Vocational Education in India

Mains: GS II - *Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

Why in News?

Recently, there is a huge decrease in skilled workforce in India due our traditional academic and rote-based education system.

What is vocational Education and training?

- **Vocational Education and Training (VET)** – It is a training that provides the specific, hands-on skills and knowledge needed for a particular job or trade, preparing students for direct entry into the workforce or self-employment
- **Examples** – Industrial Training Institutions (ITI), polytechnics, and privately run training institutes are categorized as vocational training.
- High schools under government initiatives such as Skill India, PMKVY, and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan also do the same.
- **Difference**

Aspect	Vocational Education	Traditional Education
Purpose	Career-specific skill development	Broad-based academic knowledge
Learning Mode	Hands-on, practical training	Theory-based classroom learning
Duration	Short-term (6 months to 3 years)	Long-term (3 to 5 years)
Cost	Affordable or subsidized	Generally more expensive
Job Readiness	Immediate employment opportunities	May require further specialization
Adaptability	Rapidly adjusts to industry trends	Slower curriculum updates
Outcome	Job or entrepreneurship	Degree, higher education, or research

What is the status of VET in India?

- **Skilled workforce in India** – Only 4% of India's workforce is formally trained.
- **Institutional coverage of VET system** – It is extensive with over 14,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and 25 lakh sanctioned seats.
- **Actual enrolment** – It was only around 12 lakh in 2022, implying just 48% seat utilization.
- **Low employment rates** – Our VET system struggles with not only low uptake but also modest employment rates for those who undergo training.
    - ***For instance**, in 2018, the employment rate among ITI graduates was 63%, whereas countries with robust VET systems such as Germany, Singapore, and Canada reported employment rates ranging between 80 and 90%.*
- **Schemes –** Indian government has introduced many schemes that reflect an increased focus on employment outcomes.
- **Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme** – ELI Part A offers up to Rs 15,000 for first-time EPFO-registered workers,
    - Revised ELI, Part B gives employers Rs 3,000 a month for every new hire.
    - Both ELI schemes push formalisation of jobs but have no skilling components.
- **The Prime Minister Internship Scheme** – It aims to provide one-year placements to youth in top companies, but lacks pathways to permanent jobs.
- **The ITI Upgradation Scheme** – It focuses on modernising 1,000 government ITIs in partnership with industry, but not necessarily the quality of training.

What are the challenges faced by India's VET system?

- **Stage of integration of VET** – In India, VET is a late addition offered after high-school education.
- This shortens the period available for hands-on training before the youth enter the job market, and also does not allow for orientation towards employable skills.
- Countries that introduce VET earlier in the schooling system show a stronger association with better labour market outcomes.
    - ***For example**, In Germany, VET is integrated at the upper secondary level through a dual system, combining school education with paid apprenticeships.*
- **Absence of a defined pathway** – India offers no formal academic progression from VET to mainstream higher education, nor does our education system offer credit transfers between systems.
    - ***For instance**, Singapore offers VET either as technical education at the post-secondary level or via polytechnics at the tertiary level through dual vocational tracks, but has defined pathways from VET to traditional university education.*
- This reduces the uptake of VET by many who wish to keep the option of traditional, academic education viable.
- **Perception and quality of VET in India** – In India, many courses are outdated and misaligned with industry needs.
- Singapore has industry led curriculum design, high instructor quality, regular audits and a mechanism that seeks constant feedback from employers and trainees.
    - ***For example,** Singapore also has a Skill Future Programme, where the government offers subsidies to upskill throughout one's career.*

- **Staff vacancy** – Over one-third of ITI instructor posts are vacant due to limited training capacity at National Skill Training Institutes.
- **Weak monitoring –** Quality monitoring is weak, with irregular ITI grading and no feedback systems.
- **Less private sector involvement** – In India, the engagement of employers in the private sector is limited, if not absent.
    - ***For example**, In Germany, Singapore, and Canada, governments fund VET institutions, while employers pay for apprenticeships, share training costs, and also help design curricula.*
- Medium and Small Scale Enterprises drive local job creation, but have low engagement with ITIs due to capacity constraints.
- **Lack of funds** – ITIs depend heavily on government funding, with minimal private sector investment in infrastructure and training apparatus.
    - ***For instance,** India allocates around 3 per cent of total education expenditure to VET, compared to 10-13 per cent in countries like Germany, Singapore, and Canada.*
- **Inefficient Sector Skill Councils** – Sector skill council play a key role in integrating training with industry needs, but lack state-level presence.

What can be done to overhaul India's VET programme?

- **Integrate VET into early schooling** – The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 recommends such integration, but progress has been slow.
- **Fast track reforms** – Implementing the National Credit Framework that defines clear progression pathways and aims to have a board for nationally recognised certifications.
- **Improve training quality** – Align VET courses with local industry demand through regular market assessments.
- **Expand recruitment** – Enlarge the NSTIs and fast-track instructor recruitment to address capacity gaps, and strengthen ITI grading by incorporating trainee feedback.
- **Partnerships** – Scale models like the Private Training Partner approach by leveraging public infrastructure and private expertise.
- **Utilize CSR** – Involve MSMEs, and strategically use CSR funding to boost industry relevance.
- **Increase public spending** – Ensure the financial viability of institutions by linking public funding to their performance and granting them autonomy to generate their own revenue.

What lies ahead?

- Overhauling of the skill development system could transform the level of productivity and employability of our workforce.
- Such a renovation is crucial for making vocational training a pathway to jobs an essential step towards a Viksit Bharat.

Reference

The India Express| Vocational Education in India



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering