

Book Review: India. International Handbook of Vocational Education and Training

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Book Review

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Purpose

The book is based on the authors' work for over a decade in India in the field of vocational education and training (VET). India is a country with diverse social, economic, linguistic, and religious characteristics. The Constitution of India has kept education in the concurrent list by giving responsibilities to both central and federal (state) governments.

Globalisation and market economy encouraged a huge number of private players to enter the educational sector, when they realised that the new demand for high-skilled labour meant more people would need training for these jobs. In this context, VET plays a significant role among India's learners.

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Content

Wessels and Pilz begin by introducing India's geographical, societal, political, and economic conditions. It becomes important to understand these parameters so one can recognize VET in relation to general education. India is a multi-ethnic, multireligious, and multilingualistic country with uneven economic progress. The authors clearly explain the structure of the Indian educational system. Politically, India is divided into 29 states and nine union territories. The authors explain the role of the Hindu caste system and its significance in choosing a profession. The economic condition of the family also plays a significant role in choosing vocational education as a stream in school. In the early 1990s, India liberalized, modernized, and diversified its economy. The growth and development of the economy after liberalization in the secondary and tertiary sectors increased the demand for skilled labour. The authors explain India's growth after liberalization and the restructuring of its economy through statistics, which help readers understand the need to strengthen vocational education and training. The authors state that the tertiary sector (service sector) has contributed much to achieve a higher GDP. The primary sector, such as agriculture and related activities, has only contributed marginally even though more than 60 per cent of the rural population depends on agriculture. The authors also explain the existing status of diversified economic activities by stating that infrastructure development; the automobile, chemical, and pharmaceutical industries; textile engineering; and the service sector play major roles in contributing to a higher GDP and that 60 per cent of the GDP has come from the service sector. Information Technology (IT), Informational Technology Enabled Services (ITeS), and tourism also play a significant role in this regard. The liberalization of the economy in the education sector encouraged private players to start engineering colleges and offer IT-related courses. This background information helps the reader better understand VET in India.

The authors make another noteworthy observation with regard to learning in India. Two methods of learning are practiced in India, that is, learning in the informal sector and the formal academic way of learning. The authors differentiate formal and informal educational systems by presenting two case studies. The first case study is about a fisherman in a village in Orissa, and the second is about an IT professional. One can easily understand the significance of formal education by reviewing these two studies.

In the second chapter, the authors go on to explain the formal learning process in India. Different bodies oversee India's education system from primary through university level. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in the central government and the Department of Education in the states are responsible for establishing and controlling regulatory bodies and facilitating boards to develop the syllabus at various levels. This is explained briefly by providing facts in tables and diagrams. They give a short introduction about the education system in India in 1000 BC. The authors also elaborate on who controls education and the structure and characteristics of various educational sectors. They explain a signifi-

cant concept, "Massification", which refers to the growth of society in certain regions. Based on their explanation, we can conclude that Indians have come to respect higher education. The proof is seen in the increasing number of educational institutions, growing enrolment rates in schools and colleges, rising rate of privatization of higher education, and the professionalism of universities.

After analysing Indian educational system in detail, the authors provide an exclusive chapter on Initial Continuing Vocational Education and Training (Chapter 4). They begin the chapter by elucidating on how higher education has gained importance in India, and how there is a chance for the learners to choose vocational education at the school level itself. However, selecting the wrong course at the higher secondary school level may lead to the student quitting school, due to difficulty with the coursework. The authors offer a broad explanation of the structure of vocational education and training and the provisions to use it in India. Vocational education is taught in both government-owned and privately-established Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs). Children get a provision to choose regular stream or vocational stream in the school itself. The authors include a mention if the pre-vocational education system taught at higher secondary school. As many as 150 vocational courses are now offered in higher secondary education, with pre-vocational education at 9th and 10th standard. The central government and the Federal State council are responsible for providing vocational education and training. The authors provide an extensive list of forms, provisions, and training programmes in vocational education and training in India. They start by explaining that the oldest training system, which started in 1950, was called the 'craftsmen training scheme'. After that, they describe the apprenticeship training established in 1961. Unlike these two oldest programmes, the Bachelor of Vocation (B.Voc) was launched in India in 2014. It is a three-year undergraduate degree with 40 per cent general educational content and 60 per cent vocational education and training. Apart from educational opportunities, in the era of globalization and rapid expansion of service sectors, especially IT and ITeS, big companies like Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys Technology Limited have started providing in-house company training. Most of the IT companies are not satisfied with the skills of the engineering graduates. They provide in-house training to the graduates after hiring directly from colleges and universities. The graduates get regular work only after completing in-house training and passing the exam given by the company. Apart from government and companies, vocational education is provided in a small way by non-governmental organizations. If someone studies Indian VET system, they need to give a clear picture about informal vocational education and training. In India, transferring skill and knowledge to the next generation especially in the areas of arts, agriculture, sculpture, pottery, and Indian music (both Carnatic and Hindustani) is referred to as the Gurukul system of education. Certification is rarely involved in this process. This may be considered informal learning. As we have seen earlier, the informal sector plays a significant role in boosting the economy of

the country. Unlike European countries and the United States, women face huge challenges in pursuing education in India. Society and family are not in favour of women choosing technical education. The government of India has conceived and implemented a special programme for women. The authors offer the same explanation in the fifth chapter, which is about the factors and conditions determining vocational education and training in India. In this chapter, the authors trace the history of general and vocational education. The Apprenticeship Act (1961) laid the foundation for vocational education. The government also established the Kothari committee, and it has analysed all aspects of the Indian educational system from 1964 to 1966. The introduction of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Scheme in 2002 laid the foundation for universalisation of primary education. The authors discuss additional governance structures, financing of vocational education and training, and school- and company-based training in this chapter. Apart from regular government-based programmes, the company's act of 2013 mandated registered companies to contribute two per cent of their net profit to the society. The authors enumerate different training institutions run by the government and their contributions in training ITIs instructors. They also discuss the quality of vocational education and training within the national qualification framework. Finally, they talk about bilateral and multilateral agencies and their contributions to vocational education and training and the major government reforms to improve the status of VET.

Conclusion

This book is about Vocational Education and Training (VET) in India. The government of India has formulated various policies to address the needs of diverse stakeholders by analysing different factors in the country. Initially, the MHRD and the Ministry of Labour dealt with vocational education at different levels. Recently, the centre government introduced a new ministry, namely, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), which started offering vocational education at post higher secondary level. MHRD is still responsible for providing vocational education at the school level. Because of the country's vast size, it is rather difficult for researchers and policymakers to understand the overall system of education offered at different levels. The authors have thoroughly studied the VET system and compiled comprehensive details. This book is a one-stop solution for researchers and policymakers regarding any and all information about the Indian VET system. With regard to this system and skill development, researchers usually focus on learning in informal sectors. Very few academic research studies or academic papers have been done on the Indian VET system (for ex. Pilz 2016), which is one reason why the authors travelled across the country and researched the various aspects of the VET system in India. After reviewing the bibliography, the reviewer understands the authors' important contributions on this subject. Overall, this is an important book about the scope of VET programmes in India.

Reference

Pilz, Matthias (Ed.) (2016), India: Preparation for the World of Work – Education System and School to Work Transition, Wiesbaden, Springer VS.

Biographical Note

Uma Gengaiah PhD is assistant professor in the School of Gender and Development Studies, IGNOU, India. Her primary focus areas are governance, gender and development by specializing agriculture, public policy and social capital. She is active in teaching and research for more than 10 years. She has published research papers in the areas of gender governance, VET, informal learning and informal sectors in India and Asian context.