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## India's skilling challenge: Lessons from UK, Germany's vocational training models

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SKILL DEVELOPMENT

SKILLING INDIA

Even after the formation of a separate ministry for skilling in 2015 -- the Ministry of Skills Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) -- skills training continues to be departmental scattered and fragmented in the country. The mandate even now is being supervised by 1

different ministries in their respective areas – with zero coordination among them. As a result, it has been a tough task for the newly formed ministry to monitor, assess and effectively reap the benefits of investing **Rs 3,400 crore** collectively in skill development missions.

At present, 'Skill India' mission is blowing at full steam. India has the responsibility of skilli about **104.62 million fresh entrants in the workforce** in the next four years, by 2022. The government has rolled out several schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Kaushal Yojana (DDU-GKY), Udaan for Jammu and Kashmir, National Urban Livelihoods Mission, among others to fasten the process of skillir this population.

**Higher education in the country is going through a phase of transformation where the government is making efforts to internationalise the system as well as make Indian institutes globally competitive. Skills being a major point of focus, Central and State governments are attempting to create separate skills universities that cater specifically to vocational education.**

Traditionally, Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) have been responsible for imparting vocational education and training in the country. In 2007-08, ITIs received a record assista of 280 million US dollars from the World Bank as credit for modernisation of 400 ITIs. However, despite such a generous help, several government **reports** have analysed the fai of these institutes in producing a skilled labour force in the country. Meanwhile, the **Department of Higher Education's contribution** in offering skills education and training is only about four percent, whereas the MSDE's is 58%. This clearly shows how higher educa system has been aloof from the skills ecosystem so far. Thus, it is time to experiment with new models.

However, it has been a context of debate as to whether skills training and education need be segregated from formal education system or be part of it for better homogeneity. In tl urge to fast track the process of skilling, a soon-to-be-depleting demographic dividend, In is on the verge of creating an alternate system that might not adequately skill the workfo for future jobs.

According to the **All India State of Higher Education (AISHE) data** of the MHRD, India's Gro Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education is just about 25.2%. In secondary education, ab 27% students drop out of school, and may be never join any formal education thereafter. India's **National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015** reiterates time a again that school and college dropouts will be pulled into skills training under various initiatives to provide them an "alternate career path" and way of livelihood.

Is it the real aim to create an alternate inferior system of education? The answer might be the United Kingdom's (UK) model of vocational education called Technical & Vocational Education & Training (TVET). In 2016, the UK government worked towards integrating skil

and higher education at the level of policy, funding and implementation through TVET. The programme is funded jointly by the Department for Education (DfE) and the newly reform Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The regulatory powers to examine and assess skills is also given to a single non-ministerial department. Moreover, in April 2017, the funding agency too was merged in for skills and education. The major skill providers in the UK include schools, Further Education (FE) Colleges, University Technical Colleges, National Skills Academics and private and community training providers. Clearly, educational institutes have been at the heart of vocational education in the UK.

**“ A fresh attempt to create separate skills universities in India needs to be supplemented with efforts to encourage Indian higher education institutes to also start vocational training. Such universities should not only educate students for a single job role but for an entire sector, for holistic learning.**

To avoid this movement of alternate system, the need of the hour is an inclusive education system that gives equal priority to education and skilling. The Skill Training Partners (TPs) under the National Skills Development Council (NSDC) are surprisingly not higher education institutions or are not connected to them in anyway. The [Sharda Prasad Committee Report](#) released in 2017, explains how these private training partners have made a “mockery” of skilling training by doling out short-term courses – some of them as few as eight hours. This is a natural consequence of a segregated system that wants to churn out numbers but not quality.

However, since Indian higher education has failed to deliver on its mandate to provide quality education, it could be a reason for the country to experiment with newer models of education that will have more autonomy to forge industry partnerships and innovate with teaching methods. In such a case, it is imperative for any skills institute to have a work-integrated model where students learn by doing. Unlike the UK’s FE colleges, India doesn’t have bridge institutes that train students for professional careers. Which is why it would be worthwhile to look at the UK’s another major focus – apprenticeship.

According to a recent [report](#) by Yes Bank in India on “Indian Skills Ecosystem: Opportunities for India-UK collaboration”, supported by the UK India Business Council and Department for International Development, UK, India has only about 3,00,000 apprentices, whereas UK has 9,00,000 – “around half a million people started apprenticeships in 2015.” Most of these apprenticeships are a blend of formal education and paid employment and are funded by government.

**“ It is desirable that the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme of the Government of India expand the purview of the scheme to the institutes of higher education as well, which are currently under the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). MHRD runs Bachelor of Vocation (BVoc)**

## **and Diploma in Vocation (DVoc) courses in several colleges around the country.**

A similar model in India has been experimented with at the Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS) in Mumbai. TISS's School of Vocational Education (TISS-SVE) started in 2012, with a mere Rs 10 crore grant from the Ministry of Human Resource Development and has successfully trained and facilitated the employment of over 5,000 students since then. TISS SVE works on the German Hub and Spoke model of training and dual model of vocational training.

The German dual model is essentially a combination of theory and training implanted in a work setting. It is engrained in the education system and is driven by industry and trade unions, who constantly upgrade and modify training modules and job roles. These are generally two to three-year-long courses and students divide their time between working company and learning theory at a vocational school. The companies (mostly small and medium size) provide training to students in nationally recognised occupations. These occupations are certified by either a chamber of commerce or crafts or trades.

At TISS-SVE too, hubs provide classroom-based theory and skill knowledge partners provide on-job training. Another arm is the Vertical Anchor, which does skill gap analysis, geographical mapping and curriculum and content creation. The process of quality control is performed by TISS by ways of approving the curriculum, aptitude assessment, examination and certification. TISS, as an educational institute, acts as the facilitator of the ecosystem. TISS provides a three-year BVoc degree, diplomas and certificates to participants, allowing multiple exit points after each year.

Besides, any upcoming skills universities in India should consider building a governance structure that will allow such external affiliations. Under the present norms of the University Grants Commission (UGC) such a partnership is constrained and any institute wanting to function under the nomenclature of a university will have to adhere to the norms that are restrictive and regressive. Since such a model will require timely update of course content and reforms in training methods, the academic council of the institution/university should be independent enough to make these prompt changes, without having to approach a regulatory/government body each time changes are required – unlike in the present university system.

Aside from TISS, there are other private institutional efforts in skills training such as the one by TeamLease in Gujarat and Symbiosis in Indore and Pune that have done a fairly good job of creating on-campus training labs. While such efforts are highly appreciable, government institutes need to also work out the economics. Hefty investments flowing into skills development should focus on getting return on investment from these ventures.

**Although setting up universities and rolling out skilling schemes are capital-intensive activities, it is important to understand that a one-time investment ne**

**to be supplemented with sustainable efforts to make the system self-sufficient.**

Any transformation in the job market may mean a timely and periodic upgrade of such lab which can cost huge sums of money to the institute. The government has paucity of funds and the amounts disbursed for implementing expensive skills initiatives should be utilised the utmost by adopting innovative models of vocational education and training.

It is high time India learns from successful global models of skills education, including from the UK and the Germany models and implements them in their true spirit with the highest degree of autonomy. There are many lessons to be learned and India must be selective based on what it aims to achieve and how it wants to do so. Aimlessly creating a fragmented system of skilling will only lead to more unemployed and underemployed population that will damage the country's economic growth, rather than accelerating it.

*The views expressed above belong to the author(s).*

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