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Enhancing Employability Skills through Technical and Vocational Education and Training in India: Challenges and Strategies

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Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 with its targets 4.3 and 4.4 emphasizes on ensuring affordable and quality technical and vocational education that can be accessible equally to all women and men along with the substantial increase in the number of youth and adults in having relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. This underlines the crucial need of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in today's world. The National Education Policy 2020 also stresses on the need for re-imagination of vocational education on a serious note regarding which it has also underlined the important reasons for the low percentage of people having formal vocational education in India. Thus, it is very essential to re-imagine Technical and Vocational Education and Training in India so that it can enhance the cognitive, affective as well as psychomotor abilities of a child along with the inculcation of the essential life skills in them. The paper therefore focuses on the need, ways and prospects to strengthen TVET in India. The purpose of this paper will be truly served if the insights of the paper can prove useful in reimagining and strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training in India

Keywords: SDG 4, TVET, NEP-2020, Skills, Vocational Education

Introduction

The term TVET or Technical and Vocational Education and Training was officiated first in Seoul, South Korea at the World Congress on TVET (1999). TVET is defined 'as comprising education, training and skills development relating to a wide range of occupational fields, production, services, and livelihoods' [UNESCO, 2016]. TVET is a comprehensive term that is inclusive of the study of technologies and related sciences and also consists of the acquiring attitudes, practical skills, understanding and knowledge that are related to various occupations and sectors of economic and social life. Furthermore, TVET is an integral part of lifelong learning as it not only takes place at all the levels of education, but continues even in professional developments of an individual.

TVET and skill development is a crucial and an emerging challenge in the academia especially in higher education. The National Education Policy 2020 suggests some of the important reasons behind low percentage of learners formally trained in vocational education

and underlines the urgency to undertake researches to understand the concerns, challenges as well as measures to integrate TVET in school as well as in higher education. The paper therefore tries to identify the existing challenges in achieving higher percentage of learners being formally trained in Technical and Vocational Education and Training as well as suggests the measures that can strengthen Technical and Vocational education and Training for learners in India.

Objectives

The paper includes the following objectives:

- To identify the existing challenges in achieving higher percentage of learners being formally trained in Technical and Vocational Education and Training.
- To explore the strategies to strengthen Technical and Vocational education and Training for learners in India.
- To explore the strategies for enhancing employability skills through Technical and Vocational education and Training among learners in India.

Research Questions

- What are the existing challenges in achieving higher percentage of learners formally trained in Technical and Vocational Education and Training?
- How Technical and Vocational Education and Training can be strengthened among the learners in India?
- How employability skills can be enhanced through Technical and Vocational education and Training for learners in India.

Methodology

The data for the present paper has been collected from the secondary sources which include the various research articles, documents, reports and materials from the online repository regarding TVET and the National Education Policy-2020 document.

Existing challenges in the way of Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Even though TVET has got immense potential in transforming the country's economy, the percentage of learners being formally trained in vocational education as mentioned in NEP 2020 is very low. The existing challenges that arise in achieving higher percentage of learners being formally trained in Technical and Vocational Education and Training in India may be:

1. Lack of well-defined pathway for establishing linkage between school and higher education in the area of TVET.
2. Limited access of learners to vocational courses and vocational infrastructure.
3. Lack of well-designed and relevant curriculum and pedagogical approaches in regard to TVET.
4. Lack of standardized vocational courses for learners.
5. Lack of standardized assessment procedures for technical and vocational education.
6. Lack of proper certification for technical and vocational education and skill trainings.
7. Existence of gap between educational institutions and industry involvement.

8. Existence of social stigma and negative perception among people regarding vocational education.
9. Insufficiency of efficiently trained teachers and teacher educators in the area of TVET.
10. Lack of government incentives and funding in regard to vocational education.
11. Lack of awareness among the learners, parents and society regarding the ventures and importance of TVET.

Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training among the learners in India

- **Utilizing the demographic dividend:** The Sample Registration System Statistical Report of 2018 [SRSS Report, 2018] addresses the large demographic dividend of India mentioning that 66% of the Indian population comes under the working-age group of 15–59. This young Indian population if properly trained with quality TVET provisions in their schools as well as through their higher education can be transformed into assets for the nation thus contributing immensely to the nation's economy, growth and development [Dey and Srivastava, 2022]. Thus, strengthening TVET in a well-planned manner through school and higher education especially in regard to India is very crucial.
- **Establishing linkage between School and Higher Education:** In order to strengthen the TVET provisions in India, there is a serious need for establishing linkage between the school and higher education institutions in regard to TVET. Even though the previous national educational policies including National Policy of Education 1968, 1986 and PoA 1992 as well as the various education commissions like Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), Indian Education Commission (1964-66) etc. recommended for the vocationalization of education through schools, the expected targets are not yet fulfilled. The National Education Policy-2020 also mentions about the lack of well-defined pathways to pursue a chosen vocation in higher education being yet another important reasons behind the low percentage of people formally trained in vocational education. Thus, it becomes the responsibility of the central as well as state government and the stakeholders at various levels to take immediate measures for the access of TVET to all the students and to establish a linkage between school and higher educational institutes.
- **Establishing linkage between Educational Institutes and Industry:** There is an urgent requirement of bridging the gap that exists between educational institutes and industrial requirements. As TVET induces vocational education and training as well as related competencies among learners, learners in the educational institutes must be well -versed with the capacities that can induce in them the 21st century skills as well as skills and competencies as per the requirements of Industry 4.0. The continuous up-skilling and re-skilling of learners also must be continued as per the advancements in the industries. Thus Education 4.0 must be implemented in close association with Industry 4.0.

- **Removing the social stigma for vocational Education:** The NEP-2020 mentioned that one of the serious problems for the low percentage of learners formally trained in vocational education is the mindset of people considering vocational education inferior to mainstream education. Apart from this, another serious issue is that there exists a caste-based stigma associated with particular vocation like- carpentry, sewing clothes, weaving, pottery, being a cobbler etc., that lowers down the interest among learners for vocational education. This serves another severe reason for the low percentage of learners formally trained in vocational education as the learners studying in reputed schools perceive that they would be looked down upon by the society if they choose a profession in a vocation that relates to their caste or that they consider lower to their caste. To overcome this problem, textbooks from the very foundational stage of early childhood care and education must be designed in such a way that can inculcate the dignity of manual work and labor among the learners.
- **Re-shaping curriculum for TVET:** Curriculum should be flexible, multi-faceted and multi-level and must be designed in such a way that can inculcate 21st century skills and life skills among children from the very early age. As NEP-2020 mentions that over 85% of the cumulative brain development of a child occurs before the age of 6 years, therefore the curriculum from ECCE itself should be designed in a way that educate the learners about the various skills through pictures, alphabets, numbers, colors, drawing, painting, shapes and other visual art, craft, etc. Textbooks should incorporate the various arts forms like *bandhani paintings, madhubani paintings, banarasi prints, rajasthani hathkargha, terracotta works* and the other art forms of the states of India that can make the learners aware of the rich Indian heritage. Curriculum should also be designed in a way that can expose children to pre-vocational education through co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- **Re-designing the Pedagogy for TVET:** The pedagogy of the elementary classes from the early childhood care and education itself must be inclusive of activity-based, play-based learning including indoor and outdoor play as well as puzzles, drama and puppetry based, music and movement based. It should be designed in a way to invoke logical thinking, problem-solving, and inquiry-based learning among learners. Learners should be made aware about the importance of manual work in life as well as taught to value the dignity of labor through stories, songs and poems. Learners must be provided activity-filled tours and taken for visits to local artisans and craft centers so that they can value and appreciate skills, arts and aesthetics in a better way. Furthermore, learners should be exposed to learning through gardening including horticulture, pottery, handicraft or paper craft work etc. so that learning can be fun as well as the pre-vocational fervor and knowledge of skills can be inculcated among them from their early age of learning.
- **Proper Training for Teachers and Teacher Educators in regard to TVET:** Teachers, teacher educators as well as trainers must be trained with well-designed pedagogical methods in the area of TVET so that they can impart the technical and vocational education, training and related skills to learners in the best possible way as well as have a better outreach to learners in the area of TVET.

- **Standardization and Certification of vocational courses:** One of the prime reasons for learners not opting for formal vocational courses is the lack of standardized programs and certification in the opted vocational courses. Proper certification of skill courses and standardized course structure must be done on an urgent basis as it will attract more enrollments and less dropouts in vocational courses.
- **Government funding and interventions:** Government funding, incentives and interventions can lead to enhanced institutional capacity, adequate infrastructure and resources in the domain of TVET. This is very crucial to develop a well-designed and exhaustive TVET ecosystem that further will increase the number of learners in vocational education.
- **Use of Mother Tongue for TVET:** If TVET can be imparted to the learners in their mother-tongue, it will help them to have a better understanding of the content. This will also bridge the gap that exists between the language spoken by the child and the medium of teaching. TVET in mother tongue will therefore prepare the youth for work by developing work-related skills and capabilities in them thus leading to their formal as well as self-employment. In order to address the demands rising due to the rapid technological changes of the modern world, TVET through mother tongue can be an aid for continuous professional development through up-skilling and re-skilling. Furthermore, it will directly contribute to the industrial and economic development of the state as the learners will be efficient in the area TVET in their own mother-tongue and therefore will choose to work for the state and contribute to its economy rather than migrating to other states in search of jobs.
- **TVET through digital platforms and ODL Mode:** TVET through digital platforms and through the open and distance learning or ODL mode is the call of the time for not only keeping pace with the recent advancements in the educational field but also to ensure equitable, inclusive and lifelong learning opportunities as well as for a better knowledge dissemination. The digital platforms as well as TVET through ODL mode will enhance the outreach of the TVET programs and cater to the continuous re-skilling and up-skilling of an individual leading to his or her professional development. In preparing learners for the world of work, it becomes very important for the teachers to seamlessly integrate technology into the curriculum instead of considering it as an add-on event. In this regard the professional and continuous skill development of teachers will also be met along with that of the learners through the digital TVET. The PM e-VIDYA portal is a comprehensive initiative launched by the government of India and is a remarkable step taken in enabling a multimode access to education. The PM e-VIDYA portal through its various platforms like DIKSHA, various courses available on SWAYAM Portal, various channels of SWAYAMPRAKASH as well as extensive use of Radio and Podcasts can increase the access and awareness in regard to Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

Strategies for Enhancing Employability Skills through Technical and Vocational education and Training

- Designing Industry-relevant curricula to meet the work market requisites.

- Integrating internships, on the job-trainings and apprenticeship programs in the mainstream curriculum.
- Developing soft skills including communication skills, team-work, problem solving skills as well as decision making skills among learners.
- Promoting digital literacy among learners regarding the vocational and skill-based courses through hands-on training workshops.
- Inducing entrepreneurial and self-employment skills among learners from the primary classes.
- Collaborating with industries for mentoring, placements and job-related exposures of learners.
- Active Career guidance and counselling cells in educational institutions for making the learners aware regarding multiple job prospects and nurturing their curiosity.
- Introducing skill-based certification courses for learners to recognize their skills and enhance their job prospects.

Conclusion

Technical and Vocational Education and Training is the clarion call of the time. The whole world is aiming for quality TVET provisions so as to ensure that industry demand-oriented skills as well as the 21st century life skills through proper education and training can be provided to their citizens. As India still struggles in providing TVET related competencies through formal education including school as well as higher education, it becomes very important for a country with such high percentage of young population in the working age-group to design pathways for the immediate integration of TVET in the schools as well as in higher education. Technical and Vocational Education and Training can be strengthened by re-shaping pedagogy, re-designing curriculum, bridging the gap between schools and higher educational institutions, industry-academia partnerships, imparting TVET in mother-tongue, TVET through the open and distance learning and blended mode with the integration of technology. Quality TVET with its proper dissemination will definitely lead to the socio-economic progress and advancement of India globally.

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