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# Learning while Earning

To progress, make vocational training part of the system, not an appendage

There is a birth defect in our current vocational training system; employers are not willing to pay for training or candidates but for trained candidates. Candidates are not willing to pay for training but jobs. Financiers are unwilling to lend to candidates unless a job is guaranteed. And vocational training companies are unable to find candidates that are able or willing to pay their fees. Since the disease and cures are more interesting than the symptoms, let's examine the problem and consider solutions.

Today, government money is available only for government delivery, which means they don't have clients but hostages. Most government

prepare because we can't teach children in six months what they should have learnt in 15 years. We can teach sales, customer services, masonry, carpentry, and bar-tending skills in six months but not how to be confident, creative or risk-takers. The current contradiction between learning for living and learning for earning is unfounded and unfair. There is no shortage of ideas; progress lies in reducing the transmission losses between theory and practice.

▶ Despite the antibiotic reaction from the 19 ministries involved in skill development, we must link the continued financing of their programmes to outcomes (jobs) and enforce the operating principles of the National Skill Council.

▶ We need to create choice and competition by making government money available for private and public delivery.

▶ We need to review the Apprentices Act, 1961, that sabotages scalable and effective vehicles of workplace learning.

▶ We need to encourage, incentivise and facilitate the setting of skill missions by states.

▶ We need a national framework for skill development that aligns job profiles, entry gate assessment and exit gate certification. The National Skill Corporation must create viability gap funding for high impact public-private partnerships.

▶ We must allow the 100 days job and resources of NREGA to be used for providing formal apprenticeships and skill development. English or bilingual instruction in schools must be expanded.

▶ Employment exchanges must be converted into career centres that offer assessment, counselling, apprenticeships, training and jobs. We not only need to explode the number of vocational institutes but must create performance management systems for teachers that create a fear of falling (punishment) and a hope of rising (reward).

I have a ringside view of the tragedy and many of our children are losing their futures. And losing your future is not like losing an election or a few points in the stock market. The curse of our population has been repackaged as a demographic dividend but living up to storytelling requires a radical revamp of our 3E ecosystem (education, employability and employment). If not now, then when? ■

## 2.5 lakh

is the number of apprentices in India compared to six lakh in Germany and 11 lakh in Japan.



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financing is linked to input (hours) rather than outcomes (jobs). The lack of effective entry gate assessment and credible exit gate certification means the signalling value of a vocational training diploma to employers is weak. An archaic law sabotages on-the-job training which facilitates learning by doing and learning while earning. English is a meta-vocational skill that is like an operating system because employment chances for candidates familiar with or fluent in English are 300 per cent higher but many states perpetuate an apartheid against bilingual instruction.

We need to think about repair differently from