

Seriousness on the job front

G. Palanithurai *presents his perspective on the Skill India initiative*

Skill India is the buzzword at present as it has been popularised by our Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It has drawn global attention. Countries in the western world are interested in working with India closely in skilling the youth. Why have the western countries evinced keen interest in building and enhancing the skill of youth in India? It is because they are also the beneficiaries as they need youth for their companies in India. A policy has been evolved and a new ministry was created after the formation of the new government in 2014. A series of activities have been initiated to put the Skill India proposal into mission mode. With regard to Vocational Education and Training (VET) in India, I happened to hear a set of presentation of research reports for the benefits of the scholars and policy community by a team of scholars under the leadership of Prof. Matthias Pilz, from Cologne University, Germany, in German House, New Delhi in October, 2017.

It was the initiative of Prof. Matthias Pilz to form a research team consisting of academics from institutions of higher learning in India and Germany. They are committed and passionate about conducting research on this issue. They are drawn from a few institutions from Germany and few from India, namely, Indira Gandhi National Open University; National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi; Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore; Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, Coimbatore; Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore; Gandhigram Rural Institute, Gandhigram. They have been researching on the process of vocationalisation of education in India. In the past seven years, they have organised two conferences in Germany and two in India. They brought out an anthology titled "India: Preparation for the world of work education system and school to work transition" published by Springer, a German publisher. Periodically, they publish research articles in professional journals for the benefit of the scholars and policy community and they wrote popular articles in dailies for the benefit of the opinion makers and politicians. Yet, they could not drive home the point to the policy community that though India has enormous capacity and to exploit all



Global attention to Skill India initiative is likely to make it a mutually beneficial programme

(Representational Image)

those opportunities, there is no coherent policy architecture and synergetic actions among different stakeholders at different levels from the policy at the top and action on the ground.

In the name of training the youth in VET, youth have been issued certificate. To evolve such a system of VET education in Germany, they struggled hard for about four to five decades. Whereas in India, we follow the Anglo Saxon model of VET education but we say that we follow the model of skill education evolved by Germany. Without knowing the fundamental difference between the German model of skill development and the Anglo Saxon model of development, we, in India, build the skills of the youth in India. The above aspect has been highlighted. Of the world approved 450 skills, Germany has approved 350 occupational skills. They are declaring that skill building in Germany is not for providing livelihood security for the poor.

Basically, the VET system is to enable the people to lead a decent dignified human life through a decent earning. The German system is for occupational skill and not for individual skill development. Without knowing the depth of the skill building programme of Germany, we started our skilling exercises and finished it within a short span of time and declare that the youth have been trained without linking them with job. In Germany, it is a struggle and through a rigorous process, they prepare the youth for the world of work. But in India, just like a magic, they brought the number.

The research reports have first indicated the poor research capacity of the higher learning institutions in India. Secondly, they have indicated that requisite attention was not given by the policy community to place a set of coherent policies of the different ministries to put the 'Skill India' objective in a mission mode. Thirdly, the infrastructure eco-

system has to be strengthened as they are weak and outdated. Fourth, needed awareness has to be created among the people about the new opportunities coming through skill education in India for the youth. Till date, the mindset of the middle-class has not changed towards skill education. It is the biggest barrier to take the skill India activities forward. Enough instructors have to be recruited for offering such education in the VET institutions and the capacity of the teachers who are in service is poor. 'Instructors education' has to be fine-tuned to the requirement of the context. We have to build the capacity of research on skill education among scholars. Unless they are addressed seriously, there is no scope for us to achieve demographic dividends and instead, it will become a demographic nightmare!

(The views expressed are strictly personal)

Though India has enormous capacity and to exploit opportunities, there is no coherent policy architecture and synergetic actions in place among different stakeholders at different levels - from policy at the top to action on the ground