

## General Studies-2; Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

### Vocational Education and Skill Development

#### Introduction

- India's population is among the youngest in an ageing world. India's working-age population has numerically outstripped its non-working age population.
- A demographic dividend, said to have commenced around 2004-05, is available for close to five decades. This is an extraordinary opportunity.
- **Harnessing the demographic dividend will depend upon the employability of the working age population, their health, education, vocational training and skills, besides appropriate land and labour policies, as well as good governance.**

#### Educating India's Youth Population

- With the largest youth population in the world, India faces the difficult task of educating every citizen to become a productive member of society.
- This goal has become harder with the pandemic: over 320 million learners have been affected and more than 5 million young people are likely to have lost their jobs.
- The **Economic Survey 2019 calls for additional jobs to keep pace with the projected annual increases in working age population.** We need a workforce that is well educated, and appropriately skilled.

#### Vocational Education

- India's Right to Education Act is based on books and written examinations.
- **Evidence shows that many people develop 21st century skills on the job, or from courses that focus on practical application of skills.**
- This indicates that vocational education can be a route to gain specific skillsets and knowledge that can be applied in the jobs.
- **UNESCO's State of the Education Report for India 2020 focuses on vocational education and training.**
- One of the biggest challenges for expanding the reach of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)-related courses has been the lack of aspiration and stigma attached to jobs such as carpentry and tailoring.
- Research is now proving that TVET graduates for entry level jobs can get paid as much as university graduates, and for some jobs can even surpass them.
- Students from vocational streams typically take less time to find jobs as compared to university graduates.
- **The new National Education Policy (NEP) aims to provide vocational education to 50% of all learners by 2025.**
- This will be possible only if the existing skills development systems are leveraged effectively.

#### Towards a skill capital

- In India, the skills development ecosystem has undergone rapid changes and improvements over the last decade.
- The **National Skill Development Policy revamped in 2015** recognises the challenge of skilling with speed and high standards.
- The **Skill India Mission** was launched for making India the "skill capital" of the world.
- Since then, India has laid the foundation for making quality skills development programmes available to the youth, but also faced various challenges.

## Concerns / Challenges

- UNICEF 2019 reports that at least 47% of Indian youth are not on track to have the education and skills necessary for employment in 2030.
- The projected demographic dividend would turn into a demographic disaster if an unskilled, under-utilised, and frustrated young population undermines social harmony and economic growth.
- National Family Health Surveys confirm that poor infrastructure in government schools, malnutrition, and scarcity of trained teachers have ensured poor learning outcomes.
- Even while India aspires to become a knowledge economy, millions of young people are getting left behind.
- Growing female literacy is not translating into relevant and marketable skills.

## Way Forward

- Proactive measures need to be taken to resolve this situation. Education can play a vital role in bridging this gap.
- Considerable effort, including information campaigns involving youth role models, would go a long way in improving the image of vocational education.
- Common myths around TVET need to be debunked.
- **High-quality research based on careful data-gathering and analytics** is useful for creating evidence behind the value of vocational education.
- Proving the business case of apprenticeship to employers can push them to hire more apprentices.
- For the vision of the NEP to be fulfilled, a robust coordination mechanism for inter-ministerial cooperation is necessary for bringing the skills development and vocational education systems together.
- The public-school system must ensure that every child completes high school education, and is pushed into appropriate skilling, training and vocational education in line with market demand.
- Investing in open digital universities would further help yield a higher educated workforce.
- Flexible entry and exit policies for women into virtual classrooms, and into modules for open digital training, and vocational education would help them access contemporary vocations.
- UNESCO, through its policy instruments, is committed to supporting the Indian government in capitalising on the country's demographic dividend.
- In these difficult times, TVET is certainly a key tool to help get the economy, and people's lives, back on track.