

Vocational Training Institutions at Block Level for Empowering Persons with Disabilities: A Need of the hour

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ABSTRACT

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, is the omnibus legislation that deals with the rights and empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) face many challenges when looking to develop employable skills and in gaining meaningful employment and there is an urgent need to provide qualities vocational training and education through Block Level Institutions with extensive rural and urban coverage and high employability. There are 2.68 Crore (1.50 crore male and 1.18 crore female) Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in India as per census 2011. In the overall population, the number of disabled is proportionately higher in rural areas, accentuated by general poverty considerations and poor access to health services. The rural disabled persons are significantly disconnected from proper skills and self-employment. There is a strong economic imperative to increased labour force participation which will help to address country's shortage of skilled labour force, while at the same time reducing fiscal pressures associated with welfare dependency. To bring coherence and synergy to the system, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, in collaboration with Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship has prepared a National Action Plan for skill training of Persons with Disabilities. But at present differently challenged group has to be paid special attention. The main focus of this article to improve economic empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) by their active participation. Because Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) can made efforts for identification of issues and challenges faced by differently abled and aged persons. Modes of teaching learning should be sufficiently diversified to accommodate persons with different types of special needs, their strengths should be identify and capacities build upon their strengths through Block Level, as there are the people having their own strength areas and are not to be pitied but valued.

Keywords: Empowerment, PwDs, PRIs, Self-Employment, Vocational Education & Training,

JEL Classifications: R51, R21, J23.

INTRODUCTION

The rise in population made it obligatory for the government to increase employment opportunities in order to keep poverty at bay. As per Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC), 2011 it reveals that India still resides in villages as said by Mahatma Gandhi, nearly three fourth of its population i.e 17.9 crore households live in India with paltry income of five thousand



rupees a month. The data also provides the insights of deprivations in the rural part of India. There are over 16 million blind and 28 million visually impaired people in India who are often marginalized in terms of education opportunities, career opportunities or social standing as compared to their sighted counterparts. Due to lack of access to information, they are often unable to lead fulfilling, independent, economic and socially productive lives. The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, has reinforced the commitment of affirmative action and a resolve to empower the Persons with Disabilities and mainstream them in the society. The Act for the first time has legally endorsed their right to access to education and vocational training, employment, public transport and built environment, information and communications, and upholds their independence and dignity. The Act also treats disability as an issue of civil rights rather than health or welfare issue faced by the Persons with Disabilities is their exclusion from mainstream activities of the society and hence emphasizes full participation and equal opportunities. The emergence and evolution of Panchayati Raj system in India has in fact paved the way for further strengthening our democratic roots. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) still need enhanced participation from Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) men and women, socially backward sections and educated and enlightened citizens. Then only democracy becomes “For the People, of the people and by the people” in letter and spirit.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- (a) By setting up a joint skill development task committee at state and district levels comprising of different Industry, NSDC (National Skill Development Corporation) partner training companies and representative of Government to plan, implement and monitor skill development initiatives programmes for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).
- (b) There needs to establish a data bank at District Headquarters for accessing all types information and proper support for different types of disable persons with having a disability certificate to this effect by competent medical authority.
- (c) The skill training will be provided through different training institutions at Block level recognized by District Headquarter as per eligibility conditions contained herein.
- (d) Designing industry relevant programs and developing curriculum on knowledge sharing and skill development activities in specific sectors at Block level.

OUR NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR SKILL TRAINING OF PwDS

Our National Action Plan for Skilling the Persons with Disabilities has been prepared by the Department of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) with the following main components. A Project Monitoring Unit (PMU) to be set up in the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. The PMU would have the following components-

- (a) Training need assessment unit.
- (b) Content Generation unit.
- (c) Training Monitoring and Certification unit.
- (d) Employer Connect unit.



- (e) IT Unit to provide support for creation of E-learning modules, monitoring of training, E-certification and training centres / creation and maintenance of a job portal.

THE EXISTING SKILL TRAINING LANDSCAPE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PwDs)

- (a) National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).
- (b) Vocational training courses offered by national institutes of Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities and its affiliate organizations like National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDC), National Trust etc.
- (c) Ministry of Labor and Employment supervising more than 20 Vocational Rehabilitation Centers for Handicapped (VRCHs), more than 10,000 ITIs and more than 1000 Employment Exchanges.
- (d) Technical and Vocational courses, being offered through Community Colleges, IITs and Universities, affiliated with Ministry of Human Resources Development.
- (e) NGOS focusing on vocational training and skill development.
- (f) Private sector training organizations : Under the CSR initiative, many organizations have done exemplary work.
- (g) Public Sector Undertakings have also contributed substantially to vocational training of persons with disability.
- (h) National Urban Livelihood Mission of Ministry of Rural Development.
- (i) National Urban Livelihood Mission of Ministry of Urban Development.
- (j) Vocational training / livelihood programs of other Central Govt. Ministries and State Governments.

The training delivered through most of Vocational Education Training (VET) programmes in India is still limited in scope, and put together does not cater to the Vocational Education Training (VET) needs of large number of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) for rural youths (boys/girls) who need them to become employable. The Vocational Education Training (VET) provided by different ministries and different organizations, have no linkage with each other. Each is operating in isolation. Majority of such courses does not have backing from the Industries, and hence employment to the graduate of Vocational Education Training (VET) is not surety. With limited competencies acquired, these graduates do not have capabilities to establish their own enterprises, nor any support system exist to help them in this venture. Therefore, Vocational Education Training (VET) programme with limited utility and less market value have had low social acceptability. Radical reforms are needed in the Indian education and training system to suit the skills requirements of the local market, the industry and global economy.

THE BIG GAP

There are various groups that can be put under socially deprived groups-like SC, ST, disabled persons, other backward castes from amongst minorities, economically poor people specially from rural areas. Majority of them are having a life which is far below the human dignity. According to the Census 2011, about 1.34 crores persons with disabilities are in the employable age of 15 to 59 years. About 99 lakh persons with disabilities in the employable age



group were non-workers or are marginal workers. There an urgent need to scale up the skill training infrastructure in view of the huge demand-supply gap of our country. But today the training, being offered through various institutions / mechanisms is non-homogenous, lacks quality and is low on employability. In rural areas there are very low access of the present training infrastructure to the PwDs. It is also seen that there are very low level of involvement of private sector in the skill training of PwDs. The skill training offered by various ministries / departments to the PwDs is fragmented or overlapping.

EMERGING TRENDS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING

The Vocational Education Training (VET) system in our country is fragmented and its implementation is weak. The need of vocational education is indisputable. The system has not been created considering the development needs of the youth-rural, urban areas of the country, youth from economically and socially background communities, tribal youths etc. Habitation of children with different abilities would required suitable modifications in vocational programmes and changes in instructional strategies to suit their needs. This will help them to integrate with the main stream Vocational Education Training (VET) programmes. The training institutions should initiate programmes suited to the needs of persons with different disabilities. Systematic reforms in Vocational Education Training (VET) are needed to increase the following in the management and implementation of Vocational Education Training (VET) programmes.

- **Efficiency :** (1) Separate Management Structure (2) Capacity Building of Managers (3) Better Co-ordination
- **Effectiveness :** (1) Adequate infrastructure (2) Stable & sustain funding (3) Updated & upgraded curriculum content and delivery (4) Simple accreditation
- **Transparency :** (1) Good Governance (2) Self- accountability (3) Quality assurance

Present Working of Scheme related to Self employment

The SGSY was somewhat intended to provide self-employment to millions of villagers. Poor families living below the poverty line were organized into Self-help groups (SHG) established with a mixture of government subsidy and credit from investment banks. The main aim of these SHGs was to bring these poor families above the poverty line and concentrate on income generation through combined effort.

The scheme recommended the establishment of activity clusters or clusters of villagers grouped together based on their skills and abilities. Each of these activity clusters worked on a specific activity chosen based on the aptitude and skill of the people, availability of resources and market potentiality. The SHGs are aided, supported and trained by NGOs, CBOs, individuals, banks and self-help promoting institutions. Government-run District Level Development Agencies (DRDA) and the respective State governments also provided training and financial aid. The programme focuses on establishing microenterprises in rural areas. The SHGs created may have a varying number of members based on the terrain and physical abilities of the members. It goes through three stages of creation.



- Group formation.
- Capital formation through the revolving fund and skill development and
- Taking up of economic activity for skill generation.

The SHGs are usually created by selecting individuals from the Below Poverty Line (BPL) list provided by the Gram Sabha. The SHGs are divided into various blocks and each of these blocks concentrated on 4-5 key activities. The SGSY is mainly run through government-run DRDAs with support from local private institution, banks and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The Government also assists villagers in marketing their products by organizing melas or fairs, exhibitions, etc.,. The Swarna Jayanti Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY) has been renamed as National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). With this the scheme will be made universal, more focused and time bound for poverty alleviation in our rural India.

THE NEED FOR BLOCK LEVEL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING INSTITUTION AT PRESENT

There has been a great concern expressed over the relevance of vocational courses being taught in vocational schools which tend to be biased towards traditional skills and crafts on a very broad base. In future, demands of knowledge and skills relevant to the industry needs will increase. In our rural India there are number of disable children and youth those are not getting opportunities to acquire the updated skills and knowledge to enhance their potential enabling them to live and work with dignity and participate fully in development. Therefore, need based courses should be designed and offered through flexible delivery system through Block level with the help of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Only PRIs bodies could help properly by their active participation as well as other development activities with the support of Self Help Group (SHG). All the information of disable persons and their day-to-day related activities should be update by web based monitoring system. This type of Vocational Education & Training opportunities address the issues of equity and efficiency in education and training system and therefore provide access to large number of people who want initial training, and some others who want continuous or further training for a decent earning and sustainable living.

Implementing Agencies

The Scheme will be implemented by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), Mumbai, a statutory body created by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act, 1956, which will be the single nodal agency at the national level. At the State level, the scheme will be implemented through State Directorates of KVIC, State Khadi and Village Industries Boards (KVIBs) and District Industries Centres in rural areas. In urban areas, the Scheme will be implemented by the State District Industries Centres (DICs) only. KVIC will coordinate with State KVIBs/State DICs and monitor performance in rural and urban areas. KVIC and DICs will also involve NSIC, Udyami Mitras empanelled under Rajiv Gandhi Udyami Mitra Yojana(RGUMY), Panchayati Raj Institutions and other NGOs of repute in identification of beneficiaries under PMEGP.

Identification of beneficiaries for financial assistance

The identification of beneficiaries will be done at the district level by a Task Force consisting of representatives from KVIC/State KVIB and State DICs and banks. The Task force



would be headed by the District Magistrate / Deputy Commissioner / Collector concerned. The bankers should be involved right from the beginning to ensure that bunching of applications is avoided. However, the applicants, who have already undergone training of at least 2 weeks under Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) / Skill Development Programme (SDP)/Entrepreneurship cum Skill Development Programme (ESDP) through State, District and Block level Vocational Education & Training (VT) will be allowed to submit applications directly to Banks.

However, the Banks will refer the application to the Task Force for its consideration. Exaggeration in the cost of the project with a view only to availing higher amount of subsidy should not be allowed. KVIC will devise a score card in consultation with SBI and RBI, and forward it to the District Level Task Force and other State/District functionaries. This score board will form the basis for the selection of beneficiaries. This score card will also be displayed on the websites of KVIC and Ministry. The selection process should be through a transparent, objective and fair process and Panchayati Raj Institutions should be involved in the process of selection.

Strategies to overcome the challenges of accelerating rural employment

Sl.No	Challenges	Strategies
1	Migration from rural to urban areas.	Government should step up their efforts skill and retraining activities to address the gaps between demand and supply of work skills and qualification to address long term unemployment PRI bodies.
2	Slowdown of global and local economy	Deliver integrated project based infrastructure in the rural areas. Creation of additional employment in rural areas on works of durable utility to the community.
3	Lack of employment opportunities for skilled youth (mostly in the age group of 18 -25 years)	There is a need to seriously invest and build skills amongst the youth. A complete overhaul of our education system closely integrating it with an effective apprenticeship regime.
4	Growing informal employment which counts for 94 per cent of the workforce	Broad strategy and policy package for a gradual formalization of informal activities and measures carefully adjusted for different categories of informal workers: Empowering informal workers through promoting organizations of informal workers and representation of informal workers in policy making and rule setting bodies. Increasing the earnings and growth potential of informal workers providing through independent Vocational Education and Training Institute set up.



CONCLUSION

Today, the rural youth are in the need of appropriate and satisfying jobs within the villages or local market. The sustainable solution lies in increasing the productivity of agricultural sector by accelerating public and private sector in infrastructure technology and proper skills. A well diversified agricultural growth will enhance employment opportunities. The Vocational Education & Training (VET) programmes need to be cost-effective by involving people themselves through Panchayati Raj Institutions with present working support of Institutional Strengthening of Gram Panchayats Project (ISGPP) and NGO so that viable and worthwhile projects are taken up. It is necessary ensure a robust regulatory and accreditation framework, along with proper certification of Vocational & Education & Training (VET). This will allow easier mobility into higher education streams, enhancing the value of such training and providing continuous opportunity for up-gradation of these skills. The rural people should be provided inputs like credit, marketing facilities, infrastructure and so on which will enhance their income generating capacity and strengthen their entrepreneurial capacity. It is expected that the present government's step in this respect may yield some fruits in near future.

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