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Article

## **Skill Education for Self Reliant Bharat: Gandhian Perspective and Modi's Hope**

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Skill education or vocational education and training, also called career education and technical education and training, prepares learners for jobs that are based in manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic and totally related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation, hence the term in which the learner participates. It is sometimes referred to as technical education, as the learner directly develops expertise in a particular group of techniques or technology.<sup>1</sup>

### **India Needs Skill-oriented Education to Boost Employability<sup>2</sup>**

Trade and industry sectors want their potential employees assessed in various ways. It is done to evaluate the candidates' abilities matching the desired work profile. However, most often the grudge is skill deficit or skills mismatch. **Elets News Network** (ENN) presents a report based on an interaction with industry-academia experts on how government, industry and academia can play a helpful role in skill development.

On the occasion of the launch of Skill India Mission in 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: "In the coming decades, the largest workforce required by the world will be provided by India." The Government thus set a target to create 500 million skilled workforce by 2022, accordingly.

India is steadily working to become a pool of market-ready talent for the world at large and not just for domestic needs. With India having the world's largest youth population (64 per cent of 1.3 billion in the working-age group); it is well-known that the education system will have to continue to take the lead role to provide the youngsters required skills and training, especially to higher education students.

### **Skilling the Roots for a better growth : Why skill-based Education is a need in India<sup>3</sup>**

Today skill-based education is not a choice but a need in India. The irreconcilable difference in our country is that while the demand for skilled professionals is quite high, the desire to get skilled is considerably low. Pure academic subjects are always more popular with learners, parents and society as socially acceptable qualifications. Most youth in the country still incorrectly believe that skill-based education leads to low paid jobs and it is perceived to be meant for only academically weak students.

India's education system is also characterized by a high 'school dropout rate', with as many as 56.8 per cent students leaving school before reaching the qualifying examination of 10th standard. There is a definite need for skill development to be brought to the forefront to enable this section of society to become employable.

If we look at the graduate segment, according to one particular study, only 25 per cent are considered "employable" by employers. The biggest challenge is the lack of employability skills. As a result, the individual's ability in the work environment in terms of communication, presentation, interpersonal skills, teamwork, etc. does not meet the desired expectations. Inculcating employability skills requires huge efforts on the part of our education system to bring in the transition to the role from a "student" to a worker and prepare the candidates for the modern working world.

While these issues persisted, successive governments at the Centre worked towards creating multiple agencies to address the challenge of skilling India. Challenges still remain in aligning the ambition of youth with the industry requirements. There are few lessons that India can learn from countries who have championed skilling strategy. Leading the pack is Germany, with its dual model of VET, adopted and customized by various countries. While no model can be replicated as is, the German model still has a lot to offer at policy level along with industry participation and ongoing support from ground level. Our close neighbour China too follows the TVET system, which takes into account the requirements of local industry and the

state bears more than 70% of the cost. In Turkey, vocational training students undergo hands-on practice in specially designed work areas – much like our ITI's that are housed in close vicinity of industrial belts. This hands-on practice results in the reduction of time spent on OJTs' as well as enhances the shop floor skills of the candidates, thereby making them work ready as soon as they are certified.

Imparting technical skills is something most training institutes do well. Many ITIs today harness technologies like smart classrooms, blended learning and MOOC as mechanisms to share resources and course elements like practicals that cannot be easily replicated. The National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL) from the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), is no longer just about disseminating engineering courses of the IITs. The programme has assembled more than 950 courses comprising 30,000+ video hours, many of which are being usefully harnessed as a massively online open course resource by technical training institutes. Even at the school level, the Ministry of Human Resources (MoRD) has rolled out the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) of implementing Vocationalisation of Higher Secondary Education (VHSE). This is similar to the German system of dual TVT.

Affirmative steps have been taken to vocational schools. With 'Catch them young' mantra, VHSE Scheme has mandated to add vocational education as a subject from class IX onwards till XIIth. The job roles comply with National Skills Qualifications Framework. Skilling is imparted by a professional trainer and Centum Learning is playing a pivotal role in the implementation of vocational education in more than 1150 schools across 15 states, where it has successfully trained more than 85,000 students. The novel training intervention includes face-to-face classes by professional trainers, practical classes, field visits/ industry visits, guest lectures, preparation of models/ charts/ projects, preparation of student portfolios and role-plays. Skilling students at UG level, the novel approach to introduce B.Voc Bachelors in Vocational Degree, is largely targeted towards youth who want to enhance their employability by mastering their field of work. Centum has become a key implementation partner, working with Government of Himachal Pradesh to conduct work-integrated B.Voc courses for students who have completed their XIIth standard or equivalent.

According to the India Employment Report 2016 issued by the Institute for Human Development (IHD), India will need to create at least 1.6 crore jobs over the next 15 years to come close to a point where there is neither surplus labour nor

unemployment. Skilling needs an active education-industry partnership. Industry can play a very important role by quickly adopting schemes like an apprenticeship or setting aside some CSR budgets for skilling for youth. India can grow only if India is Skilled. For a skilled India, all the stakeholders need to work closely to make this dream come true.

#### **Thought of Mahatma Gandhi on Basic/Skill Education<sup>4</sup>**

Gandhi gave a new education system of our country in form of basic education.

Attributes of Basic Education in below:

1. Basic education should be based on Handcrafted.
2. Education should be self reliant therefore students should be able to manage these daily routine costs.
3. The medium of education should be in tongue-language.

Mahatma Gandhi had a holistic concept of human development contributing to national growth and development and believed in the idea of character building, skilling and man making. The concept of trusteeship he believed would pave the way to construct small, self-reliant communities with its ideal citizens being all industrious, self-respecting and generous individuals living in a small co-operatives and community. He wished that skills and some local craft should be made as medium of education for children so that they develop their mind, body and soul in a harmonious way and also meet the needs of their future life. These Gandhian precepts and educational thoughts are relevant for development and providing solutions of the current problems like unemployment, poverty, corruption delinquency, criminality and many others.

No wonder Mahatma Gandhi's views on a classless society and on the 'primacy of reason over religions' through education have inspired and invigorated national decisions and outcomes on educational policy and practice. Let me cite that the Kothari Commission Report (1964 -66) was largely inspired by Gandhian precepts for reforms in schooling, technical training and even higher education guide as a beacon of hope even today. The pursuit of education policy and planning being modelled in the New Education Policy has to promote, pursue and practice skilling and vocational aspects of learning by ensuring, dignity of labour, life skills, character building, value education and other values inculcated early in life. On higher education, he asserted "I would revolutionize college education and relate it

to national necessities. There would be degrees for mechanical and other engineers. They would be attached to the different industries which should pay for the training of the graduates they need".

These tenets of Gandhiji's concept of craft-centric and need centric education finds an echo in the transition from rote learning to affirmative learning now being propounded. This approach is now being hailed as the best way forward for a meaningful and progressive society, even for nonviolent and nonkilling positive peace.

Gandhiji's own contribution to education has been unique considering that the advent of British colonial rule in India, brought forth an alien system of imperial education contrary to the traditional and time tested, well distilled, holistic and all-inclusive educational system of India. It is in this spirit that we have to urgently repair the damage to Indian education system that has brought in differences of race, caste religion but also the legacy of British Raj governance, class-consciousness and the crave for western materialism. Gandhiji's important works and writings on education have been meticulously brought forth by Bharatan Kumarappa<sup>5</sup> in his two excellent works 'Basic Education' (1951) and 'Towards New Education' (1953). Gandhiji's philosophy of education is a harmonious blending of Idealism which provides the basis whereas pragmatism puts the precepts into practice. The notion of 'education for life, education through life, and education throughout life" very well sums up the all-round development of the individual and (wo)man making. Mahatma Gandhi's quest for self-realisation was through eternal humility and wisdom that is best portrayed in his philosophy of life long education that had elements of pursuit of truth, nonviolent action, fearlessness and satyagraha.

Gandhiji believed in self-sacrifice and a philosophy of life that helped him in developing his philosophy of Education as a true source of inspiration where Primary Education is to prepare our youth to the ever challenging task of being morally sound, independent, constructive, productive and responsible future citizens who will be self-employed through skill training. Gandhiji believed that the ultimate aim of life is to seek Truth or God as he explained - "By education I mean all-round drawing out of the best in child's and man's body, mind and spirit. Literacy is neither the beginning nor the end of education. This is only a means through which man or woman can be educated."

More than learning of the three R's Reading, Writing and Arithmetic in school, he insisted on development of H's Hand, Heart and Head. Mahatma Gandhi believed that the separation of learning from labor would result in social injustice. In dynamic societies such as ours, he advocated education for self-reliance and the capacity to earn one's livelihood as the main aim of education. He advocated that learning and earning do go together with vocational education and cultural advancement.

Gandhiji wrote, "To develop the self is to build character and to prepare the self for complete realization and realization of Godliness'. In his scheme of things learning and knowledge must be practice based where the curriculum is activity cantered, so pragmatic and true in the modern-day approach to education. Gandhiji insisted that his system would lead to communal harmony because it would be the same for all; it would thus be "practical religion, the religion of self-help". Gandhiji disapproved rote learning and considered it as defective and emphasized to make skills and vocations as means of education. Gandhiji emphasized on the following principles in his teaching methodology: for mental development, training of senses and parts of the body be given; reading should precede the teaching of writing; more opportunities should be given for learning by doing; encouragement be given to learning by experience; Correlation be established in the teaching methods and learning experiences.

The Mahatma did show us the way forward and for our youth to be skilled not for degrees but for jobs and gainful employment for an India of the new century where environmentalism, human consciousness and moral values will rule and usher in an affirmative society for progressive and positive peace.

"The state of the world today teaches us that a self-reliant India (Atma-nirbhar Bharat) is the only path," said Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a televised national address on May 12 that outlined his government's response to the ongoing pandemic. "Our responsibility to make the 21st century, the century of India will be fulfilled by the pledge of self-reliant India."

Though the PM clarified that his call for self-reliance should not be mistaken for "self-centric arrangements", this is cold comfort for those who remember the suffocating drabness of pre-liberalisation India. Bluntly put, the rhetoric of self-reliance could easily slide into the familiar territory of closed-mindedness, cronyism and mediocrity.<sup>6</sup>

Reiterating the importance of “Self-reliant India”, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday 31 May advocated curbs on imports, as he cited several examples of individual initiatives of ‘Make in India’ and ‘Vocal for Local’.

“There are many products that find their way into the country from outside, resulting in wasteful expenditure on part of honest tax-payers. Their substitutes can easily be manufactured in India,” he said in his ‘Mann Ki Baat’ address.

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