

## Vocationalisation of Education in India

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**E**ducation in India has historically been the preserve of only a few. Before the advent of the British, scriptures and other forms of traditional learning were passed down through generations in the *Gurukul* tradition, but usually only to those who belonged to the Brahmin caste. Non-Brahmins were mostly excluded from this knowledge, but learnt the family trade as a natural part of their upbringing. Thus, the skills needed for various trades tended to be transmitted to each succeeding generation, providing skilled artisans and labour for society's requirements. Opportunities for entrepreneurship were built into these trades, hence ensuring that a skilled worker found adequate opportunity to earn a livelihood, and in many cases, prosper.

The nature of education changed all over the world after the Industrial Revolution. Several trades became redundant and new opportunities such as factory work, railways, etc began to emerge, changing the way people earned their livelihoods. In India, the infamous Macaulay Minute resulted in wide ranging changes to the way education was perceived and delivered, given its new objective of the creation of a class of people "...who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of people, Indian in blood and colour, but

English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect".

Even as the education system changed to accommodate standardization for factories/ administration, it also began to diverge from traditional knowledge – science, maths, and English had now to be learned, with those who were the intermediaries between the British and larger India being seen as a class divorced from labour. This elite in pre-Independence India formed a new class of civil servants, doctors, professors and lawyers, who were distinct – and very different in outlook, education and taste from the vast mass of those who remained poor and uneducated. Slowly, the great divide in education became about how much money one had and which school or overseas college one attended, rather than about the learning passed down through generations. In turn, and almost inevitably, those without education were also those with the fewest opportunities to better themselves.

In newly independent India, notwithstanding Mahatma Gandhi's emphasis on village economies, economic policy and thought was guided by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's view on industrialisation and the need for the State to occupy the "commanding heights" of the economy. More attention was paid to higher education with the creation of institutions of excellence such as the IITs and IIMs, and engineering

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and medical colleges, which began to produce graduates for the newly industrialising nation. In the process, school and vocational education took a backseat; in the decade between 1950 and 1960, even as we produced more engineers and doctors, the actual number of illiterates in the country rose from 294.2 million to 325.5 million.

In a sense, this divergence was also institutionalised –higher education became a focus area for the Ministry of Education (as it was then), while skills education and labour policy were relegated to the Ministry of Labour. Given that these two departments often competed for the same scarce resources, it was only a matter of time before education and skills development came to be viewed as separate from each other. Aspirations for growth and personal advancement began to be associated with higher education and not skills or working with one’s hands, as a result of which, only 2 per cent of all those working in industrial or semi-industrial trades were formally or professionally skilled.

The new millennium brought with it a realisation that this divergence could have a disastrous impact on India’s future. India’s demographic dividend and opportunity to re-establish herself as a leading economy had to be addressed through adequate skilling of youth for employability and contribution to the nation’s economy as well as a global workforce. This was reinforced by Dr. C.K. Prahlad, in his famous Vision of India at 75 address in 2007, to thought leaders of the country, where he shared his belief that India would shape the emerging world order and change not only its own destiny but even that of the world through economic strength, technology innovation and moral leadership. He envisioned India to be the moral voice for people around the world, to practice inclusiveness and sustainability, and to be the most benchmarked country for its capacity to benefit from its own diversity.

This period saw an upsurge of initiatives to address the convergence of education and skills, such as the

framing of the National Skills Policy 2009, as well as the establishment of the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC), National Skills Development Agency (NSDA), the creation of the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), and setting up of the Sector Skills Councils to spearhead the selection and articulation of outcome oriented competencies for high volume jobs.

The NSQF is a particularly potent initiative, as it provides the framework for a much needed convergence between education and skills by enabling mobility between formal and vocational education, while also creating a framework for enabling recognition of the large numbers of informally skilled individuals, with the opportunity for future career progression. If implemented as designed, this initiative has the power to dramatically reset the relationship between education and skills. Today, there are various experiments being conducted for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and vocationalisation of schools and colleges, which have already been benchmarked in the revised National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015.

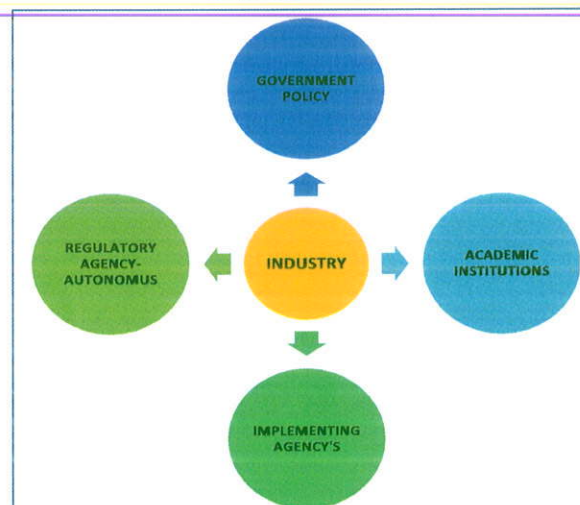
The formation of the Ministry for Skills Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) to coordinate

the various skilling initiatives in the country, and the Make in India and Skill India campaigns have also gone a long way in re-energising the relationship between education and skills, by igniting youth interest in acquiring skills formally, and industry participation in recognising skills certifications along with educational qualifications. The integration of new technologies and the recognition of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of design thinking, problem solving, analytics and entrepreneurship will necessitate a revamp to the approach to school curricula and open doors to even greater synergy between industry and education.

Government of India also launched the National Skill Development Mission on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2015, which coincided with the World Youth Skills Day. The Mission has been set up to deliver the Skill India campaign and will create convergence across sectors and States on skills training activities. As of now, the country has 249 training partners, 3222 training centres, 55,70,476 trainees, with 23,88,009 placements so far. While there are many schemes and missions under different ministries like the *Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana* (skill training for urban and rural poor), the Digital India and Make in India campaigns are all steps to encourage skills development to develop products within India by Indians.

While the government has laid great emphasis on provision of skills training, and assessment and certification, particularly at younger ages, it is also necessary to consider the demand side of this equation. The availability of more and more skilled personnel will need to be accompanied by the creation of increased demand for their services, which in turn, is dependent on the growth of the economy. Economic and financial policies must spur growth and development, and lead

**Fig 1 – The Centrality of Industry in Driving Demand for Skills**





to the creation of jobs that can absorb the young people graduating from various courses. Whether it is policy or academia or regulation, all must work closely with industry to ensure that supply and demand for skills are at all times, properly matched.

Many of the jobs we currently train our young people for will become redundant in time; indeed, it is impossible to predict with any degree of accuracy, the kinds of

jobs that will be handled by young people in the future, just as many of the jobs, that they presently do could not have been imagined 25 years ago. What is important to recall is that increasingly, employers all over the world seek recruits who can handle the 4 Cs – communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking. Any education or skilling system must therefore, provide trainees with these skills and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, so that they

will be able to handle the demands of future, yet-to-be-announced, jobs.

With India set to contribute heavily to the global workforce in the years to come, it is necessary to start young. With vocationalisation of schools and the orientation of youth towards future employability and skills associated with future jobs, India will have come a full circle in the convergence of education and skills. □

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### Coir Udyami Yojana

The Coir Udyami Yojana is a credit linked subsidy scheme in the coir sector. The pattern of financial assistance under the scheme is 40 per cent of the project cost as Government of India subsidy, 55 per cent as loan from Bank and 5 per cent beneficiary contribution. The Scheme covers any type of coir project with project cost upto Rs.10 lakhs plus working capital, which shall not exceed 25 per cent of the project cost.

Entrepreneurs under CUY can participate in exhibitions etc. by forming Marketing Consortia for which an amount of Rs.10 Crores is earmarked in the Scheme. The Board is providing Skill Development Training and organizing seminars etc. under the Scheme Skill Development and Mahila Coir Yojana.

## NORTH EAST DIARY

### SUPERSPECIALITY COURSES FOR NORTHEAST DOCTORS

As part of a new initiative for the NorthEast, various super-speciality courses for doctors from the eight North-Eastern States have been announced by the Ministry of DoNER. The courses include for Doctor of Medicine (DM) and Master of Chirurgiae (Mch). These courses will also be taken up in the institutions outside Northeast and also an as option for short duration training up to six months in super-specialty. Initially, a six months short-term training in Medical Oncology and Surgical Oncology will be undertaken from January 1, 2016 at the Adyar Cancer Institute, Chennai. The cost and financial implications of this training course will be borne by the Ministry of DoNER. This same Institute will also start a three-year DM Oncology and Mch Oncology Surgery degree course from next academic year after getting approval from Medical Council of India (MCI). This has been done in the wake of prevalence of cancer being the highest in the country among the North-Eastern States, with Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya among the first three States, with the cancer of head and neck.

The DoNER Ministry will also collaborate with the Union Ministry of Health for their support through programmes to control non-communicable diseases. The corporate hospitals have also been asked to come forward in this direction. Non-communicable diseases like Diabetes and heart attack have also shown an increase in the North-Eastern region. For this, Diabetes clinics and Apollo OPDs in Northeast, will be opened. □

### NEW RAILWAY LINE IN NORTH-EAST

The First Broad Gauge Fast Passenger Train has been flagged off from Silchar to Guwahati via Lumding, Haflong through Remote Control by organizing a Video-Conferencing between Rail Bhawan, New Delhi and Silchar Railway Station. This new line will connect Silchar by BG railway line, benefitting the people of Barak Valley, as also in connecting to the hitherto isolated states of Tripura, Mizoram and Manipur. The track passes through the verdant North Cachar hills almost parallel to the old Metre Gauge alignment crisscrossing the MG alignment at many locations in the first 100 kms between Lumding and Migrendisa. Thereafter, the proposed BG alignment detours for 30 km before joining the MG alignment again near Ditockchera. Phase-2 of the total project consists of gauge conversion of Badarpur-Kumarghat (118 km) and finger lines Arunachal-Jiribam (50 Km), Baraigram-Dullabcherra (29 km) & Karimganj-Mahishasan including Karimganj bye pass line (13.50 km). This phase will be completed by 31.03.2016 for which, mega block has already been taken from 01.10.2015 for six months. The current estimated cost of the entire project is around Rs.6000 crores. □