

Chapter 17

Vocational Education and Training for Muslim Minorities: Opportunities in the Open and Distance Learning System

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ABSTRACT

Last year Prime Minister of India launched a nationwide programme called “Make in India” to encourage multinational and domestic companies to manufacture their products in India. The main objectives are not only to bring in foreign direct investment but also provide millions of youth to gainfully employed using the skill development programme. To realize the dream India needs skilled workforce of almost 110 million by 2022. The challenges are many. Recent NSSO survey among the religious groups find Muslims are mostly employed in the vocational sectors without any formal training and position of Muslim women is worst among them. Open and distance learning system opens up the opportunities for the minorities. Open schools and universities offer courses in the traditional vocational course which would help them to refine their skills and also enhance and augment the capacities of the Muslim learners. Certification of training also helps them to be employed in private and government sectors. In this paper, opportunities thrown open by the ODL will be discussed.

INTRODUCTION

In global world India is one of those few nations who has the highest percentage (70%) of human resource especially in the age group of 10-35 years (UN, 2012). According to 2011 census, youth population in the country including adolescents is around 550 million (Planning Commission, 2012). This phenomenal rise in the youth population has made India the youngest nation with a demographic dividend appearing to be a reality and population growing at 1.8% per annum, India is expected to become the global powerhouse of human resource by 2025. In the emerging era of knowledge-driven society, declining workforce and aging population in developed countries, India with its large young population has the

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-2621-6.ch017

opportunity to position itself as a quality source of skilled manpower for the world (Majumdar, 2012). Transforming this huge human resource into capital resource is the biggest challenge country is facing today. Education is considered as the special purpose vehicle through which it can be realized. The present liberal kind of education being offered at school and higher level would create knowledge which is required for basic development of human beings. It is not that we do not need such kind of education. Whether it is University Education Commission (1948) or National Policy of Education (1986) if we look at the objectives of education definitely it is heavily inclined towards the liberal kind of education. But, the skill based education was always need of the hour especially after India got Independence, and in the backdrop of Wardha Scheme of Education where it was stressed that craft should be the centre of education be it school or at higher level but unfortunately it never become the centre of education as cautioned by Zakir Hussain committee while reviewing the Gandhian Philosophy of education. Though in 1952, Secondary Education Commission felt the need to promote technical skill and efficiency at all stages. Similar kind of recommendation was given by Kothari Commission (1964) which said that almost 25% of the students graduating from schools should be diverted towards skill based education. National Policy of Education (1986) too has considered higher secondary stage of school education as crucial since it is at this stage that necessary skills and competencies are acquired which enable the students to enter the world of work or to go for higher education. 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. As a result Indian government launched the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Vocationalization of education in 1988 which was revised in 1992 (POA, 1992). The objectives of the scheme were: (i) to provide diversification of educational opportunities so as to enhance individual employability; (ii) to reduce the mismatch between demand and supply of skilled human resource, and (iii) to provide an alternative for those pursuing higher education. Under the scheme vocational courses are provided in general schools with 2 years duration after secondary stage. As regards funding, 100% financial assistance had been given by the Central Government for 11 components, fund was shared 50:50 between the Centre and the State for 5 components and 100% funding is provided by the respective State Government/UT in case of 2 components. Generally Rs. 1 lakh was provided for each vocational course for construction of laboratory and purchase of equipment. The scheme provided for recruitment of 2 full-time teachers and 1 part-time teacher per course. The vocational courses were of fixed 2 years' duration, although the scheme included a provision of variable duration, ranging from 1 to 3 years. The scheme was implemented through formal and non-formal sector via participation of NGOs. The Scheme, so far, has created infrastructure of 21000 sections in 9619 schools and creating a capacity of about 10 lakh students at + 2 level. The grants released so far since the inception of the scheme is Rs. 765 crore (MHRD website, 2015). But the 61st NSSO survey (2004-05) provides us the gloomy picture. Some of the results are:

1. Almost 97% of individuals in the age bracket of 15–60 years had limited exposure to technical education, which is another indicator of low skills sets among Indians.
2. According to the occupational profile of India's workforce, 90% of the workforce population is employed in skill-based jobs, whereas more than 90% had no exposure to vocational education or training even though more than half of the seats remain unutilized in vocational education.
3. There is a lack of training facilities and skills development in as many as 20 high-growth industries such as logistics, healthcare, construction, hospitality and automobiles.

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