



Learning to compete

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Skill India needs a sharp realignment if it is to meaningfully transform people's life chances

- In 2013, India's skill agenda got a push when the government introduced the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF).
- This organizes all qualifications according to a series of levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude, just like classes in general academic education.
- For each trade/occupation or professional qualification, course content should be prepared that corresponds to higher and higher level of professional knowledge and practical experience.
- The framework was to be implemented by December 27, 2018.
- The Ministry mandated that all training/educational programmes/courses be NSQF-compliant, and all training and educational institutions define eligibility criteria for admission to various courses in terms of NSQF levels, by that time.
- In this article, we look at NSQF implementation through the prism of national skill competitions, or India Skills, a commendable initiative of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- Twenty-seven States participated in India Skills 2018, held in Delhi.
- Maharashtra led the medals tally, followed by Odisha and Delhi.
- Now, teams will be selected to represent India at the 45th World Skills Competition, scheduled in Russia this year.
- It was also heartening that the Abilympics was included in India Skills 2018, for Persons with Disabilities.

Course curriculum not clear

- However, there are two priorities requiring action before the next round of India Skills is held.
- From which training programmes and NSQF courses did participants come to the competition?
- The answers to this would hold the key to improve Skill India

government programmes dramatically.

- Meanwhile, the India Skills competition has provided evidence that many reforms are critical and urgent.
- This points to the need for more holistic training and the need to re-examine the narrow, short-term NSQF-based NSDC courses to include skills in broader occupation groups, so that trainees are skilled enough to compete at the international level.
- There is no real alignment between the Human Resource Development Ministry (responsible for the school level and Bachelor of Vocation courses) and the Ministry of Skill Development (responsible for non-school/non-university-related vocational courses).

Too many councils

- We must also reduce complications caused by too many Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) anchoring skill courses.
- World Skills holds competitions in construction and building technology, transportation and logistics, manufacturing and engineering technology, information and communication technology, creative arts and fashion, and social and personal services.
- To cater to these sectors, 19 SSCs participated in India Skills 2018 as knowledge partners with the help of industry or academic institutions.
- Most of the NSDC-SSC- approved training does not produce students who can showcase “holistic” skills for broad occupational groups in such competitions.
- India could learn a lesson from Germany, which imparts skills in just 340 occupation groups.
- Vocational education must be imparted in broadly defined occupational skills, so that if job descriptions change over a youth’s career, she is able to adapt to changing technologies and changing job roles.

Conclusion

Skill India needs a sharp realignment, if India is to perform well in the World Skills competition later this year.

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