



Rebooting the system for a skills upgrade

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Highlights

- The ITIs were initiated in the 1950s. In a span of 60 years, until 2007, around 1,896 public and 2,000 private ITIs were set up.
- However, in a 10-year period from 2007, more than 9,000 additional private ITIs were accredited.
- Disturbing facts such as these come from the report of the Standing Committee on Labour (2017-18) headed by Bharatiya Janata Party MP Kirit Somaiya, on the “Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Skill Development Initiative Scheme” of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- What explains this huge private sector scale-up as the committee says that it is not efficiency but a disregard for norms and standards.

Issues

- The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) today has more than 6,000 private training centres. Since it has short-term courses and its centres open and close frequently, it is all the more prone to a dilution of standards.
- Private training partners have mushroomed at the rate of five a day (mostly with government support) and it is clear that the government has been unable to regulate private institutions for quality.
- The lack of a regulator for skill development, with teeth, has led to poor quality affiliation, assessment and certification.
- Private-ITI accreditation troubles started when the Quality Council of India (QCI), a private body, was hired due to “high workload of affiliation and shortage of [government] staff”.
- The QCI did not follow accreditation norms created by the National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) and it appears that neither scale nor standard was achieved, but only speed.
- ‘Speed’ now risks the future of 13.8 lakh students (on an average, 206 students per ITI) studying in these substandard ITIs, which can be closed any time.

The ITIs have a unique functioning set-up. While they were formed under the government’s Craftsman Training Scheme scheme, their day-to-day administration, finances and admissions are with State governments.

National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT)

- The NCVT performs an advisory role.

- The ITIs often run into issues with no one to take ownership.
- A case in point is the examination process — the question paper is prepared by the NCVT, but administered and evaluated by instructors of the State Councils for VT.
- The NCVT is just a stamp with no role in actually assessing quality wondering how can quality outcomes be expected without quality assessments

Other issues

- There are 183 cases pending in High Courts on non-compliance of norms by the ITIs.
- The short-term training programmes of the Ministry evade any scrutiny and action.
- The Standard Training Assessment and Reward scheme spent Rs.850 crore in 2013-14 with no norms for quality. There were no Aadhaar checks, attendance requirements and batch size limitations. Private training operators have made a profit with no court cases.

A good point to start the reforms would be the Sharda Prasad Committee recommendations.

Recommendations

Broad based reforms

- A national board for all skill development programmes.
- The core work (accreditation, assessment, certification and course standards) cannot be outsourced. Like every other education board (such as the CBSE), a board is required in vocational training that is accountable.
- Since we have the NCVT as a legacy, it should be used as a kernel to constitute the board.
- We should also have a mandatory rating system for the ITIs that is published periodically
- There should be one system, with one law and one national vocational education and training system.
- Unified legal framework can facilitate such unification. The absence of a law has only weakened regulation and monitoring.
- What we need is a national vocational act that replaces all scattered regulations — recommended in the 12th Five Year Plan.

Micro-institutional reforms

- The ITIs have many internal issues such as staffing and salaries that need attention, as the NILERD nationwide survey in 2011 had found.
- There is also a critical need to reskill ITI teachers and maintain the student-teacher ratio. Since technology obsolescence is a continuous challenge, financial support envisaged through the NSDC should be extended to the ITIs.
- Institutional reforms such as moving the office of the Directorate General of Employment (the arm that has all data on employment) from the Ministry of Labour to the MSDE would help. It would also complement the Directorate General of Training already under MSDE.

Employers and financing

- Given the scale of our demographic challenge, a belief that financing from corporate social responsibility, multilateral organisations such as the World Bank, and the

government will meet the financial needs for skill development is wishful thinking.

- Reimbursable industry contribution (RIC) — a 1-2% payroll tax that will be reimbursed when employers train using public/private infrastructure and provide data.
- RIC, which is implemented in 62 other countries, was recommended in the 12th Plan and is an idea whose time has come.

ITIs are suffering due to poor institutional accreditation. Placement in NSDC training has been less than 15%. Maybe if we take care of the present, we will be better prepared for the future.

Source: [The Hindu](#)



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