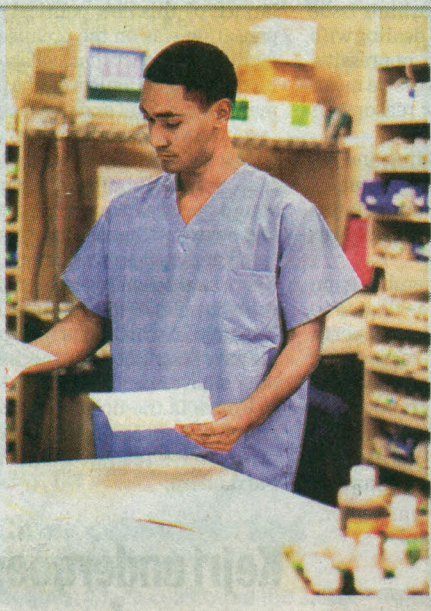
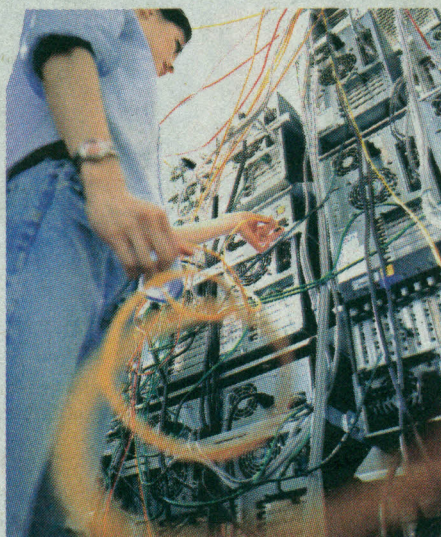




VOCATION VS TRADITION

Professor Neela Dabir, Dean, TISS School of Vocational Education, tells you all about the growth of vocational education in India

Skill development, skilling India, vocationalisation of Indian education have become the buzz words in the country today. Rightfully so, because it is the national mission to change the current workplace scenario, where there's a huge gap between the skill sets of the manpower and those needed by industries across sectors. Unlike traditional education that imparts generic knowledge, vocational education trains a person in a particular skill, making him employable for a job in the sector. As a result, the large number of university graduates who are unemployed alongside a huge shortage of skilled workers will become a thing of the past.

The government is serious about promoting skill development efforts in a big way to achieve the targets of 'Skilling India' at a faster pace. We have a new Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship that has come up with the new National Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Policy, 2015. The policy links skill development to improved employability and productivity, which will pave the way for inclusive growth in the country. The skilling strategy is complemented by efforts to promote entrepreneurship in order to create opportunities for the skilled workforce.

Vocational Education should ideally start after SSC or HSc, when formal schooling is complete. But some preliminary training in different vocations ought to be incorporated right from secondary school level. It can give the students exposure to different vocations at an early age and enable them to make informed choices.

There are two ways of imparting vocational training—institution-based or work-integrated training (involving industries as partners in training programmes). Institution-based training has been more common in our country and many formal as well as informal training institutions offer vocational training in different sectors. Institution-based training faces several challenges, including the high cost of investment in infrastructure, difficulty keeping pace with the changing demands of the job market, a lack of proper trainers and limited capacity in terms of the number of students that can be trained. Work-integrated training has several advantages. It involves skill training in a relevant industry and classroom training in a training institute. This lays greater emphasis on skill/practical training on the real shop floor and less weightage is given to theory inputs. The trainers are from the industry and students learn

through using the latest equipment on the shop floor. In many cases, the student receives a stipend from the industry, thus reducing the cost of training. Germany and other European countries have been using this model for more than ten years and admission to vocational courses is very competitive. It's the vocational courses, rather than the traditional ones, that attract top performers.

The new initiative by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to offer vocational degrees is therefore of great importance. Now, it is possible to de-



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velop vocational courses up to graduation level in any vocation. The UGC has developed guidelines for developing Bachelor of Vocation (BVoc) courses. This degree is equivalent to any other bachelor's degree (BA, BSc, BCom). The duration is three years after HSc and has multiple exit/entry options. After the first year, students get a diploma; after the second year, an advanced diploma; and after the third year, a BVoc. Giving vocational education a status equivalent to traditional courses will go a long way in attracting students. It gives them an opportunity to pursue higher education. UGC is now giving grants to colleges and universities to offer BVoc courses. In the next few years many colleges and universities will enter this field. Apart from this, there is a move to revamp existing training centres like the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and the VETs and make them more responsive to current needs.

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) has been at the forefront of developing a robust model of vocational education that is scalable and sustainable. With a seed grant from

Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) under the aegis of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) we have been given a mandate to incubate a National Vocational University. The aim is to demonstrate how universities can enter the space of vocational education.

TISS has developed an ecosystem to offer 'work integrated training' in different sectors. The main feature of this model is that it involves various training partners from various industries. It ensures the development of courses that have market demand and that the students receive a BVoc at the end of three years. Students also gain three years worth of industry-related work experience. Such training works to enhance employability at the end of the course.

So far, we have identified 20 different sectors and developed many BVoc as well as short-term programmes with the help of 19 vertical anchors, more than 100 hub partners and about 20 different industry partners as skill knowledge providers. In addition, TISS has developed two BVoc programmes in the childcare sector—BVoc in Early Child Development and BVoc in Child Protection. We are also offering a one-year Diploma in Geriatric Care. All these courses are offered in collaboration with different colleges of social work and NGO partners across the country. More than 12 BVoc courses and several other short-term courses are being offered and the student count has already crossed 2,000. Another important feature of the TISS model is that it gives the existing workforce an opportunity to complete their graduation and get a BVoc degree.

Considering the number of skilled workers in the country, we need thousands of such initiatives. The need of the hour is to rope in industries to contribute in a big way by helping design relevant courses, providing opportunities for internships/work integration for vocational training, giving incentives to untrained workers to enroll for courses and get a recognized qualification. Many more colleges and universities have to come forward and design courses that are in demand in their geographical location, by involving the local industries in the process of curriculum development and training.

The key to successful implementation of vocational education is to develop courses based on demand. This should be a demand-driven model and not a supply driven one. This means courses have to be regularly upgraded to suit job demands.