

Designing Vocational Education (Vocational skill) Program

Mohammad Yusoof¹

ABSTRACT

Vocational education is an essential component of strategies to reduce and prevent child labor. Many children do not see the relevance of education to their lives hence drop out of school. In many cases, the decision not to send a child to school is taken by the parents, who would rather have their children enter the workplace as they do not see how education can help to put bread on the table. Vocational education programs can prevent children from ending up in situations of child labor by ensuring that trainees master skills and benefit from basic education classes that include training in health, safety, and their rights. Some programs also offer life-skills training to promote the beneficiaries' personal and social development.

Besides linking skills to local labor market demands, there are several other common features of effective vocational education and skills training programs for at-risk children. In addition, the training must be designed to be adaptable to the situation of each trainee by providing skills training in different environments, including in the community, training centers, or in private workshops with local artisans. Follow-up included support to trainees in either setting up businesses or seeking employment.

INTRODUCTION

Vocational education has been accorded high priority in the National Policy on Education, 1986. The NPE, 1986 inter alia states "The introduction of systematic, well-planned and rigorously implemented program of vocational education is crucial in the proposed educational re-organization. Vocational education will be a distinct stream intended to prepare students for identified vocations spanning several areas of activity". The NPE, 1986 set the target, to cover 10% higher secondary students under vocational courses by 1990 and 25% by 1995. The POA, 1992 reset the targets of diversification of students in vocational streams at + 2 level to 10% by 1995 and 25% by 2000. However an enrolment of only about 5% has been achieved.

As evident from the above, education, has to undergo a change to make it more relevant in the lives of the children, as perceived by parents. The dropout rate rises substantially after Class VIII and further more after Class X. Herein comes the relevance and role of vocational education, since that is one thing that will link education with employability. It would also retain more children in the secondary and higher secondary levels. The need for vocational education to be embedded in the education system also stems from the fact that 93% of our workforce is in the unorganized sector, most being illiterate or at a level below primary.

The National Mission on Skill Development, under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India has set a target of preparing 500 million skilled persons by 2022. On the other hand it is expected that approximately 75 to 80 million jobs will be created in India over the next 5 years; 75% of these new jobs will require vocational training to enhance the employability prospects. There is a pronounced 'skill gap' both in terms of quality and quantity; and current vocational education and training infrastructure is not geared to meet industry requirements (CII report on case for setting sector skill councils, 2009). This is a Contradiction of scenarios – supply demand mismatch on the one hand and rising population of educated unemployed. At present only 2% of the work force in the age group 15-29 has undergone formal vocational training and 8% have had non formal vocational training. 93% of the workforce is in the unorganized sector. Vocational education and training is provided in India by several educational

¹ Assistant professor, Dept of Teacher training and Non Formal Education, Institute of Advanced studied in Education, Faculty of Education, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi-25.

institutions / organizations functioning under about 17 different Ministries of the Government of India. In spite of this, of the 12.8 million new entrants to the workforce every year, the existing skill development capacity is only 3.1 million.

Vocational Education in a much broader sense cover education and skill development at all levels from post primary to tertiary education- both through formal and non formal programs.

The aims and objectives before the existing syllabi have been very realistic; yet considering the changing global scenario, they need revision and addition.

The following are identified as general objectives of vocational course:

1. To fulfill the national goals of development and the removal of unemployment and destitution
2. To impart education relevant to productivity, economic development and individual prosperity
3. To meet the needs of skilled and middle level man power for the growing sectors of economy, both organized and unorganized
4. To prepare students for self-reliance, gainful employability and self employment
5. To reduce mismatch between demand and supply of skilled manpower

Vocational courses differ from other formal education courses in that they are:

- a) designed to deliver industry standard training
- b) developed in consultation with industry representatives
- c) developed from national training packages
- d) delivered and assessed against industry specific competency standards and
- e) designed to provide clearly defined pathways to further education, training and employment.

Designing a vocational education and skills training program

Though ultimate goal of all types of education is vocation, many poor families due to their short sightedness look at education in terms of how it will support the family in the long term. If children can complete their education cycle and emerge with a set of skills that can facilitate their access to decent work with improved working conditions, this will make the program more appealing to parents, who are the main family decision-makers. However, technical skills, while required for employment, are not sufficient in themselves. They should be accompanied by basic education, such as literacy and numeracy, as well as vital life skills that will prepare them more fully for adult life.

1. Defining the purpose(s) of vocational education and skills training

In designing a vocational education and skills training program, it is necessary to carry out a comprehensive assessment survey of needs and expectations in the targeted communities, in consultation with all the relevant stakeholders. This needs assessment survey can determine whether there is a demand for such a program and if it can continue to be supported after a designed time line. It will be beneficial if it would be part of a more general education needs assessment. As with education generally, the linked issues of access and quality are crucial.

In general, vocational education and skills training are implemented in the following ways:

- *through central, regional, or local government institutions, which follow state curricula for specified trades, usually taught by government trainers and providing a nationally recognized accreditation to the successful trainee;*
- *through private institutions often called a “center-based” approach which may or may not use state curricula, depending on availability and relevance, and which hire*

trainers for specific trades and for specific periods depending on demand. In this and the preceding scenario, training is provided in a center and through specialized trainers. It may include a mix of practice and theory, and the trainee may spend some time in a working environment to put into practice the skills taught;

- *through private enterprises in the formal and non-formal sectors, using a practical, hands-on approach, whereby trainees are taught in a work environment. This often, but not always, takes the form of an “apprenticeship,” in which the trainee learns the relevant technical skills by working directly with experienced adults;*
- *through a community-based venue, often of an informal nature, such as a private home, a community center, or school.*

The training in these courses is usually highly flexible to suit the needs and situation of the trainees. Skills training can be a mix of the above. The needs assessment in the targeted community will determine the choice of service provider. Another early project design element is whether the provision of vocational education and skills training will be the main activity or whether it will be a sub-component of an integrated education strategy within the community. This decision will affect the manner in which training is offered and whether it will be linked directly to other forms of education. It will also affect the strategy for working within the existing education infrastructure or whether new institutions need to be created.

II. Accessibility of vocational education and skills training

The state vocational education and training institutions are often limited to major urban centers. Mainly these institutions are for the childrens who have obtained appropriate qualifications through the formal school system. Access to such institutions in rural and remote areas is often scarce or non-existent. Therefore, if any organization wishes to include vocational educational and skill training program, it will necessary to map state of private vocational institution already exists in the community or nearby. Identification of the venue, where delivery of skill training will be conducted, is also important. Public buildings may be utilized after the permission of the appropriate authority.

Accessibility issues which should be considered for designing Vocational Education Course (Vocational Skill Training Course):

- *Already available formal or non formal institute in the targeted community.*
- *The institutions or services are available in neighboring communities.*
- *Can capacity of these institutions increased? Sometimes seats remain vacant, if it is so, how can these seats be filled.*
- *Financial Agreement or MOU may be signed up with these institutions to fulfill the requirement of the community.*
- *Girls of the community may be prevented to attend these institution due to culture, tradition, religion, or other social impediments, perceived or real. It must also be addressed.*
- *If problems with accessibility are identifiable, how can these be most effectively addressed?*
- *Would getting support from the authorities is easy for example by providing trained teachers, building new classrooms, or supplying technical equipment for training purposes?*
- *Private sector may support the training or may not. Private sector may support the program through apprentice or in consultation tin designing curriculum.*

Ease of access is an aspect of accessibility:

The Course/ Training beneficiaries must be able to reach the training center and/or workshop easily and safely. Moreover, appropriate sanitary facilities must be in place on the training premises or in private workshops, especially for girls. If not, girls may drop out of the program.

There are various other impediments to vocational education and skills training including cultural or traditional barriers to the participation of girls or of certain social groups. The costs of training, whether

direct or indirect, can also be an obstacle. Trainees may be charged for the course, for tools, for use of equipment, and for examinations. In addition, there can be indirect costs, such as the purchase of appropriate clothing, health and safety equipment, books and materials, and transport to and from the institution. Such barriers obviously affect poor families in particular, putting vocational education and skills training beyond their reach. In such circumstances, families may find artisans and traders willing to take children on as apprentices. These informal apprenticeships are often exploitive and may be categorized as worst forms of child labor. In the worst cases, the apprentices are abused, take years to learn any useful skills, are paid very little or not at all, and do not benefit from basic education programs.

Stakeholders should be involved in identifying ways to overcome these barriers. Solutions may include persuading authorities to waive fees or to allow fees and others costs to be paid in installments. Better still is to help communities and families put in place resource mobilization or saving schemes that will help them to meet the costs of vocational education and training after the project ends. This is a particularly challenging aspect as skills training can require significant investment and is a relatively costly intervention.

The quality of vocational education and skills training

At present, formal vocational education and training systems in a number of countries are largely inadequate, some of the skills offered are obsolete, and access is limited. They are in urgent need to update the curricula and range of skills being taught and to upgrade the institutional infrastructure, including equipment. This needs a fair investment in upgrading overall system. The world of work has changed significantly over the past 20 years and continues to evolve rapidly.

The informal sector, in particular, is the largest area of employment growth in many countries around the world. Ministries of labor and education need to work together to identify the types of skills required in this new work environment and to adapt training programs accordingly. More training establishments are needed, particularly in rural and remote areas, with adequate staffing. Vocational education /Vocational Skill training institutions should also collaborate with employers, including in the informal sector, to establish effective apprenticeship systems and increase the number of accredited training providers. This takes time and investment, underscoring the need in the meantime to establish short- to medium-term strategies to provide non-formal vocational education and skills training to (former) child laborers and at-risk children.

The issues regarding quality to be considered in program design:

- i. The skills training courses offered should be relevant to the local labor market to ensure that trainees have access to employment or self-employment after completion the course.
- ii. Trainers should be sensitized to the causes and consequences of child labor and to the realities, needs, expectations, and capacities of the trainees. The trainer must be trained in pedagogical skills. The trainer must be made aware of the learning challenges of child laborers and at-risk children.
- iii. Training programs should include basic education. It should insure that if the trainee may join mainstream education courses after completing the course. Training Program should also cover subjects directly related to the well-being and holistic development of the trainee, including literacy and numeracy, business development and management, and life skills.
- iv. Extracurricular activities must be the part of vocational education program. These activities may include recreational activities, sporting activities, cultural activities, traditional, and social activities.
- v. Prior to the admission to the vocational skill training course, Trainees should be introduced to a range of skills areas. It helps to assess the area of the vocational stream which is best suited to the capacities, interests, needs, and expectations of the trainee. Girls should be encouraged to participate in traditional trades.

- vi. Training delivery such as time, duration of the course, venue etc should be flexible. The implemented of the training must also be through a variety of approaches that accommodate the situation of each trainee. Training may be center-based, community-based, or apprenticeships.
- vii. Before starting vocational training program, Awareness-raising activities should be carried out with the families of the target children and with the community members. Members of the community, particularly who use child labor must be invited to the training awareness-raising program. Such activities also reinforce the contribution of the general education and skill training to the development of business and community as well.
- viii. Appropriate tool kit/Instruments should be provided to the trainee to use during training and after the training. It motivates and encourages the trainee to participate in vocational skill training course.
- ix. Associations must built with other group of trainees, trade unions and other professional organizations. The basic role of these organizations is to defend the fundamental rights of the workers and working conditions. The trainee of vocational courses must have the knowledge of such objectives and rights as well. Various other information's can also be obtained from such organizations which help and support the trainees.
- x. To insure quality and relevance of the program/ course private sector employers must be involved in the development and implementation of the vocational education/Vocational skill training program/course.
- xi. Close collaboration should be established with relevant central and local authorities, particularly those concerned with education, labor, employment, and social services, to obtain formal accreditation of the training programs. This will make the institution nationally recognized, and hence the certificate of the training issued t the institution will also be recognized nationally.
- xii. Long term associations to government organizations to the training program will also be beneficial. The support to such organization may link the trainee to the formal stream of the education.
- xiii. Close collaboration should be established with the banks and other financial organizations to facilitate and support the trainee.
- xiv. Training programs should have the coverage area beyond the target group. Whenever possible to include at risk groups and other adult within the community and other then the community.
- xv. Follow-up and monitoring elements must be included in the vocational education and skill training program. It helps to ensure appropriate support in the job to the trainee or to startup new enterprise.

Pre-vocational training

Pre vocational training is an important aspect of the vocational education/ vocational skill training course. Such program helps to introduce vocational education/ vocational skill training program to the target group. In pre vocational training program beneficiaries and the other at risk groups participate for a short period/ duration. The introductory workshop/Training enables children /adults to try out trades that have been identified for the vocational training purpose. Guidance is also provided during the pre vocational education / skill training by the vocational counselors and employers. The counselors/ Employers help child/ trainee to chose the skill set best suited to their needs, abilities, academic capabilities and aspiration.

Pre vocational training can also be included in primary and secondary education programs. This helps younger's to decide what they would like to do in their future life. Short term training/ workshop may be provided during schooling or in vocation. Such programs also have academic motivation impact on the students.

Vocational Education/ Skill training provides direct link to the real life experience enabling them to support their families and themselves also. It has more and qualitative impact on the learning. The direct link to the local market/ entrepreneurs makes the program more effective. The vocational

programs are more flexible and decentralized. This also contributes the high performance work place. Hence it also contributes to the national economy and high quality life style of the citizens. Larger entrepreneurs are more interested in such skill training programs. These can also give good salaries to the trainees after training and scholarships during training also. This also causes the motivation and effective learning in vocational courses/ skill training courses.

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