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BT IN FOCUS SKILLING INDIA

Restructuring entrepreneurship and employment system



With every passing year, the Skill India Mission is taking steps forward in strengthening its skilling agenda in collaboration with industries, training partners and other stakeholders. Important steps which have brought some groundbreaking changes include the PMKVY scheme and the establishment of multi skill centres, the introduction of vocational programmes at government schools and the implementation of the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) that standardizes the quality of training and connects with job roles in the industry. Based on the NSQF individuals can progress through education and training with multiple entry and exit options since the Framework paves the way for interoperability. A large amount of money and energy has been invested in the skilling and vocational education which in our country is still at the nascent stage. However, much more is desired to give it a sharper edge and greater quality, especially in terms of developing pedagogic procedures and implementation at the ground level.

◆ By Gayathri Vasudevan

Among the 10 focus areas in the Union Budget for 2017-18, skill development has been given a priority which is a very good piece of news for industry. One of the fundamental changes brought about is the introduction of Common Norms across skill development. Earlier each government scheme were run, with its own norms for eligibility criteria, the duration of training, the cost of training, outcomes, monitoring and a tracking mechanism. Hence the outcomes were diffusive. However, with the standardization across sectors as applied through Common Norms, it has helped define the activities constituting skill development, the curriculum alignment with the National Skills Qualification Framework, input standards for training programmes and the outcomes expected from these programmes. This is a very positive alignment and has enabled the scaling up of programmes at a rapid scale.

The influence of this can be seen not only in the programmes run solely by the Government, but by industry as well where PPP models of the government scheme implementation have been rolled out. A case in point is where one such scheme has been rolled out in partnership with LabourNet at SKF, a leading engineering component supplier. It had set up training centres in adherence to the norms established by the NSDC under the auto service technicians course along with hostel and food facility. Today, they stand to gain in this entire effort as they can continue with the same standard of training in future beyond the partnership with the Government and impart the same quality of output.

Standardization definitely has brought some uniformity in the vocational education training programmes. However, the cause for worry is that such normalization might stifle the growth for innovative thinking in teaching and sector specific solutions for further improvement. Space for innovating new dimensions for training and skilling needs to be made available to arrive at sector specific prudent solutions.

CAREER GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Another forward step taken by the Government has been in the vocational education stream where movement through interoperable options across the NSQF and the mainstream educational framework has enhanced career growth opportunities. Earlier, the economically backward students (deprived and dropouts as well) having a diploma course had limited options for upward mobility, both in terms of educational upgradation and professional upliftment. But in the present format, with one or two bridge courses undertaken along with the vocational course, students can get the recognition of formal mainstream education. However, translating the policy at the ground level is yet to have a proper conformity and clarity.

Early introduction of the vocational programme at the school level is a positive drive in the skilling direction. For instance, under the Additional Skill Acquisition Programme, approximately 100 government schools in Kerala have been reaching out and had an enrolment of 7,000 students through the LabourNet. Exposure to such hands-on skill along with theoretical inputs at an early

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stage can help in deciding the future stream of vocation for students.

A similar progression can be seen for adult workers who are already a part of the workforce but lack any accredited qualification. Government schemes such as the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) have helped in the assessment and certification of the skills they have already acquired due to their experience and observation and thereby enabled their inclusion in the mainstream. Many State Governments have endorsed this scheme and successfully implemented it. In Odisha the BOCW has reached out to approximately 55,000 construction workers whose livelihood has been enhanced due to the RPL programme.

Flexi-MoUs and Dual ITI, another milestone, are the "first of their kind" initiative and have given companies flexibility to design training programmes at industrial training institutes or at their own facilities tailored to their specific needs. These programmes are run under the aegis of the National Council for Vocational Training and accredited by it. In this way, industry can participate in assessing apprentices and identifying gaps in training, especially with regard to last-mile employability. Companies such as the Tata Projects Limited and the Pratibha Industries which have partnered with the LabourNet and had endorsed this format have found this model worthwhile.

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE

A lot has been initiated in the direction of vocational training and development. The optimization of skills through due recognition and the standardization of inputs have helped bring some homogeneity in the market. However the biggest challenge that is bound to affect the growth would be in terms of developing training pedagogy. In the mainstream education system, long years of experimentation across various subjects have helped arrive at a pedagogy of teaching and learning. But the same cannot be said to be true for vocational training. For example, a carpenter may have honed his skills through long years of experience or could have inherited the skill trade from his family which may be highly qualified in the



RAJIV PRATAP RUDY, Union Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

Attention towards entrepreneurship development should be taken more seriously. By giving an 18 to 26 hour training in entrepreneurship and incentive to start an enterprise, entrepreneurs cannot be groomed. The missing link lies in creating incubators that will give the space and time for first-time entrepreneurs to take the plunge with more confidence.



MANISH KUMAR, MD & CEO, NSDC

to start an enterprise, entrepreneurs cannot be groomed. The missing link lies in creating incubators that will give the space and time for first-time entrepreneurs to take the plunge with more confidence.

The continuum of education to the vocational stream leading to employment and entrepreneurship is a comprehensive approach and will help in solving many employment issues and enabling people to move up the social ladder. The market-driven economy is pushing major changes in the labour market and we have been responding to these challenges quite effectively. The Government is pumping in a huge amount of funds in this direction to expect instant results. However, the impact of such efforts takes decades to show results. ■

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