhance its contribution to GDP. It is also expected that with the increases in manufacturing activity, a substantial number of job will be created for the skilled workforce that the country is preparing. In line with the same, the Government has recently launched the Skill India Mission which will act as a pivot for all the other national missions like Make in India. Digital India, Smart Cities and other. Only a job ready and skilled workforce will lead to the success of all these national missions. India's educational system is still undergoing a content reformation. A few initiatives by the current incumbent government will shift our focus to the right needs of our country's youth. Our focus has always been on education but unfortunately not on overall skill development. This is the need of the hour, in order to become a great power and utilize our biggest strength i.e. our demographic dividend. According to the Census data released in September 2013, India's youth bulge is now sharpest at the key 15-24 age group. As India's demographics grow younger, the issue of sustainable employment becomes more important. A significant opportunity that the country forsees now is that India will be expanding its most productive cohorts (population between 15-60 years) as most developed countries and some developing once will be contracting theirs. By utilizing this opportunity, we can pull the Indian economy into a virtuous cycle of growth with meaningful job creation. Approximately 15 to 17 per cent of the global working population in 2022 would be Indian. The figures today reflect that India's working population will surpass china's working population by 2040. Clearly, our country has an advantage in terms of the 'total workable population'. But we cannot just rely on the increase in workable population for a brighter future. Of the country's approximately 500 million workforce, 14 per cent is employed in the formal economy and 86 per cent is not well-trained or recoganized in the job market. Today, there is a huge mismatch between education, skill training and employement. According to a report form McKinsey, only 54 per cent of youth believe that post-secondary education improved their employment oopoetunities. 56 per cent of students drop out between high school and higher education. Hence, we clearly see that there is a mismatch between the aspirations of the

Indian youth and the expectation of the employer and thus, there exists a huge gap between employement and employability.

II. Steps Taken by Government for skill development

The first and foremost step that the government took in shaping the skills landscape was the creation of a separate Ministry for Skill De!elopment & Entrepreneurship (MSDE). The country already had an existing skill ecosystem created by NSDC which includes 37 sectors skill councils and 235 training partners wilh 3611 training centres spread across 450 plus districts across the country. On the other hand, the Skill India Mission and the Skill Policy 2015, aimed to skill 40 crore youlh in the country by 2022. Over 70-odd Skill Development Programmes (SDPs), have been running, each with its own norms for eligibility criteria, duration of training, cost of training, outcomes. monitoring and tracking mechanism etc. Industry is also witnessing an increased participation from Corporates and PSUs who are coming forward and investing back in thc country's youth by supporting skill devclopment through their CSR initiatives under various partnerships such as financing, providing infrastructure, recognition of prior learning, adoption of national qualification framework and occupational standards etc. Organisations like PowerGrid, NTPC, Coal India, Ambuja Cements, CIFCL. Essar and Coca-Cola are some of ihe leading examples. PSUs have been very forthcoming in their agenda towards skill development. The three PSUs. PowerGrid. Coal India Limitcd and NTPC have contributed more than Rs.200 crores for this purpose.

Important issues:

1. The vocational course are terminal in nature- there is lack of clear vertical mobility from certificate to diploma to degree course in vocational education. As a result, parents who do feel that their child has an inherent skill, do not influence him/her to take up a vocational career. Thus, vocational courses are not pursued by 'choice' and entrants to this stream are limited in number despite the demand for skilled manpower.
2. Social acceptablility- vocational and skill development course are looked down upon and such student do not have acceptability in the society as compared to other courses.
3. Lack of good infrastructure and poor quality of courses- The infrastructure in most skill training organization or centers is of poor quality and not upgraded. Hence, the gape between what the industry desire and the machinery being used for training becomes wide.
4. Poor quality of trainers- the trainers who impart the skill training are not up-to-date with the skills reqired by the industry and hence the outcome of training is not as per desired quality.
5. Lack of initiative from the industry- The small and medium enterprises do not emphasize on vocational certification or fomal training as this sometime increases the cost of manpower. At times, it is observed that such SMEs prefer to hire an a chaper pay-out than a formally trained or skilled worker.
6. Lack of standardization- several Ministries offer skill courses increasing the confusion amongst student also resulting in lack of standardization.

It is observed that the expansion of this sector and the various initiatives being taken are happening without considering all these and other major issues facing this sector today. Furthermore, there is no single comprehensive model addressing all the concerns of this sector.

Recommendations:

1. Creating a vertical mobility from certificate to diploma to degree course in the vocational education sector. Providing options right from school level up to PG level. Establishing a skill Development University to offer specialized degree programs which will provide advance skills. Since most students aspire for higher education, such a university will help more and students to enter the vocational stream.
2. Providing lateral mobility by giving equivalence to vocational student especially at +2 level so they can pursue under graduate programs.
3. Increasing role of industry in all aspects of vocational training- providing latest machinery for training, governance, providing trainers from industry and doing assessments to ensure quality at each stage.
4. Industry should emphasize on formal vocational training and certification at the time of hiring and for career advancement.
5. Creating standard curricula and assessments across various agencies offering vocational courses.
6. Formal training programs for vocational faculty and trainers so that they understand this pedagogy.

The above recommendation will ensure that parents will motivate their children to enter the vocational stream and will also bring social acceptability to these student. Industry will get job ready manpower and quality of skilling will improve.

The NSDC has taken several major steps in the above direction already steps in the above direction already and continues to address these issue through various initiative. Each state mission for skilling is also addressing effort in improving the present scenario.

In my personal opinion, apart from implementating various recommendations as highlighted above, it is important to 'vocationalize the current education system'. The existing professional programs can be 'vocatonalized' by developing curricula in line with industry needs, creating infrastructure for skill training, involving the industry in all aspects of curricula development, training delivery, student assessments and creating a model where students can obtain skills and at the same time get a degree.

China's skill development system lessons for India:

The People's Republic of China's achievement of becoming the manufacturing hub of the world is well known. The high industrial growth rates, averaging over 10% for the past so many years, stand testimony to this fact. The growth of agricultural output, rural industrialization, and enterprise reforms since 1979-80 resulted in economic growth and rapid poverty reduction. The impressive growth performance in china can also be attributed to the successful structural transformation, both in terms of total output declined from 28% in 1978 to 10% in 2011, while the share of the secondary sector remained at 47% (compared to 25%in india), and the share of the tertiary sector increased from 24% in 1978 to 43% in 2011. The share of employement in the primary sector decreased from 70% in 1978 to 35% in 2011, and the share of secondary and tertiary sector increased from 17% and 12% to 29% and 36% respectively (cheong and wu 2013).

The Chinese TVET System:

The compulsory education law of 1986 resulted in near universalisation of the six years of primary and three years of junior secondary education. It also resulted in a growing demand for education post the junior secondary level. The Chinese TVET system has been comprehensively designed, taking into account the important aspects of vocational education and training-vocational education at the secondary level, in higher education institutes, vocational training in training centres, adult training and retraining, training of vocational trainers, financing as well as industry participation.

Vocational Education in the School System :

Chinese students are first exposed to vocational education at the junior-secondary level. The junior or lower secondary level comprising grades seventh-ninth are however now covered under the nine years of free compulsory education under the 1985 act, after six years of primary education. Over the years the component of vocational education at the junior-secondary level is withering away. At the end of junior-secondary level, students have to take the senior high school entrance examination called the "Zhongkao." This score determines the entry into general or vocational streams. Usually students with lower marks in the examination end up in the vocational secondary stream.

Table1: some attributes of the Vocational Education Institutes, by Level:

Vocational Education Institutes	Number of School	Total Enrolment	Full-Time Teachers	Student-Teacher Ratio
Elementary level Vocational junior secondary schools	54	25,966	1,541	16.9
Secondary level Vocational secondary education	13,093	81,38,664	8,81,938	9.2
• Regular specialised secondary education	3,753	29,95,725	3,03,864	9.9
• Adult specialised secondary school	1,614	10,39639	55,192	18.8
• Vocational senior secondary school	4,802	24,64,262	3,15,472	7.8
• technical school	2,924	43,04,232	1,92,575	22.4
Higher/tertiary level Collages with specialized courses	1,280	95,88,501	4,12,624	23.2

Source: China Statistical Year Book (2012).

Another important characteristic of the Chinese vocational education at the secondary level is the way the curriculum is designed. One-third of the curriculum includes general academic training determined nationally determined caters to the particular trade; and the remaining one-third again with respect to the trade is however designed locally at the school level, in line with local enterprise needs (OECD 2010). Thus, not only is exposure to general academic skill facilitating horizonatal mobility ensured, but vocational education tends to get aligned with industry needs as the curriculum takes into account local industry needs. None of this has been

so far possible in india. With economic expansion and the need for skilled workers, the thrust by the government on vocational education also expanded. Between 1980 and 2001, the proportion of secondary vocational school student among total secondary students increased from 19% to 45% with a concomitant decline in those pursuing general acadmic education at the secondary level. By 2008 it reached almost half of all students entering secondary education. In 2008, while only 2.5 million of the 19 million junior secondary graduates entered the workforce directly, eight million joined secondary vocational school. In absolute terms, the expansion in total enrolment in vocational high schools was comparable to general senior secondary school-from 12 millionin 2000 to 22.4 million in 2010 for vocational education compared to 24 million for general stream (Hao 2012). Thus, the share of the student taking up vocational stream in china in almost four times compared to the Indian average of 5% (student of the same age group) (IAMR 2014). In india, even the dropout after rate after completing elementary level education (i.e., up to class 8) is still as high as 40% in 2010-11 (MHRD 2013). The increased employability and improved prospects for jobs in part address the low status attached to vocational education. The aligning of the VET curriculum with industry needs has significantly improved the employment prospects of these graduates. The employment rate was around 97% in 2012 for secondary vocational school graduates. Around 57.6% of these graduates get employment in the services sector, while those who are employed in the primary and secondary sectors accounted for 9% and 33.4% of all graduates respectively (china daily 2013).

Vocational education and training outside school:

The MOHRSS (the Ministry of labour and employment equivalent) is also responsible for vocational qualification system. The 1996 vocational education law explicitly mentions that vocational training includes pre-employment training, apprenticeship training (as also conceived in india) but also interestingly on –the-job training and retrainingfor laid-off workers; and training centres, enterprise-sponsored training centres and non-govermental vocational training organizations. The number of various training providers along with the targeted beneficiaries is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of Vocational Training Institutions and Trainers in 2006:

Type	Training institutions	Number	Number of traineer(in 10,000 persons)
Technical schools/SWSs	2,855	270.3	pre-employment training for out of school: 20.3 Laid-off and unemployed persons:46 Employees/workers:127.6 Other:28.2
Employment training centres (job centres)	3,289	797.2	pre-employment training for out Of school: 20.3 Laid-off and unemployed Person:262.7 Others: 120.8
Private/civilian-run training Centre/non-govermental organizations (NGO)	21,425	1,905	pre-employment training for out Laid-off and unemployed person:159.1 others:837.1
Enterprise-sponsored training centres	22,000	3,000	employees/workers

Source: Adapted from Ding (2010) and lai et al (2011) quoted in potter (2011),from IAMR (2014).

Training of Vocational Education Teachers/Trainers:

Training of vocational trainers is another important dimension of the VET system. The efficiency of vocational education and training outcomes and trainers. This is very carefully designed in the Chinese TVET system which requires the training of these instructor to be at par with industry needs and new technologies. For teachers to be hired at vocational school and training institutions, the system has strict guidelines which require techers at vocational secondary schools to be a least vocational graduates, and those only with postgraduate vocational degrees and the respective occupational certificate can teach at vocational undergraduate collages (IAMR 2014). This is in contrast to the ITI system where in most of the private it is, the trainers were to be themselves merely ITI graduates (IAMR 2013).

Lessons for India:

We can draw significant lessons from the Chinese experience for the central/stage governments in india, as well as the private sector. To reap the benefits of the demographic dividend, available to india only till 2040, it is crucial that the skill development needs of our workforce, and demand for skilled workers are addressed.

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