Relook on 'Skill India'

What is the issue?

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- The Skill India was launched in July, 2015 with a roadmap for skilling 400 million people by 2022.
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- But the performance of the programme over the years had not been that encouraging.
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What are the shortfalls?

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- A fundamental shortcoming was the lack of attention given to education while taking measures on skilling side.
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- In all successful countries - Germany, the UK, Japan or even China - skills and education remain closely connected.
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- India somehow missed this in 1977 when 10+2 was introduced by D S Kothari, the then UGC chairman.
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- It was done with vocational education as the central objective, in accordance with Education Commission Report (1964-66).
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- Unfortunately, there were few takers for vocational education.
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- It is primarily due to deep-rooted social prejudices against working with one’s hands as it is considered lowly and demeaning.
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- As a result, over the years, the budgetary provisions for skills in schools dried up.
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- Today it exists in isolation as a scheme of the Ministry of Skills and Entrepreneur Development (MSDE).

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- Resultantly, the dream of streaming 50% students into the vocational side never materialised.
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How did NSQF address this?

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- An attempt was made in 2010-13 with approval for the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF).
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- The Ministries of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and Labour and Employment (MoLE) jointly notified this.
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- NSQF is a framework under which skills are mainstreamed into the education system at the national level.
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- There are several advantages to NSQF, over the modular courses offered by the MSDE.
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- It streams students according to their aptitude and capacity into the general or vocational line from Class IX itself.
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- The certificates and diplomas granted by the MSDE and others are terminal in nature.
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- But the NSQF can lead a student to a bachelor’s degree in vocational education (B.Voc).
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- It also seamlessly provides pathways between education, skills and the job market.
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- It thereby de-stigmatises vocational education by making it part-and-parcel of the school and university system.
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- General education subjects such as reading, writing, arithmetic and basic science provide the necessary basics.
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- NSQF also recognises prior learning, through which an estimated 20 million school dropouts can get a second chance.
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- The National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015 also

highlights the importance of NSQF.
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What are the continuing concerns?

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- Education and skilling continue to have the disconnect in policy approaches.
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- Also, the role of Ministry of Skills and Entrepreneur Development (MSDE) is being perceived in isolation.
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- The MSDE is finding it extremely difficult to tackle the huge task and target of skilling 400 million.
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- The present target would have been less challenging with MHRD’s capital and human resources, along with MSDE.
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- [MHRD - 900 universities, 6,000 technical institutions, 3,200 polytechnics, 36,000 colleges, 1.55 million schools; MSDE - 10,000 ITIs]
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- Skill India has also been afflicted by insufficient industry partners and the failure to attract genuine skill knowledge providers.
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- The Apprenticeship Act, which has enormous potential, has also failed to enthuse the industry.
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- Some estimates indicate placements figures as low as 5 to 10%.
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What should be done?

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- The 10+2 needs to be implemented in its original spirit along with NSQF.
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- Importantly, the MSDE’s success as a ministry depends largely on its capacity to work closely with others.
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- These include 18 ministries, the state governments and the industry partners, who are the real agents of Skill India.
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- National Council on Skill Development headed by the PM could play a crucial role in ensuring the working of NSQF in its true spirit.
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- The university system can bring in uniformity throughout the country in terms of enforcing the National Occupation Standards and NSQF.
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- Skill universities have started to spring up in many states.
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- So without any delay, it is appropriate to have an apex body to ensure standardisation in this across the country.
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- E.g. a National Skills University could be considered similar to what IGNOU did in the 1980s for Open and Distance Learning (ODL)
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Source: Indian Express

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