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Transforming Industrial Training Institutes

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Introduction:

ITIs are the backbone of the VET (Vocational Education and Training) System in India. Numerous steps have been taken to revamp them, to make them more equipped to produce industry-ready professionals including – Centers of Excellence, STRIVE funding, grading of ITIs, and making IMCs (Institute Management Committee) mandatory. Yet the transformation of ITIs remains incomplete in view of three facts: They remain underutilized, the quality of training, faculty, and infrastructure remain not par with global standards, and most of the trainees are neither employable nor skilled enough to start their own enterprise.

To come up with transformative ideas for revamping the ITI ecosystem in the country, this study was undertaken for the SDE (Skill Development & Employment) vertical of NITI Aayog. The study presents a seven-pronged approach across several divisions to create changes in administration, curriculum, reporting, monitoring, resource mobilization, and so on.

Key Findings:

These insights have been inferred from interviews and interaction sessions conducted with various stakeholders across DGT (Directorate General of Training), MSDE (Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship), and Industry professionals as well as principals, faculty, and students of it is

- **Perspective from ITI Principals –**

a) **On grading process**- The experience was mixed. While some felt that they were inequitably judged. Problems arise for proof of employment of past students who were self-employed. Rural ITIs were unfairly scored for geographical constraints.
b) **On instructors** – The consensus was that the chronic shortage of qualified instructors was a serious problem. It was suggested that principals be given the authority to hire part-time instructors till full-time positions were filled. Pay disparity was also a major concern across states.
c) **On Curriculum** – The curriculum remains decades old. And there is a clear disparity between modern market needs and what the curriculum offers.
d) **Industry Connect** – Industry leaders and companies had not shown significant involvement or engagement despite signing several MoUs (Memorandum of Understanding).
e) **On management** – Lack of financial power of principals becomes a barrier to procuring required machinery, gadgets, and necessary infrastructure development.
f) **On placement and Apprenticeships** – Lack of a specialized placement cell becomes a hurdle in carrying out necessary work that can only be done by a specialized placement cell. **Also, Covid-19 has marked a significant drop in placement opportunities for students.**

- **Perspective of ITI Faculties** –

a) Similar observations were made from interactions with faculties. While permanent position holders were satisfied with their jobs, contractual instructors hoped for an increase in their salaries.
b) **Infrastructure, Facilities, and Industry Connect** – Faculty members across the board were of the opinion regular industry visits would improve the awareness among students about career possibilities. A lot of concern was raised about updating the curriculum and branding of several courses.

- **Perspective of ITI Students** –

a) The experience for students across the ITI system has been a mixed bag. While urban ITI students received an 80% percent placement and most students were happy with the training they received, students from rural ITIs saw a sharp decline in recruitment percentage – ranging anywhere from 20-60% percent.
b) There was a disparity in expected employment opportunities and what was provided. Students interested in entrepreneurial ventures expected support from the Government and their institutions which the ITIs were not able to provide adequately. Government sector jobs required NAC (National Apprenticeship Certificate) & NTC (National Trade Certificate) for jobs of fitter and electrician that the ITI system did not equip them with.

Recommendations:

- **Governance and Administration –**

a) **Separate Board for Vocational Education for Better Credibility and Recognition** – There needs to be a progression pathway for linking vocational education graduates to other vocational education opportunities.
b) Further the role of the National Council for Vocational Education and Training needs to be extended into a National Board for Skill Development which will be the vocational education counterpart of CBSE. This will enable further permeability between both vocational and general education domains. This will bring vocational education to the mainstream, provide opportunities for lifelong learning, and streamline certification processes.
c) **Centralized Admission Process** – A national-level centralized portal following the Join Seat Allocation Authority used for engineering examination admissions in the country will centralize and streamline the admission across the board. This will not be cost-intensive because the system already exists for JEE and NEET. **Additionally, the inclination of the candidate in the trade should also be considered not just the 8th and 10th marks**.
d) **Demand-based course allocation**- Courses should be based on local demand analysis and complement local labor demands. Additionally, ITIs should have forward linkages with the district's employment exchanges to enable placement and apprenticeship opportunities through employers registered with the exchange.
e) **Instituting a robust process for continuous monitoring**- ITIs should be institutionalized for quality assurance. Comprehensive Continuous Monitoring is felt necessary for concurrent review of the functioning and operations of ITIs.
f) **Changes in Grading Process**- The features of NIRF ranking can be incorporated into the ITIs and made into an annual activity. Also, the grading should move away from checklist-based grading to a more qualitative assessment made by professionals with the technical know-how to better understand and appreciate the initiatives being taken.

g) Increasing quality of trainers. Instructors can be sent to industry visits to learn new technologies that are being used and teach the students. **Industry can be the best place to train trainers as they can upskill on the latest industry needs. Companies like Mahindra offer week-long training programs for instructors. Selected instructors of high performing can be sent to exposure visits to Germany.**

- **Financing-**

a) **Specialized funding Scheme for Uplifting Poor-Performing ITIs**- Though STRIVE funds are available for the upliftment of ITIs the allocation is performance-based. Funds must be relocated for struggling ITIs. A State and Central partnership scheme needs to be devised for need-based allocation of funds for low-graded but promising it is
b) **Financial and administrative Autonomy**- Introducing sufficient freedom can enable flexibility and efficiency and can help in reducing administrative financial constraints leading to better implementation.
c) **Private Training Partner (PTP) Model for funding-** Implemented in West Bengal, the PTP model provides a model where the state provides land and building infrastructure for partner organizations to run CTS trade. The partner org invests in Machinery, Raw Materials for practical classes, Teacher's Salary, and operational costs. This provides sector-specific engagement and increases chances of getting placed after training.

- **Partnerships-**

a) Partnerships with MSMEs can provide additional placement opportunities along with large-scale industries and Manufacturers.
b) ITIs should maintain an updated repository of alumni repository and regularly organize knowledge exchange sessions.
c) ITIs should have a close association with Sector Skill Councils (SSC) and other industry associations. Skill day and job fairs can be organized in collaboration with them.

- **Curriculum and Nomenclature** – Keeping track of macro and micro-economic trends should be done. ITIs should work near DGT (Directorate General of Training). Global offices can be set up in the USA, EU & the Far East for global placement of ITI Talent. Also investing in advertisement and awareness programs can help with increasing the image and generating awareness and future prospects of ITI courses.

- **Reporting and Redressal –** More records and data must be kept and generated for drawing better inferences. Strict monitoring of data management systems should be put in place. Additionally, a time-bound grievance redressal mechanism must be put in place.

- **Student Support Services –**

a) Establishing a placement and Entrepreneurship Cell is to be made mandatory across the board. These cells are to equip entrepreneurship support services such as access to job databases and access to banking services, certifications, and licenses. The placement cell should collaborate with the DIC (District Information Centre).
b) Focusing on career counseling and Soft Skills training.

c) Special provisions must be made for female students in ITIs. To increase their participation in the workforce. Non-traditional roles should be especially encouraged to support the booming gig and platform economy.
d) Awareness to be increased for further studies after ITI should be increased and equivalence with NIOS should be encouraged more.

- **Infrastructure and Resource Mobilization-**

a) Incorporating Production Units into ITI and NSITs can aid in making vocational education more relevant by promoting entrepreneurship and making it into a viable economic unit. Additionally, most of it has ample unused land which can be leveraged for production and service center usage.
b) Nodal ITI's maybe designed for sharing of resources across ITIs which can function as a hub, as equipment buying can be time and resource-consuming.

Conclusion

The NITI Aayog Report on Transforming Industrial Training Institutes is a timely study that provides attainable goals for the improvement of the ITI ecosystem across Central, State, and Private boundaries. Even though it does not provide a timeline for achieving these goals, the recommendations should be followed meticulously and follow-ups must be done to check the degree of implementation of these recommendations. ITI's are the basis of training skilled labor force for the industries. The inability to produce trained individuals can result in a severe bottleneck of talent.

Read More at: Transforming Industrial Training Institutes

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