

Vocational Education

What is our usual idea of an educated person? It is that he must have read many books and read them intelligently. We may laugh over the super-subtleties or we may scoff at the book worm pouring over voluminous books—but that is our idea of an educated person or used to be. Of late, background and aptitude count.

Vocational education has many advantages. It helps a person choose his career early in life and formally train for it. This increases the productive capacity of a country. If we have armies of architects, engineers, doctors, chemists and other persons trained in different vocations, then we shall be able to produce more and more and make the nation strong and prosperous. If the USA, Germany, Japan, Israel and other countries are progressing with rapid strides, it is because they have a large number of technologists and technicians.

This also saves wastage. Persons who are not fit for an academic career, will not crowd the corridors of universities, lowering their standards, as is presently happening. If in this context India is lagging behind Western countries, it is because our erstwhile alien rulers were not interested in promoting the trades and making us industrially advanced. They wanted persons for subordinate administrative jobs which served their purpose. They got such persons through a formal theoretical and bookish education.

Although vocational has its advantages, we ought proceed with caution. It is theoretical education, both humanities and scientific, that develops the mind, and no person can do well unless his intelligence has been honed and his vision widened.

Which is possible only through literature, philosophy and general science. If we neglect theoretical learning, we shall produce a nation of mechanics, not of educated, capable persons. In some countries, cultural education is imparted along with technical skills. We ought not forget that vocational education fulfils itself only when it has succeeded in widening the mind and in fitting a person for life through vocational expertise and good background.

Vocational education is given due importance in the 10+2 recommended by the Kothari Commission in 1961. The higher secondary stage was envisaged with more accent on vocationalisation involving diversification and specialization in subjects suited to the aptitude of students. Vocationalisation was introduced in 11 states and three union territories. There are 115 vocational courses already offered. An all India board of vocational education has been set up with

stipendiary schemes under the Union Ministry of Education. As of now vocational subjects are available at college level.

Vocational education prepares pupils to understand social realities so that they themselves work out their own potential. This type of education prepares crucial middle level of trained manpower in certain specific competencies without which neither production can be increased nor technical service properly manned.

Nor does it prepare students only for different jobs in industry, offices, hospitals, factories, but for self-employment as well. For this end, manpower requirements are projected in advance and vocational institutions planned accordingly. Moreover the range of available occupations and trends are anticipated.

Quite some issues still remain unattended to in the monitoring and implementation of vocalization of education. First, regional needs and local employment capacity were hardly taken into account. Secondly, minimum qualifications for recruitment to the services in government and public sector enterprises were not modified. And no preference was given to those completing the vocationalised stream. Thirdly, there is lack of chances and preferences to the students to improve their qualifications in the same course in higher vocational institutions. Fourthly, vocational courses were introduced in the states very hurriedly without adequate preparation. And lastly, heads of institutions where these courses were introduced have no clear concept of such education. So were the teachers. The scheme could not make much headway.

An important prerequisite for the successful implementation of the programme is to bring about co-operation and co-ordination among agencies, departments, institutions working in the areas of vocational education for the purpose of training and placement. No special cell for vocational education exists in the directorate of Education.

Vocationalisation signals a major transformation in the country's educational system. So it cannot be achieved without structural and functional changes in the new scheme of things.

Measures are afoot to recognize vocational education in order to put it on the same wavelength as industry, agriculture, communication and other productive sectors of the Indian economy. The decision to delink technical jobs from degrees augurs well for this pattern of skills, knowledge and training based education that is catching up steadily.