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Perspectives and perceptions of students' regarding the choices for courses and locational attraction of the institutions for higher education in Assam, India

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Abstract

This paper presents the analysis of perception of sample students and trainees of Polytechnics and Industrial Training Institutes in Assam and students from Assam studying in Institutions of Higher Education in Delhi relating their perception towards educational and employment aspects. This paper gives the insights of the choices and trade practiced by Polytechnics and ITI's and their other attributes. The gender stereotype associated with certain specializations and trainings has been observed in the study. The bigger cities work as spatial locations of pull factors to attract to bigger cities with regard to higher education and employment.

Keywords: Urban population, educational infrastructure, vocational training and perception

Introduction

Population is a demographic variable that helps determine the number of human beings living in a defined territory at a point of time. This number can be weighted on a variety of parameters to reflect the quality of population (Tepas, 2002). When population is weighted by educational and health related parameters, it is often taken as a representation of human resources (Korn, 1995). If we want to enhance human resources in the region, we have to develop the educational infrastructure in the region (Kamin, 2006). Well established curriculum leads to the better result and good outcome in the institution. Some of the students who attempt for higher education, but due to less mark or other circumstances have not enrolled into higher education, enroll to the vocational courses. Institutions should collect feedback through formal and informal mode from their students for the improvement of the quality of education in the institutions. It should be done in both formal and vocational institutes. There should be equity in participation in higher education institution, without and discrimination based on caste, gender, creed etc. Student Centered Learning is viewed and reduced to effective classroom practices that have little to do with more foundational aspects of the teacher-student relationship and manifold possibilities for learning.

Educational infrastructure of Assam is skewed in nature. The availability of educational infrastructure is very significant for any area (Anatoly *et al.*, 2015). As in many other states of India, Assam also has more institutions imparting general education. The districts of Kamrup Metropolitan, Dibrugarh, Nagaon and Sonitpur have better infrastructure. These are also districts with bigger cities which impacts the region's development direction (Angel, 1995). The highest education infrastructure index value is recorded by Kamrup Metropolitan district. One of the reasons for the disparity in infrastructure can be attributed to the disparity in the level of urbanization, although the state itself is at the lower end of urbanisation scale. Thus, districts which are more urbanised have better educational infrastructure compared to districts which record less urban share like Baksa, Chirrang, and Udalgiri. (Adam, *et al.*, 2015)

The intake capacity reduces drastically when one moves from undergraduate to post graduate level. Only about 4 per cent of the students enrolled in undergraduate level courses can be accommodated at the post graduate level in Assam. Only about 8 per cent of the students enrolled in post graduate courses take admission in M.Phil., Ph.D, and D.Phil programmes in the state. While there is gender parity in enrolment up to higher secondary level, the proportion of female enrolment reduces noticeably at the degree and post graduate level

education. A sharp decline in female enrolment can be seen in all professional courses except nursing.

The emerging perspective on urban centers is that they would be a strong knowledge economy integrated with physical infrastructure that connects people, resources/goods, and ideas/knowledge, and skill. Because of economies of agglomeration, they attract among other things institutions and, educated and skilled labour.

About 8.1 million persons were in the age group of 16–29 in Assam as per the 2011 Census. It is useful to compare this figure with the intake capacity/enrolment in educational and skill building institutions in Assam. Against this, the total intake capacity of these institutions is about 0.853 million. Thus, the intake capacity in Assam with reference to education above secondary level could cater to only about 10 per cent of the population in the age group of 16–29.

This paper attempts to bring out the perspectives of trainees and students vis-à-vis the quality of training they receive, about their aspirations regarding employment, expected wages, the reasons for the choice of a particular trade in which they are getting trained, and related attributes. Two sample groups were selected to respond to the questionnaires – (a) Final year students undergoing training at Polytechnics and it is, and (b) students from Assam

studying in institutions of higher education in Delhi.

Database and Methodology

In order to bring out the perspectives of trainees and students vis-à-vis the quality of training they receive, about their aspirations regarding employment, expected wages, the reasons for the choice of a particular trade in which they are getting trained, and related attributes. Two sample groups were selected to respond to the questionnaires – (a) Final year students undergoing training at Polytechnics and it is, and (b) students from Assam studying in institutions of higher education in Delhi. Out of the twenty seven districts in Assam, nine districts were selected to conduct the survey. These include three districts namely Kamrup Metropolitan, Kamrup and Kokrajhar from Lower Assam; from Upper Assam, Dibrugarh and Jorhat were surveyed. The districts of Dima Hasao and Cachar were selected from South Assam region. Total 22 institutes were surveyed that include two from Kakrajhar, four from Dibrugarh, one from Dima Hasao, two from Cachar, three from Kamrup, five from Kamrup Metropolitan and Jorhat each.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents from Sampled Districts

S. N.	District Name	Per cent Respondents
1.	Kokrajhar	7.2
2.	Kamrup Metropolitan	39.5
3.	Dibrugarh	23.5
4.	Cachar	6.5
5.	Jorhat	10.9
6.	Dima Hasao	2.5
7.	Kamrup	9.9
		100

Source: Primary Survey

All polytechnics and Industrial training institutions in these districts were covered in the primary survey. All final year students present during the day of the survey responded to the questionnaires. The distribution of number of institutions across sample districts is given in Table 5.1 and the distribution of respondent trainees by institution is given in Table 5.2. Overall twenty two institutions were covered to collect the responses from the students. From lower Assam ten institutions were selected; from Upper Assam nine and from South Assam three were chosen. In terms of the responses, from Kokrajhar 7.2 per cent, Kamrup 9.9 per cent and least 2.5 per cent from Dima Hasao. The districts with highest recorded responses are Kamrup Metropolitan with 39.5 per cent followed by Dibrugarh with 23.5 per cent (Table 1).

Results and Discussion

Attributes of Respondents from Industrial Training Institutes

Of the 738 respondents from the ITIs, 144 were female, 592 male, and 2 transgender. The distribution of respondents by Trades. Among the trainees, less than 20 per cent are females. In trades like Cosmetology, hundred per cent of the trainees are females which indicates stereotyping of trades.

Similarly, the male only trades are those that train motor mechanics, diesel mechanics, welders, and wiremen (Table 2).

Personal interest, employment opportunities, and higher wage rates are the major reasons for choosing the trade in which the respondents were getting trained (Table 5.4). Less than 50 per cent of the respondents are satisfied with the quality of training and laboratory space. In so far as equipment and support staff in laboratories is concerned, about 53 per cent of the respondents appear to be satisfied. Among the trades that do not command sufficient demand in the labour market are: AC and Refrigeration, Draftsman (Civil), and Fitter. An overwhelming number of respondents were expected to register with employment exchange (about 87 per cent). This is despite the fact that a very small number of candidates are absorbed through employment exchange. One reason for the large number of job aspirants to register in the employment exchange is that the trainees can be absorbed in the government sector. Only 10 out 738 respondents said that they were undergoing an internship. While less than 45 per cent of the respondents were aware of government schemes for self-employment, many more (58 per cent) had shown interest in loans, particularly bank loans.

Table 2: Trade wise ITIs by Trade and Gender

Trade	Female	Male	Total
AC & Refrigeration	1	12	13
Basic Cosmetology	43	---	43
C.O.P.A.	19	14	33
Construction Wood and Working Sector	1	16	17
Draughtsman Civil		20	20
Dress Making	8	1	9
Electrical	--	2	2
Electrician	17	155	172
Electronic Mechanic	9	10	19
F.T.N.S.	1	13	14
Fabrication	1	41	42
Fitter	6	121	127
Hardware & Networking	8	5	13
IT & Networking	--	1	1
M.M.V	--	46	46
M.V.V	--	1	1
M.W.V	--	1	1
Machinist	--	1	1
Mechanic Diesel	--	84	84
Mechanical Engineering	--	2	2
Plastic Processing Operator	9	19	28
Plumbing	---	10	10
Pump Operator	---	1	1
Sewing Technology	2	5	7
Turner	1	2	3
Welder	---	11	11
Wireman	---	18	18
Grand Total	144	592	738

Source: Primary Survey

Most of the respondents preferred to be employed in cities, preferably within the state. Based on the experience of the seniors, about 80 per cent of the respondents believed that

they would be absorbed in the labour market within a year of successfully completing the training. Less than a fourth of the respondents preferred self-employment (Table 3).

Table 3: Views of Respondents' of ITIs by Their Choices and Trade

Trades	Reasons for trade Selection				Satisfied with Infrastructure		
	Employment opportunities	Personal interest	Higher wage rate	Ease of admission	Size of the Laboratory	Equipment	Support staff
AC & Refrigeration	2.88	1.83	1.59	3.10	0.88	2.86	0.52
Basic Cosmetology	7.85	6.54	4.50	3.88	5.26	4.69	8.51
C.O.P.A.	3.14	4.97	4.50	12.40	2.63	7.81	3.87
Construction Wood	2.09	4.19	1.32	3.88	2.19	2.86	2.84
Draughtsman Civil	4.97	2.36	0.79	0.00	2.19	3.91	2.06
Electrician	19.63	21.20	28.04	17.05	19.30	19.79	25.52
Electronic Mechanic	3.40	3.66	2.91	0.00	3.51	3.91	3.35
F.T.N.S.	1.83	1.05	2.12	3.88	0.44	1.56	2.84
Fabrication	2.09	6.28	2.38	0.00	1.75	0.00	6.70
Fitter	21.20	13.09	20.11	14.73	25.88	17.45	14.95
Hardware & Networking	2.36	1.57	2.12	0.78	0.88	2.34	2.06
M.M.V	9.42	8.90	5.29	0.78	15.79	8.85	3.35
Mechanic Diesel	6.02	11.52	13.76	14.73	5.70	10.16	14.18
Others	4.19	5.50	2.38	2.33	7.46	5.21	1.55
Plastic Processing Operator	6.28	2.36	5.03	4.65	2.19	4.43	3.61
Plumbing	1.05	2.62	0.00	4.65	2.19	1.82	1.55
Welder	1.31	1.31	1.32	3.10	1.32	1.30	1.29
Wireman	0.26	1.05	1.85	10.08	0.44	1.04	1.29
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Primary Survey

Among the trade demands electrician was seen highest followed by fitter and, mechanic. If the willingness of respondents in terms of registering in employment, it is seen that beside the same three fields above people from the trades of fabrication, plastic processing and cosmetology have shown interest. Campus placement is also higher for electrician, fitter and mechanic followed by C.O.P.A and

M.M. V. The awareness about government schemes for youth has been seen in most with least in plumbing, welder and electronic mechanic. Respondents from most of the trades have shown interest in taking loan for the self-employment. Even the basic cosmetology respondents which are all females have shown interest in loan and self-employment (Table 4).

Table 4: Employment Related Viewpoints

Trades	High Demand for trade in job market	Employment exchange Registration	Campus placement	Awareness of government loan schemes	Plans for applying loan
AC & Refrigeration	2.38	1.34	2.56	1.6	3.8
Basic Cosmetology	5.68	3.95	5.20	2.37	9.74
C.O.P.A.	6.76	5.21	6.86	6.21	3.80
Construction Wood	1.35	2.69	3.53	2.37	1.43
Draughtsman Civil	1.35	2.21	2.29	2.66	3.33
Electrician	28.16	22.99	17.40	23.55	14.25
Electronic Mechanic	2.70	3.00	2.49	0.00	3.56
F.T.N.S.	2.97	2.21	2.91	3.55	0.24
Fabrication	0.27	5.69	0.00	12.43	9.98
Fitter	18.11	17.69	20.79	16.57	14.73
Hardware & Networking	1.89	1.90	2.70	2.66	1.43
M.M.V	5.41	5.53	9.56	0.30	7.84
Mechanic Diesel	16.76	12.64	11.02	13.61	8.08
Others	2.16	3.16	3.53	1.78	5.23
Plastic Processing Operator	1.35	4.42	5.82	3.55	3.56
Plumbing	1.62	1.58	2.08	0.89	1.90
Welder	0.54	1.58	1.04	0.59	2.85
Wireman	0.54	2.21	0.21	5.33	4.28
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Attributes of Respondents from Polytechnics

Although 26 different trades are listed, the sample districts had respondents only from six streams of engineering (Table 5). Of the 318 respondents, 51 were females (16 per cent) and 267 males. Some level of concentration of female trainees can be seen in Chemical and Civil engineering, possibly relating to petro chemical industries and construction activities in the state. Almost all trainees felt that the support-staff was more than satisfactory (97 per cent), including the quality of training imparted (71 per cent). Majority of the respondents were dissatisfied with the laboratories and equipment. As in the case of ITIs, almost all expect to register with employment exchange, are aware of government schemes, and prefer employment in urban

areas while very few prefer employment outside the state (Figure 1 and 2).

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents from Polytechnics by Gender and Trade

Trade	Female	Males	Total
Automobile Engineering		2	2
Chemical Engineering	13	24	37
Civil Engineering	25	63	88
Computer Engineering	11	29	40
Electrical Engineering		69	69
Mechanical Engineering	2	80	82
Grand Total	51	267	318

Source: Primary Survey

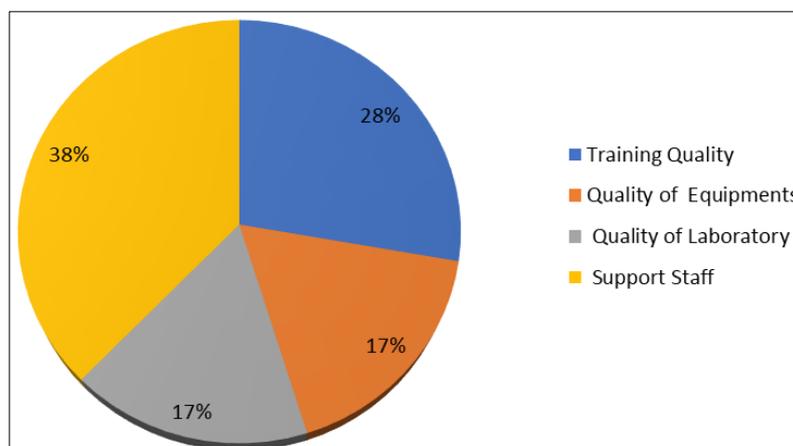
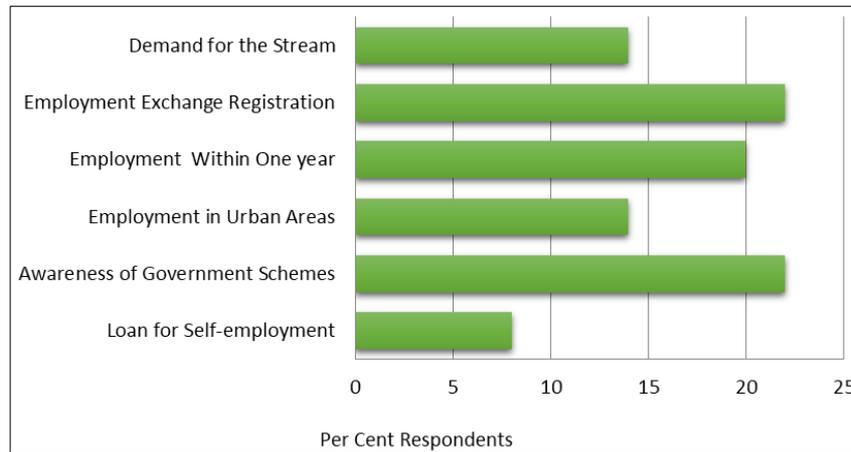


Fig 1: Level of Satisfaction about their Institution



Source: Primary Survey

Fig 2: Perspectives about the Employment

Profile of Sample Students from Assam Studying in Delhi

A sample of 333 students studying in institutions of higher education was selected using snowballing method of sample selection. Of these, about 56 per cent were females (including transgender) and 44 per cent males (Table 6). Most of the sample students are found to be pursuing undergraduate courses in higher general education followed by post graduate courses. A very small proportion is in professional courses. A questionnaire canvassed among the sample respondents.

Table 6: Respondents from Higher Education in Delhi

Attributes	Per cent Respondent
Female	55.86
Male	43.54
Transgender	0.6
Background	
Rural Background	27.63
Urban Background	72.37

Again, a large proportion (about 73 per cent) came from an urban background. This also reflected the districts of origin of the sample respondents. Around 30 per cent from together from both Kamrup districts followed by Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Sonitpur, Golaghat and Sibsagar with 7 to 11 per cent. Nagaon, Tisukia and Dhubri covered 3 to 5 per cent. And all other districts includes only less than 2 per cent (Table 7).

It is not so much the push factor, but the pull factor that is responsible for students from Assam to migrate to cities such as Delhi for higher education. This is indicated by responses to different questions in the questionnaire. Students move to Delhi as they feel education standards and course are better (Figure 3). Firstly, as observed earlier, most of students are from large city-based institutions in Assam. Secondly, almost two-thirds of the respondents indicate better education standards as the main reason for

pursuing higher studies in Delhi while more than one-third reported greater choice of available courses as well as job opportunities (Griggs, 2000). Most students came to Delhi for pursuing graduation degree (Figure 4).

Table 7: Distribution of Sample Students in Delhi from Assam by District of Origin

District	Per cent Respondents
Kamrup	15.02
Kamrup (M)	12.61
Jorhat	11.11
Dibrugarh	7.81
Sonitpur	7.21
Golaghat	6.91
Sibsagar	6.91
Nagaon	5.11
Tinsukia	3.6
Dhubri	3.0
Lakhimpur	2.1
Baksa	1.8
Cachar	1.8
Kokrajhar	1.8
Nalbari	1.8
Karbi Anglong	1.5
Bongaigaon	1.2
Udalguri	1.2
Barpeta	0.9
Chirang	0.9
Dima Hasao	0.9
Goalpara	0.9
Tezpur	0.9
Assam	0.6
Darrang	0.6
Dhemaji	0.6
Aizawl	0.3
Guwahati	0.3
Hailakandi	0.3
Morigaon	0.3
Total	100

Source: Primary Survey

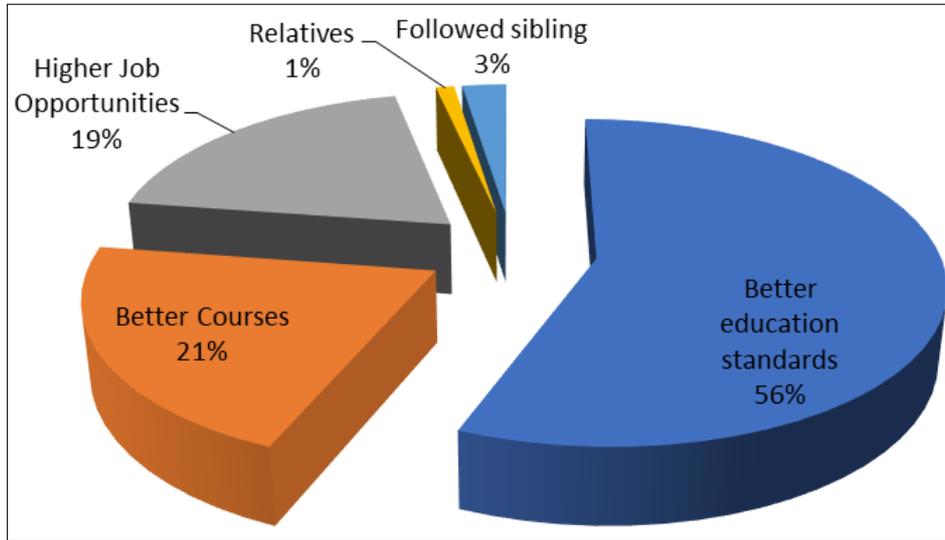
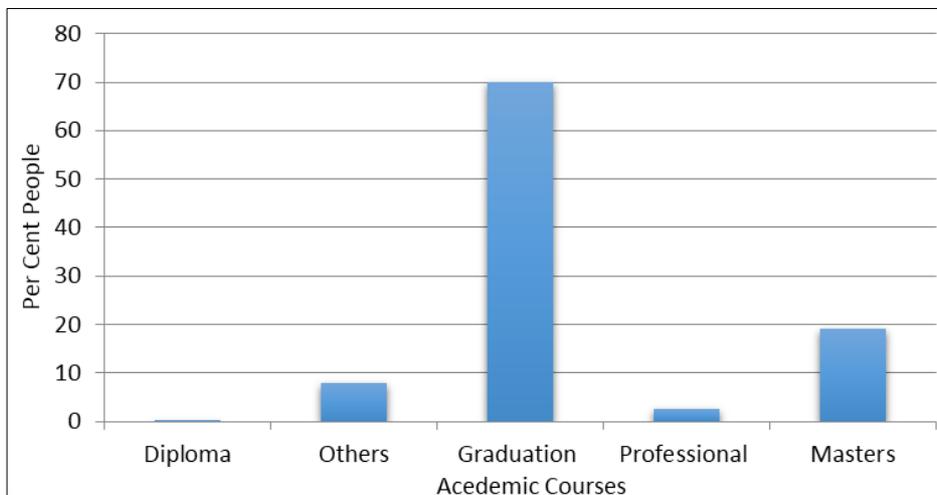


Fig 3: Reasons to leave Assam and moving to Delhi



Source: Primary survey based

Fig 4: Type of courses that Student come for

Of the 333 sample respondents, about 71 per cent prefer employment in Delhi (Figure 5). Compared to the private

sector, government as an employer is preferred by most of the respondents.

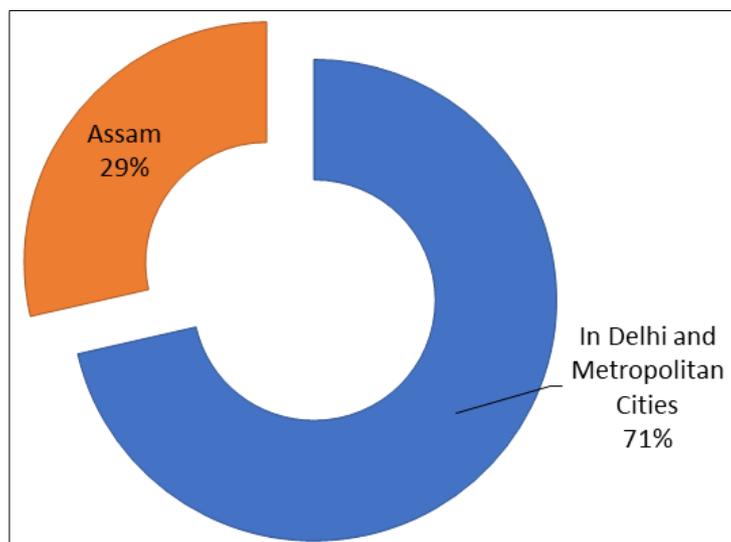
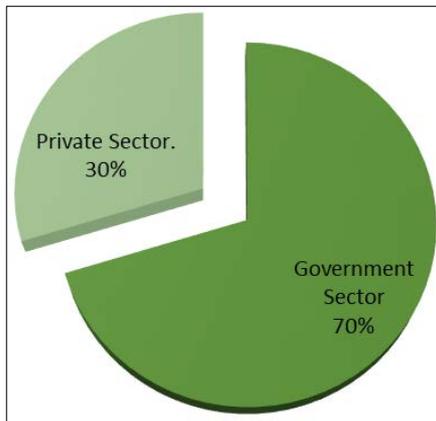


Fig 6: Job Preferences



Source: Primary Survey

Fig 7: Preferences for Sectors for Employment

Other than the regular institutions, among the recent steps taken by the state government is the establishment of Assam skill Development Mission (ASDM), Guwahati, which was set up under the aegis of Skill Employment and Entrepreneurship Department. The Mission is looking after more than 340 training centres in and around 30 sectors in Assam. The ASDM has around 150 training partners across the state. The ASDM ensures that the trainee find employment, for which it has been tracking the placement of trainees for about 12 months. The Mission is anchored by intentions to:

1. Create large and good quality vocational institutes,
2. Reduce risk by providing capital, and
3. Create sustainability of support systems required for skill development.

The target under Skill Development Programme is to impart market-driven skill training to the two lakh youths of Assam by 2019. Some of the challenges being faced include the quality of training provided by some of the PPP partners and the shortage of training materials and good quality trainers. Absence of robust industry-linked skill training institutions continues to be a problem that needs to be addressed. Skill mission is adding more employment oriented courses and is proposing that one trainee should be trained in more than one job. However, their orientation appears to be towards the upcoming government supported schemes.

Short-term training courses being offered by skill mission is a boon to the local industries. Local administration has to motivate the youth so that entrepreneurship should be an option of livelihood. Government should take on the responsibility of ensuring the welfare of the workers and also simplify the paper work. One way of improving the database is to create a Business Opportunity Map, preferably at the district level, for traditional skills that are ubiquitous and consistent. At the state and national levels, the demand for emerging skills in the sunrise sectors needs to be projected. Combining these two, the state could take up constructing a skilled man power map from 10 to 15 year perspective. An institutional mechanism to organize annual meeting between the skill imparting Institutions and the industry needs to be put in place.

Conclusion

The importance of skilled manpower that is usually generated through vocational education and training is a driving force of economic growth and social development.

One of the important issues is to minimize the gap between skills supplied by the vocational training institutions and the skills demanded in the labour market. Much of the skill development in India is supply driven. Very little is known about the skills in demand in the labour market. It is necessary to classify skills into two segments: those that are of basic nature that command a set level of in-demand across time as well as emerging skills whose demand has peaks and troughs. The former gets upgraded with change in technology and upgraded equipment. An estimation of demand for emerging and future skill requirements skills in a medium-term perspective and is best undertaken at the national level.

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