

The Status of ITIs in India  
A case study in Kashmir  
Fozia S. Qazi, IUST

121

Paper Reprint from



ये अल्लवदकी वाणी है  
कोई बाली करो विचार

Rethinking Universities for Development: Intermediaries Innovation & Inclusion

**Rethinking Universities  
for Development  
Intermediaries  
Innovation &  
Inclusion**



IDRC \* CRDI

CCO Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship  
UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

## **The Status of ITIs in India: A case study in Kashmir<sup>1</sup>**

**Fozia S. Qazi, Islamic University of Science and Technology, Awantipora, J&K**

Vocational education in India is largely located in the informal sector and only a small percentage (approximately 2%) of trainees receive formal vocational training through government run ITIs or similar private bodies called Industrial Training Centers (ITCs). This training is often outdated and doesn't always meet the demands of the existing labour market or the aspirations of the trainees themselves. In many cases the problem is compounded by lack of proper infrastructure and facilities as well as the general negative perception regarding vocational training.

There is a need to redefine the critical elements of the ITI model (or vocational training in general) in order to make it relevant to the contemporary global environment, flexible in the choices it provides to the students and attractive as a space for learning and growth.

### **Drawbacks of the ITI/ITCs System**

There are several administrative flaws in the system that has made the ITI model outdated, restrictive and unappealing to a vast majority of the young people it aims to attract. Some of the major problems include

Administrative structure: The ITI/ITCs as well as other vocational training institutions are governed under an administrative structure where policy matters and general accountability are handled by Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET) and implementation happens through the technical education department of the concerned state. On the other hand, the standards setting and accreditation is the responsibility of the National Council on Vocational Training (NCVT) and its state counterpart SCVT. This schizophrenic and fragmented management system lacks an effective coordination mechanism causing diverse accountability, inefficiency and administrative delays in the implementation of new policies. (A parallel to this set up exists in higher education as well where colleges are administratively run by the state governments through their Department of Higher Education while as academic norms for these colleges are dictated by one of the state universities). As a result the system is unable to assess whether its training programs are responsive to changing needs of the labour market on a regular basis and implement the necessary reforms in time.

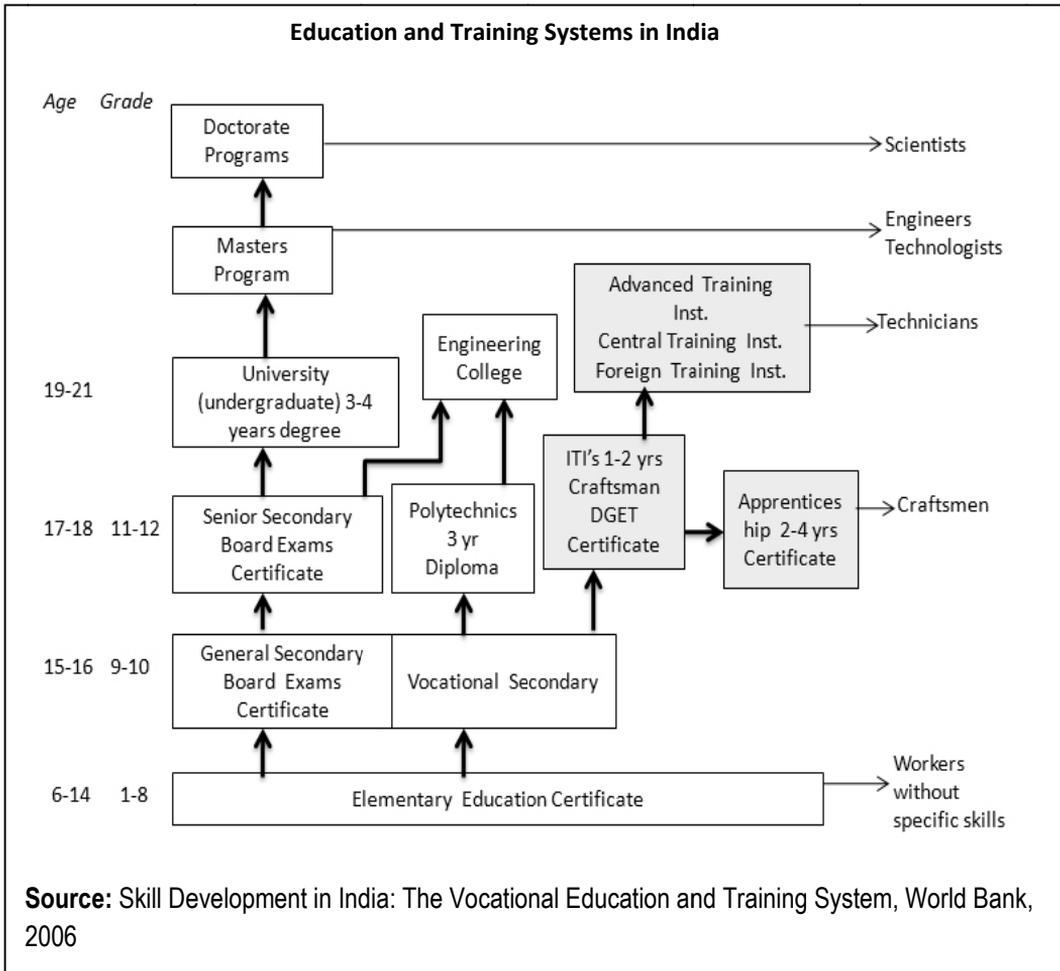
Quality & Relevance: The quality of the training is low in many cases given the lack of good teachers and other lacunae in the system. There are not many trades offered in the high growth sectors e.g. none of the ITIs offer training in insurance, though a few ITCs have started taking this up as a trade. The ITIs have inadequate linkages with the industry, and given their lack of autonomy, cannot upgrade their training appropriately even if such linkages existed.

Autonomy: The ITIs lack basic autonomy and generally have little incentive to either improve the quality of different trades, increase enrolment numbers or offer additional services to the students in the form of career counselling, trade related seminars, industry tours etc. Not surprisingly, the ITCs fare somewhat better in student retentions over the ITIs as they have a financial stake in ensuring a sizeable student body.

---

<sup>1</sup> *This note presents a brief review of the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) based on my experiences as a member of the Institute Management Committees of two ITIs in Kashmir during the past three years*

Infrastructure: Many ITIs function out of rented premises and lack some of the basic facilities including internet, computer labs, auditoria, projectors, workshop equipment, properly trained instructors etc



Upward mobility: As can be seen in the above figure, the ITI/ITC system has limited entry and exit points and there is very little upward mobility. A performing ITI/ITC graduate does not have the option to join the higher education stream. Thus by enrolling in an ITI a 'late blooming' student has to give up on the 'education' component and opt instead for training in a trade which may be obsolete or which offers only limited career options.

## Responses

Some have been taken up by DGET for improving vocational training and the ITI model. Two to the main measure are the Modular Employability Skills scheme and the upgradation of the ITIs through World Bank grants or the PPP mode.

Modular Employability Skills (MES): This scheme is designed primarily for school drop-outs and existing workers and offers different short-term courses of 3-6 months duration. One especially positive component of the MES is that it allows for existing skills, including those from the informal

Fozia S Qazi

sector, to be tested and certified. Many of the MES courses have been designed after consultation with the industry.

Upgradation of ITIs: Several ITIs have been upgraded under two different schemes with the purpose to make their functioning more efficient and improve the quality of their training programs.

In one scheme, the World Bank would provide a grant of 3.5 crore rupees each to 500 ITIs to transform themselves into “Centres of Excellence” offering multi-skilled courses.

The other scheme for upgradation would be through Public Private Partnership (PPP). An industry partner is identified to assist ITIs under this scheme. An Institute Management Committee (IMC) is constituted and registered as a society. The IMC is given an interest free loan of up to Rs. 2.5 crore, on the basis of an Institute Development Plan (IDP) prepared by it. The loan is repayable in 30 years. Under this scheme, the IMC is given a certain degree of autonomy to manage the affairs of the ITI including capacity building and training of staff. The industry partner may provide financial assistance as well as machinery and equipment to the ITI, training to instructors and internship opportunities for the students. The ownership of the ITIs however remains with the State.

### **ITIs Tral and Shopian: A case study in Upgrading through the PPP mode:**

I have been a member of the IMCs of ITI Tral and ITI Shopian since December 2009 and have had a chance to observe the transformation of these two institutions under the PPP scheme. Some of the initiatives within this scheme have been a success while others still need some time to develop and produce results.

At the time of formation of the IMCs, both of these institutions were functioning from rented buildings, not necessarily in the best of conditions, and one of them particularly dilapidated. The equipment was outdated, classrooms dingy and the overall atmosphere was not very vibrant. The students seemed to lack motivation which was not surprising given the overall atmosphere of the institutions. Both of these institutions were slated to have new buildings under the old setup but the construction work had suffered



**A classroom/workshop in the newly-built IMC building at ITI**



**The new IMC building at ITI Tral in early stages of construction.**

due to chronic delays that seem to characterise the state administrative processes.

Both of the ITIs are in new buildings now. In case of ITI Shopian, the IMC building has been built within the 2 years while its old under-construction building is still under construction! The enrolment for new and upgraded trades started in August 2012. The presence of the Industry Partner in the IMC has also helped in terms of providing technical assistance in purchasing of equipment and on the nature of training.

One of the visible advantages of this scheme is that, given the relative autonomy of the IMC, the time lag between decisions and their implementation has shrunk considerably leading to a better managed system. For Example, at ITI Tral, the IMC recently decided on a host of new measures for greater community outreach which, among others, include conducting open houses and offering short-term courses -such as Tally - for local students who are on their long winter break. This would not have been possible under the old setup.

Under the PPP scheme, the ITI can choose an existing trade(s) for upgradation and/or introduce new trade(s). Both the upgraded and new trades come under the management of the IMC while the non-upgraded existing trades remain under the control of the state. This has the potential to cause a dichotomy within the ITI between the perceived 'haves' (the IMC trades) and 'have nots' (non-IMC trades) since the former is better funded and managed. It is hoped that, in time all trades within a particular ITI that have a good local market, will be upgraded and brought under the ambit of the IMC. The other, non-relevant trades need to be discontinued.

### **Conclusion and some Recommendations regarding ITIs:**

The new measures that have been introduced to overhaul the ITI system seem to be, for the most part, in the right direction. However there are some conceptual fault lines in the original ITI system in addition to the major issue of multi-boss schizophrenia cause by the complex administrative setup. These fault lines need to be addressed squarely if the second class status accorded to these training institutions and their graduates are to be addressed. .

**Social stigma:** One of the biggest challenges facing the ITI/ITCs, and vocational training in general, is that it has been unable to attract good teachers or students. This lack of overall social recognition and the secondary status accorded to vocational training is, for the most part, the result of a policy that fails to make timely changes in a rigid and outdated system and curriculum. It is only by instituting policies that create opportunities for upward mobility, understanding the career aspirations of the students, and by providing proper facilities and relevant infrastructure that the social stigma regarding vocational training can be reduced.

Although an improved ITI infrastructure will play a role in reducing the stigma associated with vocational training, there is a need for several other parallel measures in order to make vocational training a meaningful and appealing option for the youth. For example universities and ITIs could develop linkages such that ITI students can attend seminars and lectures in their neighbouring universities or student tours of labs and workshops could be organized. Greater use of Information Technology in ITI classrooms; community outreach programs that provide career counselling, short-term training; and change in nomenclature of some of the trades are some possible measures that will help in mainstreaming the ITIs in the public's mind. ITIs can take advantage of the IMCs and their degree of autonomy to push these measures through in a timely and efficient manner.

There is also a need to regularly monitor the quality and impact of training programs and the performance of the training institutions in terms of quality teaching, student retention, career counselling and placements. Such information needs to be made public and well performing institutions given appropriate incentives.

Lack of General Education: The ITI model is designed to provide the student training in a specific trade and does not provide any basic education in science, mathematics or humanities. Except for a 'social studies' course and a newly introduced IT course which are mandatory for all trades, there is no general education that would provide basic critical thinking and problem solving skills necessary for a well-rounded technical education. The end result is that the system may produce a plumber but not an educated plumber who has the requisite skills to adapt to the changing demands of the labour market. The social studies course, which has units on communication, entrepreneurship, trade unions, worker's compensation, environmental management etc, only skims the surface and fails to meet the general education needs. The presence of units on family planning and HIV/AIDS/STD and drug addiction, and their corresponding absence from most of our secondary education curriculum raises many questions and reinforces the stigma and labelling associated with vocational training. (This course has been redesigned recently and is now called Employability Skills and has a greater portion on entrepreneurship. Interestingly, the unit on trade unions has been omitted. Other omissions include units on family planning and drug addiction). It is a fact that while the relative wages of workers with secondary education have increased over the years, there has been a steady decline in the relative wages of workers with vocational skills. This is not surprising given the current demand for a multi-skilled workforce. Employers often prefer a worker with strong basic educational skills who is regarded as a good candidate for on-the-job-training. The ITI model needs to be redesigned to make it a platform for well-rounded vocational education as opposed to narrowly specific vocational training.

Outdated curriculum: Many of the trades offered by the ITI/ITCs are obsolete or have not been upgraded in a long time. The curriculum changes, for example, are not sufficient to produce a multi-skilled and educated trainee and the system is still unable to provide greater mobility to the students between vocational, general and technical education. When a student enters the ITI system for a year or two years, the primary focus of the training is to make him/her proficient in a particular skill. However, the contemporary labour market demand is for a multi-skilled worker. This mismatch of the training with employer needs is one of the main reasons for the low employment rate of the ITI/ITC graduates.

Informal Sector: The traditional ITI/ITC system does not have a training mechanism for the informal sector. Many of the artisanal trades are in need of revival as the younger generation shies away from what they see as old and non-marketable trades that do not relate to the outside world. There is a need to make these trades more 'mainstream' with the infusion of modern technology and marketing tools. Many of these trades have the potential to generate employment with minimal use of capital provided they are appropriately professionalized. ITIs could have played an important role in this regard but have failed to do so.

The university-ITI linkage, as mentioned above, is one possible way for the university system to get involved in the non-formal artisanal sector through a community outreach program. Ideally, every university should have a Community Outreach Program (COP) along the lines of CSR for corporates that would function as an instrument for reducing the town-and-gown gap prevalent in our universities. An example of this is the Mantaqi Center for Science and Society set up by the Islamic University of Science and Technology. The Mantaqi Center has started a program for local potters which aims to infuse some new technologies in this traditional knowledge and revive a dying craft. The project is

being conducted in a way that respects local knowledge and where learning is bidirectional. Our university, through its food technology department has also started short-term certificate courses in food preservation and baking. .

Measures such as these, that utilize existing resources and knowledge available to the universities, are needed in order to make the universities an inclusive space for those who are rarely included in the paradigms of current thinking.

### **References:**

1. *Skill Development in India: The Vocational Education and Training System*, World Bank, 2006.
2. *Annual Report 2010-2011*, Ministry of Labour and Employment.
3. *Institute Development Plan*, ITI Tral
4. *DGET website*.

### **Discussion**

Dhruv: What can be done to reverse the social stigma associated with ITIs? Is it only about the hygiene conditions or the lack of career opportunities? Fozia: Conditions of better hygiene can help to a certain extent. But this is where the universities can come forward to offer their facilities, their libraries, etc. and elevate the status of ITIs in the view of the public.

Isn't there opportunities for career advancement in the field? Fozia: The maximum you can go is foreman, but that too is seen as a shop-floor level job.

Dhruv: What can be done to incorporate traditional arts and crafts into the ITI framework?

Fozia: The Islamic University of J&K has started a Science and Society programme where an ongoing initiative has enabled local potters to attend workshops and provide lessons to students. The university on the other hand helped in getting better technologies, materials and marketing their products. Similarly, the food technology department did a programme which was attended by the local bakeries on food processing, marketing skills etc. These have shown that learning can happen at both ends. But we need to give it an entrepreneurial twist and the assistance of institutes like the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII) would prove valuable in such cases.

Gopal: ITI was servicing our manufacturing sector. Now over half of World Bank aid is going for infrastructure and the focus is in the service sector. Also it is not that it is benefitting and entire sector or sub-sector. The benefit seems to be for the particular company that is associated, to get people to man its own particular processes. There is no real development or enhancement of the level of skills, of capacity with modern technology in general, but only the specific needs of that particular companies processes.

### **National Skills Development Corporation**

(FR)The National Skills Development Council (NSDC) has facilitated the introduction of two different initiatives for skills development in J&K – Udaan, for students in colleges and Himayat, for school dropouts. While both these schemes were launched with much fanfare and promised to place the students (40,000 under Udaan and 100,000 under Himayat) in companies at the end of a 5 year period, both have fallen short of achieving their annual targets dismally. The NSDC is also dovetailing on earlier initiatives thus not creating any new opportunities for the underprivileged.

The skills development schemes in J&K cannot be designed with a one size fits all approach. We need to understand the ground realities where the youth have been traumatized for decades. They do not have an optimistic vision for their future; hence their aspirations and adequate opportunities need to be attended to through life counselling rather than career counselling. Something like CREST.