

Vocationalisation of Healthcare Education: Driver of Growth

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Abstract

Healthcare industry has become one of the prime sectors of the Indian economy, in generating revenue and employment. Health care education comprises of allied health staff such as radio technician, laboratory technicians, pharmacists, physiotherapist, home caregivers for the elderly and many others. Many of these sectors are prime players to India's wellbeing and overall development, hence, healthcare vocational education must be taken in multiple ways. Vocational education is the need of the hour and especially needed in skill-oriented industry such as Healthcare. We are required to raise the industry standards by having well-trained workforce in the field of healthcare. The demand and supply gap needs to be bridged and it can be achieved by having quality vocational courses. The Government is fully acquainted of the crucial role of vocational education and has already transformed in this area. This paper focuses on the significance of vocational education to meet the demands of the skilled workforce required by industry and how emerging healthcare industry has encouraged health professionals to join labour markets and ensure additional training and skill building. Increased availability and accessibility of healthcare services by population in general, enhanced investment in healthcare care sector that will strengthen health system for dealing with pandemic situations like COVID-19 and any other epidemic/s. Also, skilled healthcare workers contribute to economic growth and overall economic well-being.

Introduction

Vocational education is the kind of education or training that prepares students for jobs, specific trade, occupation or vocation, in which the individual participates. Vocational Education and Training (VET) ensures skill development in a wide range of occupational fields, through school-based and work-based learning. It comprises of all sort of trainings from handicrafts to agriculture, from mechanics to health care industry. It aims in making a student self-reliant. Vocational education has to become an attractive option for students to choose from. In the changing world of jobs, nature of work, well-designed vocational education & training systems can play a pivotal role in developing the right kind of temperament, attitude & skills for the work force market, not only for the student mass but also for the adults who require up-skilling or re-skilling as healthcare industry as many patients suffer at the hands of untrained staff. The other important internal stakeholders are the nursing staff, the paramedics and the technicians There have been number of incidences where the untrained and unskilled worker were responsible for loss of life and damage to infrastructure. Such experiences leave the patient with bitter feeling and reduces the over-all healthcare service standards.

In spite having a glorious history of medicine, the standard of healthcare in India is not up to the mark. Having large number of beds and doctors is not sufficient to raise the standards of the healthcare services. The other pillars of healthcare industry including the nursing staff,

nursing attendants and technicians have to perform their duties well. In order to do so they have to be well-trained. It is a sad fact the most of the workforce in healthcare is not adequately skilled. This not only causes damage to infrastructure but to human life as well. Such incidences can be reduced with the help of appropriate vocational courses. Standardized training can only be achieved through well-structured vocational programs. It can be inferred that relationship between the healthcare service standards and healthcare vocational courses is directly proportional. Ministry of Education (MoE) have introduced National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework (NVEQF) and National Occupational Standards (NOS) to standardise the vocational training, which will help to churn skilled man-power. There is a need to strengthen this initiative by all the strata of society, to bring the desired positive change in the healthcare industry.

This paper, explores how changing technology, demographics and other drivers will change work in the health care sector. Such changes will pose opportunities and challenges to governments, employers and workers in the field.

Vocational Education in India: Journey so far

An in-depth review of the demographic profile across the country reveals significant variation with respect to age, education level, income level, aspirations, required skill set in industry and the nature of jobs. At one end of the gamut, the elder will require greater attention; on the other side there are the young Indian population, where providing education, skills, and employment opportunities shoulder the highest precedence.

Though, over the years the Indian skilling ecosystem has progressed with a mix effort of government as well as private partnership. In addition to traditional, many long term and short term skill development programs, have been introduced in the country by the policy makers. The Government of India (GoI) took dual role of policy advocacy as well as a key financier for majority of skill development programs. Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) is commended with forming policies for skill development initiatives and cares for the operations centrally with assistance of National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), Directorate General Training, erstwhile National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) and National Council for Vocational Training, National Skill Development Fund (NSDF), State Skill Development Missions (SSDM) and other Program Implementation Agencies (PIAs). Recently, National Council of Vocational Training (NCVT) and NSDA have been amalgamated to form National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET). MSDE is engaged to achieve the government's vision of a 'Skilled India.' At the state level, the primary responsibility for program implementation and governance lies with the state governments through respective State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs). This integration has been planned from the upper primary segment onwards, by offering short-term internships with indigenous artists, craftspeople, and blue-collar professionals. The policy also perceives it as a way of 'emphasising the dignity of labour'. Qualification Frameworks (QFs) are global policy tools, usually adopted by economies to reform vocational education systems. For years, the acceptability of education in India has been through Institutions in the formal settings which is why NSQF has thus far failed to reform Vocational Education and Training (VET) in India. However, this does not necessarily mean that another qualification framework, albeit in the higher education space, will fail too.

The major cause of present scenario of skill gap and vocational education in our country, is due to various underlying reasons such as; vocational Education is still considered to be outside of mainstream education and ironically, not looked at as one of the critical pillars

of education. Even today, our education system lays over-emphasis on knowledge-oriented training based on rote learning rather than emphasising on skilled based and marker requirement. Therefore, there is an imperative need to re-structure and re-imagine the insight in school toward vocational education as an alternative career choice. Critical challenges we are facing to achieve to provide skilled worker in the world of work; Poor employability outcomes, in-efficient industry-academia linkages and the absence of an opportunity for youth to discover vocations, identify and unlock hidden passions that can drive very gainful lifelong livelihoods.

The problem of shortage of VET institutions in India can be solved by establishing more such institutions for imparting technical and vocational education at all stages. So, the Government should offer for more institutions to meet the increasing demand. The curriculum of Technical and Vocational Education should be upgraded. Supplementary educational materials for vocational education need to be sharpen keeping the requirements of job markets in mind, with NCERT and/or SCERTs. The youth population of the country should be imparted proper education to change their attitude towards work with more focus on dignity of labour/ job role. They should be taught the importance of physical labour & developing skills, both mental and attitudinal soft skills as well as manual skills. Regular & rigorous practical training sessions & workshops should be properly conducted and young enterprisers should be given practical knowledge of starting industries and setting up business firms. Collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations, industries could be done in order to provide practical skills, exposure, knowledge, industrial training, internship, and hands-on experience to the students. And assessment of all vocational education courses, jointly with the partners that are providing the practical skills training to the students could also be conducted. Part-time instructions should be provided to persons employed in jobs in order to improve quality of work. Cluster-based training is another possibility for small companies to get a sufficient number of trained personnel. For instance, they could develop a cluster-based training approach where a few companies from a particular area can jointly generate training programmes through cost sharing.

Emerging Prospects

The healthcare sector is likely to generate 2.7 million additional jobs in India between 2017-22 i.e., over 5 lakhs new jobs every year. How do we ensure that such a large workforce is adequately and appropriately skilled? The answer to all the queries that have been raised so far is by having an appropriate skilling program. This can be achieved by having structured vocational healthcare courses. The need for well-trained and appropriately skilled workforce is tremendous and is also essential to raise the standard of healthcare services. Having structured programs will not only train the healthcare workforce but also raise the overall standard of the healthcare service.

The crisis situation that our healthcare system is going through is not a set-back but an opportunity to come together and set a benchmark in the healthcare industry that will bring pride to our mother nation. Driving factors for the growth of the Indian healthcare sector includes: population, a growing percentage in the number of middle classes, emerging lifestyle diseases, an increased prominence on public-private partnerships in addition to augmented implementation of digital technologies, like telemedicine and interest from investors over the last two decades. The Indian Government has undertaken various reforms to reinforce the healthcare sector and has also encouraged Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The *Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan* packages include Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes for advancing domestic trade of pharmaceuticals and medical devices. India is working in the direction of becoming a centre for spiritual and wellness tourism.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only posed challenges but also several prospects to grow by opening the gates for Indian start-ups, and stimulus to the growth of telemedicine and the home healthcare market. In the hospital segment, the expansion of private healthcare providers offers striking investment opening. India also has the chance to expand domestic manufacturing of pharmaceuticals, over-the counter drugs, diagnostic centres, medical devices industry, and vaccines.

Complex drivers and trends are creating both challenges and opportunities for health service delivery: healthcare costs are increasing; populations and the health workforce are ageing; and technology promises to radically reshape the health sector in ways yet to be imagined. Despite many achievements, however, persistent health inequities remain a major concern. Having an in-depth knowledge about the field, one can implement it in the industry very well. Considering the fact that every industry is now technology driven, having proper technical knowledge in that specific industry helps one gain a lot and become a key performer in that industry. Vocational graduate programmes open doors for post-graduate education enhancing career opportunities.

Government Reforms

India has emerged as one of the fastest-growing emerging economies over the last two decades. On the policy front, the Indian Government is undertaking deep structural and sustained reforms to strengthen the healthcare sector; it has also announced conducive policies for encouraging Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In fact, India's FDI regime has been liberalised extensively. Currently, FDI is permitted up to 100% under the automatic route in the hospital sector and in the manufacture of medical devices. In the pharmaceutical sector, FDI is permitted up to 100% in greenfield projects and 74% in brownfield projects under the automatic route. There is a growing emphasis on and emergence of Public-Private Partnership models in India's healthcare sector. The country's relative cost competitiveness and availability of skilled labour are also making it an increasingly favoured destination for Medical Value Travel. All of these factors together create several opportunities for investment in India's healthcare industry.

Investment Prospects-Megatrends and drivers

Achieving the desired future of work in the health services sector requires a number of efforts in response to the drivers involved. Effective social dialogue between governments, workers and employers and consultation with other relevant stakeholders, such as patients' forums, is imperative, particularly during times of structural change. Horizons needs to be broadened and look for approaches to strengthen and enhance skills training at the level of society. The unmet demand for health workers in high-income countries will continue to increase the migration of such workers from low- and middle-income countries that cannot afford the incentives needed to retain them is another picture of this story. Significant numbers of migrant care workers, mostly women from India, are following this geographic trend to fill demand in affluent countries.

Research suggests that medical tourism in India can have both positive and negative effects on the health workforce. It can generate employment and contribute to health workforce holding in destination countries. Developments in the health services sector as a result of these megatrends and drivers will likely influence consensus building and democratic participation among stakeholders. Policies for the future of work in the care sector must similarly be founded on social dialogue.

Education and training in the health professions will most likely be influenced by the larger factors shaping the future of work, characterized by a continuous decrease in the need for physical and manual labour and basic cognitive skills. Due to these factors, it is expected that the relative weight of certain skills will grow in value. This includes interpersonal and soft skills like communication, social and emotional skills, higher cognitive and technological skills, as well as teamwork and team-building abilities. The changing relationship between patients and health workers due to technological advances will require tailored training related to social media, and education through simulation training.

Conclusions

The future of work will definitely require mechanisms to ascertain lifelong learning, flexible education, and training systems that can get ahead the skills demanded by the labour market. The transformations in work driven by new technologies mean that education and training will have to better prepare health workers for their new tasks and roles. Strengthening health systems in an interdependent world requires curriculum development and student evaluations that are competency-based in order to prepare health workers for services remodelled around peoples' needs. Therefore, education and training will need to include inter-professional training to adequately prepare health professionals for changing realities. Investments in the vocational education in health sector and its workforce are expected to create positive social returns and enhance inclusive economic growth.

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