



Vocational Education In India And China: A Comparative Study

Poonam Chaudhary

Lecturer English

RPVV Sector-11 Rohini Directorate of Education, Delhi, India

Abstract: The present paper looks into the vocational education of India and China in a comparative perspective. India and China are two of world's fastest developing economies. Vocational education is an important part of any country's educational system. In the context of economic development of a nation, proper implementation of vocational education becomes all the more important. China has an expansive and diversified vocational education which has played significant role in its developing economy. India too is placing emphasis on vocational aspect of its education which is quite evident from 11th and 12th five-year plans also. This paper tries to look into various aspects of vocational education of the two countries. The focus is on the structure, need, problems and achievements of vocational education in both countries. The comparative study of the two countries in respect of their vocational education is especially significant in terms of the lessons that can be drawn from the China's comparatively successful VET system for India.

Index Terms - Vocational Education, Skill Development, NEP 2020.

Introduction

Vocational education and training or VET is an important element of the education system of any nation. VET can be called an education that prepares people for specific trades, crafts and careers at various levels. Vocational education is teaching of procedural knowledge in distinction with declarative knowledge, as used in education in a usually broader scientific field. Vocational education can be at the secondary, post-secondary level, further education level and can interact with the apprenticeship system. This is especially significant in developing economies such as India and China where the demand of labor market has to be met by an education that churns out workers. In contrast to an "academic culture" vocational education promotes a "skill culture". So VET is a kind of blend between education and economy. But VET has also been a matter of considerable debate in the field of education for different countries. There have been people who opposed and who supported it. For those who support it, vocational education has been seen as an answer to the problems of drop-out and rural to urban migration. It is seen as significant for socio-economic prosperity in rural areas. It has also been considered as a remedy to both unemployment and ever-increasing demand for higher education. So for controlling the unbridled demand for higher education and to reduce pressure on higher education budgets, VET has been seen as important. Different countries have given different importance to vocational education in their overall education system. VET has specifically been seen as significant for developing countries like India and China.

There have also been opponents to vocational education. There is a criticism that there is a mismatch between education and the labor market and so vocational education does not necessarily prepare students for the world of work. Another criticism is that general academic streams lead to higher wages than the vocational streams. Thus it creates inequalities and a sense of second-class citizenship. Vocationalisation in this manner is not a remedy for educated unemployment. But many countries are developing their educational system on the lines of vocational education. China has had the aim of having 50% of its total enrolment in vocational education. Similarly, India has had a goal of 25% of its enrolment in vocational stream.

UNESCO and World Bank have time and again emphasized technical and vocational education. In 1974, UNESCO gave a recommendation for integration of vocational education in general education.

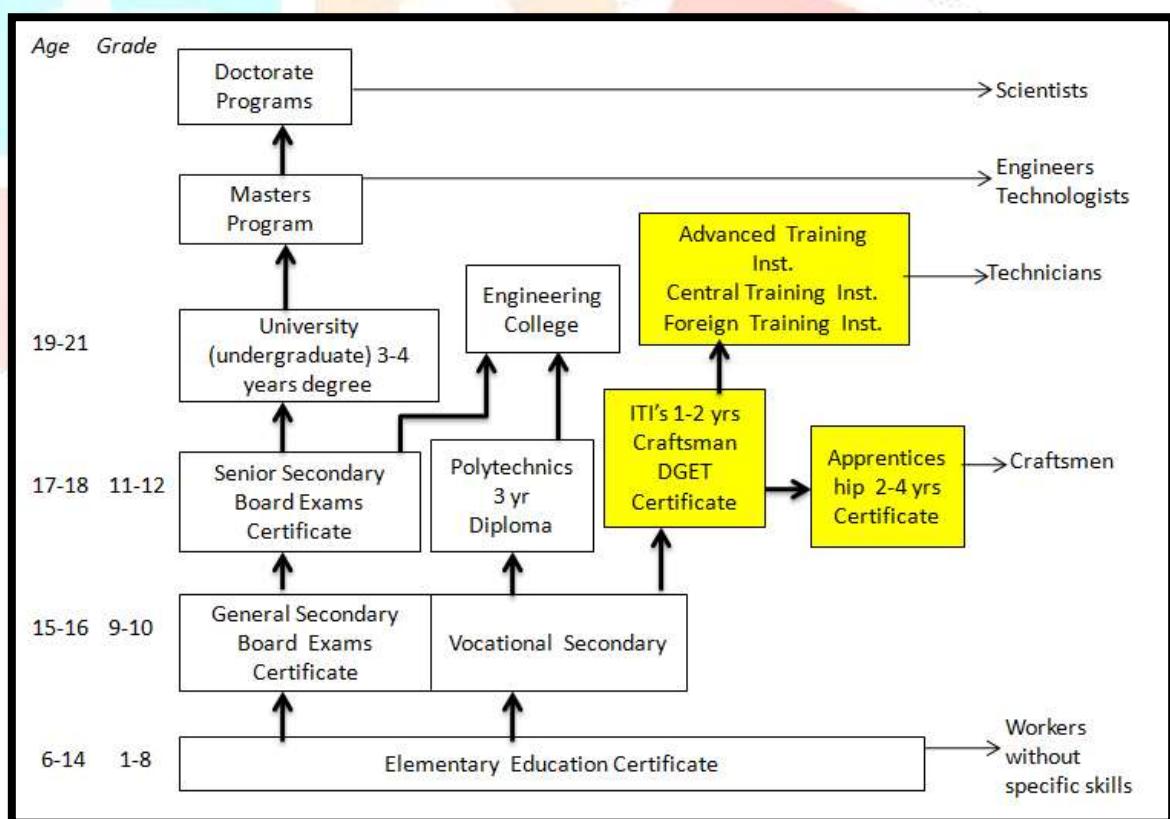
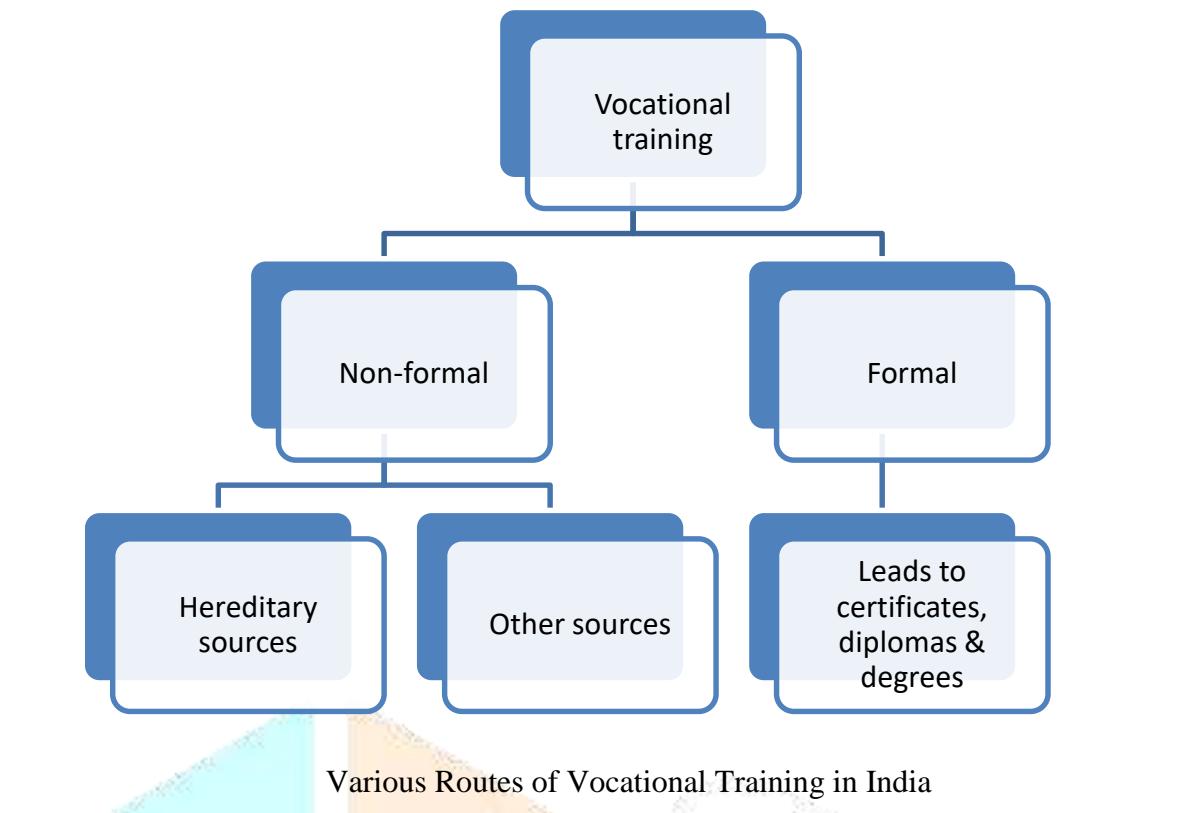
2. Vocational Education in India

The need for vocational education in India can be understood as follows:

- Introduction and expansion of vocational education has been felt as important to reduce the dropout rates and improve the enrolment rates. Vocational education can cater to that segment of school children which drop out of school and join the workforce.
- The overwhelming problem of educated unemployment can also be checked by developing a sound vocational education system in the country.
- To make education more responsive to the needs and demands of industry, it is important to introduce vocational courses which are more specific and responsive to the economic needs of society.

2.1 Structure of Vocational Education in India

Formally VET in India is implemented at senior secondary school level and funded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India. All the state governments run vocational schools. There are about 9,583 schools offering 150 vocational courses of two-year duration. The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) also imparts VE in about 80 courses. In India vocational training is provided on both full time and part time basis. Industrial training institutes or I.T.I.s offer full time programs. The nodal agency for grant of recognition to the I.T.I.s is NCVT which is under the Ministry of labor, Govt. of India. Part time programs are offered through state technical education boards or universities who also offer full-time courses. Vocational training has been successful in India only in industrial training institutes and that too in engineering trades. VET in India is provided by several types of institutions which come under different departments. ITIs come under Ministry of labor and employment. While evaluation and overseeing of its curriculum is done by National Commission of Vocational Training (NCVT).



2.2 Some Policy Provisions for vocational education

- The National Policy of Education (NPE) 1986 envisaged the introduction of systematic, well-planned and rigorously implemented programs of vocational education, which can enhance employability, reduce the mismatch between demand and supply of skilled manpower. NPE 1986 also intended to provide vocational courses to 25% of all students at 10+2 level within 10 years.
- The Eleventh five-year Plan aimed at launching a National Skill Development Mission.
- During the current 12th Five Year Plan it is proposed to provide financial assistance to government schools for introduction of vocational education from Class IX onwards and incentivize government aided schools and recognized private unaided schools for introduction of vocational education.
- Recognizing the high demand for skill and vocational education in the country, Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) emphasized the need for a National Vocational Qualification Framework.
- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes integrating vocational education into mainstream education from Grade 6 onwards. It aims to enhance employability by offering practical skills and real-world experience, aligning educational outcomes with industry needs and economic demands.

2.3 Challenges of vocational education in India

- Vocational education is provided by a number of agencies which lack coordination among them. As many as 17 Ministries and Departments serve the sector, with no overarching agency responsible for providing a policy framework and guidelines.
- Vocational education represents a sector directly influenced by social stratification. The students enrolling in this stream are mostly from low socio-economic strata. So VET programs are perceived as serving mainly the lower socio-economic strata of society.
- The range of courses as well as their quality is not at par with the developing and diversified economy that we have. So there exists a gap between the vocational educational system and the world of production.
- Another challenge with the system is the general societal perception towards vocational education. There is a perception that vocational courses are suitable only for those students whose potential for academic courses is poor. Vocational courses are also perceived as inferior to academic courses.
- The Vocational education teachers largely do not have any formal training, and they possess the same qualification as the teachers of general education courses possess.
- Another deficit in the system of vocational education is that there is a lack of good quality textbooks for vocational courses. In addition, the institutes providing vocational education generally lack required equipment too.
- Provision for vocational education and training, at present, is generally oriented towards job opportunities in the organized sector of the economy. In India about 93 per cent of the working population is employed in the informal or unorganized sector. But the irony is that the VET system does not cater to this sector of the economy.
- There is also a mobility issue in vocational education. The vocational education does not provide scope for vertical mobility and proves to be a dead end for the students.
- The participation of the private sector in strengthening of VET is also missing.

3. Vocational Education in China

3.1 Structure of Vocational Education in China

Vocational education in China is provided at three levels:

- Vocational Education at Junior Secondary level
- Vocational Education at Senior Secondary level
- Vocational Education at Tertiary level

Junior vocational education refers to the vocational and technical education after primary school education and is a part of the 9-year compulsory education. The students in secondary vocational school should be primary school graduates or the youth with equivalent cultural knowledge and its schooling lasts 3 to 4 years. To meet the needs of labor forces for the development of rural economy, junior vocational schools are mainly located in rural areas where the economy is less developed.

The secondary level mainly refers to the vocational education in senior high school stage. It is composed of specialized secondary schools, skill workers schools and vocational high schools. This is the mainstay of vocational education in China, and it plays a guiding role in training manpower with practical skills at primary and secondary levels of various types.

Consisting of secondary technical schools and normal schools, specialized secondary schools enroll junior high school graduates with a schooling of usually 4 years and sometimes 3 years. A few specialties are open only to senior high school graduates with the schooling lasting 2 years. The basic tasks of these schools are to train secondary-level specialized and technical talents for the forefront of production and all the students should master the basic knowledge, theory and skills of their specialty in addition to the cultural knowledge required for higher school students.

Aiming at training secondary-level skill workers, skilled worker schools enroll junior high school graduates and their schooling lasts 3 years. Their graduates are directly engaged in production activities.

Chinese VET system has been designed in a very systematic manner. It derives its comprehensiveness from the careful planning which takes into account every aspect of vocational education and training – vocational education in secondary schools, in higher education colleges, vocation training in training centers, adult training and retraining for those already in labor force, training of vocational trainers, curriculum design, industry participation and financing of VET.

3.2 Policy provisions for vocational education in China

The Vocational Education Law of 1996 provides the legal framework for the implementation/functioning of the vocational education and training system in the country. It also elucidates the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security on the one hand, and local governments, vocational training providers and industry/private participation on the other. The 1996 Vocational Education Law also requires that 20 per cent of the annual education budget should be allocated to vocational education and training. Therefore, significant progress has been made in vocational education in rural areas of China with vast expansion and improvement in both quantity and quality.

The following articles of the 1996 Vocational Education Law summarize the commitment of the State towards vocational education:

Article 3: Vocational education is an important part of educational undertakings of the state and an important way to promote economic and social development and employment. The state shall develop vocational

education, push the vocational education reform, raise the quality of vocational education, establish and improve a vocational education system that keeps abreast of the market economy and social progress.

Article 4: Vocational education shall follow the state's educational policy, giving the education receivers education on ideology, politics and vocational ethics, teaching vocational knowledge, developing vocational technical abilities, conducting vocational directions and raising the quality of the education receivers in an all-round way.

Article 5: Citizens shall have the right to receive vocational education.

Article 6: People's governments at various levels shall incorporate the development of vocational education into the planning of the national economy and social development. Trade associations, enterprises and institutional organizations shall perform their duties to carry out vocational education in accordance with law.

Article 7: The state shall adopt measures to develop rural vocational education and support the minority nationality regions, remote border areas and poverty-stricken areas to develop their vocational education. The state shall adopt measures to assist women in receiving vocational education, organize the unemployed to receive vocational education in various forms and give aid to the development of the vocational education for disabled people.

3.3 Some achievements of Vocational Education in China

- **Expansion of Vocational Education:** Between 1980 and 2001, the proportion of regular senior high school students among all the students in senior secondary education has decreased from 81% to 54.7%, while the proportion of secondary vocational school students has increased from 19% to 45.3%.
- **Achievement in training of Vocational Education Teachers:** Since 1989, over 160 higher education institutions have established departments, specialties or classes devoted to the training of vocational education teachers. There are also about 50 teacher training bases set up by vocational technical colleges which are affiliated to higher education institutions and over 200 bases set up by central departments and local governments.
- **Rapid Development of Vocational Education in Rural Areas:** Since the 1980's, significant progress has been made in vocational education in rural areas of China with its quantity greatly enlarged and quality greatly improved.
- **Reform of Vocational Education:** China has learned and improved from different models such as the dual-track system of Germany, the educational and training pattern based on the ability in Australia and Canada, the Employment Education Structure advocated by the World Labor Organization, the "Skill Courses for Starting Small Enterprises" initiated by the UNECO.

4. Differences between China and India's VET systems and lessons to learn for India

- China is a manufacturing giant in the world. This has become possible partly through the comprehensive TVET system. India is also planning to increase its share of manufacturing in GDP. Here India can take a leaf from China's experience and work on its vocational education system. Now the National Vocational Education Qualification Framework has also been approved. It mandates starting vocational education from class 9 onwards.
- The TVET system of China is backed by a strong law which is 1996 Vocational Education Law of People's Republic of China. The law provides legal backing. The Law not only encourages students to take up vocational stream post junior secondary education, but also clearly demarcates the different roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders in the TVET system. India needs similar move to strengthen its own system. The 12th five-year plan of India builds a case for this though.
- As compared to China, very few students opt for vocational education in India. Chinese government encourages the adoption of VE at senior secondary level by incentivizing it financially. Unlike China

there are no provisions of stipends to the students opting for vocational courses in India. Such courses are seen as a dead end to students.

- In China, teachers in vocational schools are required to undergo one month in industry each year, or two months every two years for their career progression and promotion. In India, around 32 per cent of the trainers in vocational institutes do not have any formal certificates. 67 per cent of teachers in ITIs and 53 per cent in private ITIs were only ITI graduates. The percentage of degree holders was less than 10 per cent in both ITIs and private ITIs. The 12th Five Year Plan recognizes the importance of training trainers for the effective functioning of TVET system. However, the scheme of Vocationalisation of school education envisages the provision only for in-service training of 7 days for 2,000 existing vocational education teachers, and induction training of 30 days for 1,000 new vocational education teachers.
- In China, the curriculum of a senior secondary vocational school is designed such that, one-third includes general academic skills defined nationally by the Ministry of Education, another one-third is again nationally defined content associated with the particular occupation, and the remaining one-third defined again with respect to the occupational field is determined locally at the school level with the help of local enterprises. There is no such flexibility permitted in either ITIs or in senior secondary vocational schools in India.
- In China, the 1996 Vocational Education Law requires that 20 per cent of the annual education budget should be allocated to vocational education and training. The local government plays a very important role in vocational education in China. In India, there is a strong case for developing National Training Fund and this has been recommended in India's 12th Five Year Plan as well. The Plan envisages setting up a training fund, in the form of tax levies to be collected from large and medium enterprises (to begin with), for mobilization and allocation of resources for skill development.

Authors' Biography

Ms. Poonam Chaudhary is Lecturer English at RPVV Sector-11 Rohini. Her areas of specialization are English language and Education. She has wide experience in the field of school education. Her recent work focuses upon comparing education systems of different countries.

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