

Role of vocational education in poverty reduction & national development

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Abstract: This article highlights the importance of vocational education and training. Vocational education is a noble approach to impart knowledge to the learner as well as make them skillful so that they can get employment according to the market demand. This research article also focuses on the various schemes of vocational education and training in India. The important provisions of NEP 2020 to strengthen the vocational education structure in India is also discussed. The paper can give an insight into the concept that vocational education and training is a much needed tool in poverty reduction as well as national development.

Key Words: Vocational education, vocational training, poverty reduction, national development, unemployment, NEP, Skill India, Skill.

1. INTRODUCTION:

India has a population of more than 1.42 billion people with growth rate of 0.81%. 68% of India's population is within 15-64 age group which we may call as working class of people or able to work age-group. India is a country which has high growth rate of population and much of its citizens are still under poverty line. Education is considered as the most powerful weapon against poverty. An fully educated society is able to cope against the evil of poverty. Education is not just about teaching people in schools and colleges, education is also not just about getting higher and higher degrees. But education is much about enhancing the skills of people and enabling them getting rid of poverty through transforming their abilities into various kinds of skills.

No Poverty is among the top goals of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs represent a universal aspiration that unites all nations in their collective endeavour to foster an equitable and inclusive future. India has also embraced these goals with full heart and promises to reduce poverty in all its forms by at least half by 2030 through its powerful mission. Poverty is the worst misfortunate afflicting our countrymen since ages. Rapidly increasing population and decreasing level of available resources are the biggest concerns on the path of poverty reduction and national development. So far, after independence, all the past governments and present government has made various efforts to completely eradicate poverty through numerous plans & schemes but total eradication of poverty is still a distant dream. Education is always considered as the greatest tools to fight poverty and eliminating hunger from our society. Due to its demography, India is considered as a country with rich human capital. To achieve the goals of 'No Poverty' and 'Zero Hunger' this population workforce must be trained in market-oriented vocational skills. Enhancing people's vocational abilities include educating and training them for better jobs. According to Fagerland nad Shah (1989), the concept of 'human capital' suggests that education and training raises the productivity of workers, and increases their lifetime earning capacity. Another scholar Alam (2007) noted that investment in education and training produces benefit both to the individual and the society as a whole. While talking about return on this education and traing he further states that, the return on investment for society will be a skilled workforce that will enable global competitiveness and economic growth, while the return of the individual will be a better career path, increased earning and a better quality of life. Vocational education (VE) can play the role of a vital tool to improve the standard of citizen's life and to help them participate in national development.

The World Development Report – 2005 also highlighted that jobs are the main source of income for people and the main pathway out of poverty for the poor. But, without a proper structure of vocational education system, the workforce cannot be trained properly and the problem of poverty & national development remains. Vocational education means learning to change one's behaviour to enhance the quality of life through work and values, without or along with formal schooling. If the learning through the well devised and targeted vocational education system enhances self-

employment and economic productivity of the people then the evil of poverty can be conquered in a constructive manner. There are examples of many countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines where a lot of economical benefits are obtained through vocational education. Vocational education system can be helpful in development and poverty reduction in those countries where a vast population of adult illiterates are present. There is a lot of debate going on between formal and vocational education system (VE) since time. Vocational education is mainly an education system in which no rigid rules and regulations are present like formal education system and VE is mainly a life and need based education system which can convert an unskilled and unexperienced adult population into skilled human resources. Formal education system follows rigid rules & regulations, chronologically graded structure and inflexible nature due to which the poor people are excluded from its advantages. Vocational skill training includes the study of technologies, the learning of practical skills and information about professions in various sectors of the economy. Finch & Crunkilton (1999) states that “it increases human potential for paid employment while also encouraging self-employment and entrepreneurship”. Thus, it is clearly evident that vocational training equips people to be self-employed according to their choice. As per UNESCO report (2010, 2012)- “It is a true belief that vocational and technical skills can help to reduce unemployment in rural areas that eventually will tackle the issue of urban-rural drift”.

Aims & objectives of vocational education (VE) includes—provision of technical knowledge and skills, to give an insight to young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexion of technology, to provide people necessary scientific knowledge for improvement and solution of ecological problems, provide trained manpower in all fields of science & technology, restructuring the education system according to need of the market etc. vocational education builds a large pool of workforce with specialized knowledge so that they can get employment more easily. A well-structured and targeted vocational education system can be introduced at schools and the students can get benefits of both formal and vocational streams.

Vocational education is largely seen as a community development process. Poverty is characterized by a situation or condition of life lacking nutrition and with illiteracy, diseases, high infant mortality and low life expectancy. Nowadays, globally poverty needs to be understood in the multidimensional manner. This understanding of poverty goes beyond the marked level of daily income and includes vulnerability, exposure to risk and voicelessness or powerlessness (World Bank, 2000). Poverty reduction strategy is of their forms—poverty alleviation, lifting people out of poverty and poverty prevention. Indian government and bureaucracy have practised many shortcut methods for poverty alleviation. But all went wrong or became unproductive due to the fact that there is no shortcut for poverty reduction or alleviation. Countries like Japan and China in much earlier days and later Thailand and Malaysia realized this and started imparting vocational education.

According to the policy paper on vocational education, the World Bank (1991) suggested to consider following important factors while designing vocational education system —

- a. Well-timed modern courses linked of local and global demand;
- b. relevant and up-to-date VE courses need to be developed;
- c. proper justification in respect of individual country that at which level of schooling is best in offering VE courses; and
- d. wider range of TVE courses need to be developed in terms of demand and cost effectiveness (not only for offering various courses but also for duration of the courses, for student classification in terms of their merit, ages, job market, etc.).

In our country also, National Council for Vocational Education (NCVT) advises the central government on issues relating to the vocational education schemes. Similarly, in states, SCVTs are doing the same thing. National Skill Development Council (NSDC) was set up by Ministry of Finance as Public Private Partnership (PPP) model. NSDC aims to promote skill development by catalyzing creation of large, quality and for-profit vocational institutions. Further, the organisation provides funding to build scalable and profitable vocational training initiatives. Its mandate is also to enable support system which focuses on quality assurance, information systems and train the trainer academies either directly or through partnerships. The Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Urban Development & Poverty Alleviation, along with 14 other ministries, have come up with various schemes on skill development. A separate Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has been formed to focus on enhancing employability of the youth through skill development. National Skill Development Mission (NSDM) has been launched by the central government. Its governing council is chaired by the Prime Minister of India. An initiative ‘Skill India’ has been launched to empower the youth of the country with skill sets which make them more employable and more productive in their work environment. The Skill Mission was launched on 15 July, 2015. More than one crore youths have joined the mission annually till date. Under the scheme of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), more than 1.37 crore people get skilled and got employed in various sectors. More than 720 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKKs) have been opened throughout

the country to support skill development infrastructure. The ITI system has been brought under the umbrella of Skill India. MSDE has also introduced two important schemes-- National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) in August 2016 and Pradhan Mantri Yuva Yojana (PM-YUVA). More than 7 lakh apprenticeship trainings have been imparted through the former scheme.

With the implementation of new National Educational Policy-2020 (NEP-2020), the vocational system of education also comes in the focus. The NEP 2020 document advocates the comprehensive revamping of vocational education by bringing it into mainstream or formal education system as suggested by successive commissions of education. The documents highlights that teachers at higher secondary levels are not fully skilled to teach vocational courses. According to NEP 2020, by 2025, at least 50% of learners shall have vocational exposure through school and higher education. During grade 6 to 8, students will have 10 bagless days a year on which they can go on vocational work experience of their choice. Skill labs will be set up at schools. At the secondary level, every student will receive training of at least one vocation, A National Committee for Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE) consisting of experts in vocational education and representatives from across Ministries, in collaboration with industry will oversee the efforts of the implementation of VET. The NEP also states that required number of trained teachers will be employed at schools to teach vocational education training.

But, India is a large country as well as diverse country. Much of the population is illiterate, semi-literate, residing in rural or remote areas. There is also an urgent need to implement an open education system promoting vocational education. Much more emphasis can be given to industry oriented training and participation of non-government agencies along with the government.

With rapid growth of population and resulting unemployment, vocational education and training has become an important tool to reduce poverty and in nation building process. VE is now an important education initiative. India enjoys a country of vast human capital. There is an urgent need to tap this human resource by train them and make them fit for changing global scenario. Vocational education and training will not only help in reducing poverty and increasing income generation but also helps in creating a literate and self-sufficient society according to the market demands. The central government and the state government is not unaware of this. Through various schemes by MSDE and also through the provisions of NEP 2020, now there is much focus on vocational education and training.

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