



International
Labour
Organization

Skill Development Initiative: Modular Employable Skills Scheme

Feedback from the Field

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List of Abbreviations

SDI	Skill development initiative
MES	Modular employable skills
MoLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment
DGET	Directorate General of Employment and Training
NCVT	National Council of Vocational Training
ITI	Industrial Training Institutes
ILO	International Labour Organization
VTP	Vocational Training Providers
ITC	Industrial training centre
PSU	Public sector unit
RDAT	Regional Directorate of Apprenticeship Training
NIMI	National Instructional Media Institute
DOEACC	Department of Electronics and Accreditation of Computer Courses
CCC	Certificate course in computer concepts
BCC	Basic computer course
UID	Unique identification
SSC	Sector skills councils
NSQF	National Skills Qualification Framework
NCVT	National Council of Vocational Training

Acknowledgements

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1. Background

The Government of India has recognized Skill Development as a major priority for India's socio-economic development, for sustaining its growth rate and the best means to convert India's demographics into an asset for development. It is also believed to help India respond to the global needs of skilled manpower and contribute to the reduction in inequality and poverty.

2. The SDI-MES scheme

The Government of India launched the Skills Development Initiative (SDI) scheme in 2008, with the aim to train 1 million persons on demand-driven vocational skills over the next 5 years and 1 million each year after that to support skills training, certification and upgradation in the unorganized sector. Under this initiative, the MOLE/DGET undertook the development and implementation of a strategic training framework known as Modular Employable Skills (MES) to cater to school drop outs and existing workers, especially focused on the informal economy.

MES was developed in close consultation with industry and micro enterprises in the unorganised sector, state governments, experts and academia. It offers flexibility in the provision of vocational training to those who have limited education and cannot afford to be away from employment for long periods of time. It also provides testing and certification of existing skills of a person as the SDI scheme provides a mechanism of third party assessment of trainees under the MES framework through DGET empanelled Assessment Bodies leading to NCVT certification that has national recognition in India.

The SDI-MES scheme also has the objective of building capacity in the area of development of competency standards, course curricula, learning material and assessment standards in the country.

3. Aim of this report

This report has been developed by the ILO for the Directorate General of Employment and Training, MoLE with a view to strengthen the implementation of the SDI-MES scheme. The report includes key issues and recommendations made at an SDI-MES experience sharing workshop held at Bhopal on 24th May 2013 (35 participants) supplemented by material obtained through follow-up interviews with other key stakeholders during the month of June 2013 (19 respondents).

Workshop participants included those who have been working closely with the ILO and the DGET in the implementation of the SDI programme, including through the ILO Convergence project in six states and through the ILO's work in the Moradabad and Firozabad clusters of glass and bangle making industries where industry were linked to the SDI scheme and new MES modules developed and delivered to local artisans.

A list of participants in the Bhopal forum is contained in Annexure C and a list of additional interview respondents is contained in Annexure B. A copy of the interview schedule is included in Annexure A.

4. Major achievements of the scheme

The MES-SDI scheme has been immensely popular amongst youth and industry. Against a target of training 1 million persons during the 11th Plan (2007-12), close to 1.4 million were trained and assessed. To date, 1433 course modules have been developed which cover a variety of trades and 7000 Vocational Training Providers along with 46 Assessing Bodies have been registered.

The scheme is targeted towards the early school leavers and unorganised sector workers among others to increase their employability and skill level. The flexibility of training delivery has also proved beneficial to people who cannot devote a long time to studies. Respondents suggested the scheme had helped facilitate improved access to training and promoted equitable access, increased earnings of participants, and achieved the desired scale of participants. It was also considered to have improved industry participation through the assessing bodies which are empanelled throughout the country and involve employers at the grass roots level.

The scheme was also considered to have opened doors for the recognition of prior learning including traditional skills, and ascertaining skill levels of those already a part of the trade. It has helped those who acquire training informally, due to certain socio-economic constraints, to be assessed and have their skills nationally recognised thus enhancing their employability.

The general view of workshop participants and interview respondents was that SDI-MES was a good initiative, apt for the present situation where there exists a demand for skills. Being widely dispersed, the scheme also reaches rural areas, making the modules accessible to all.

The scheme is considered to have helped provide certification of vocational skills to people for whom it is not possible to undergo formal education due to restrictive program prerequisites. The certification has enabled them to have better livelihoods, develop soft and advanced skills and increase their productivity at work. It also increases their bargaining power in industry.

Working under the model of a public private partnership, the scheme has also helped private training institutions obtain accreditation under DGET and NCVT norms for running vocational training programmes and given the network of VTPs involved, has made it easier for potential trainees to find vocational training centers in their area. Another identified strength of the program was the involvement of third parties in the assessment process which was seen as an important contribution to quality outcomes.

5. Major challenges being faced by the scheme

Respondents felt the biggest challenge being faced by the SDI-MES scheme is that it is not designed as an outcome based scheme in that it did not ensure a link between training and employment/self-employment for those not from industry.

Whilst it was acknowledged that the SDI-MES is a major scheme covering a lot of trades, the process of empanelment of training providers is considered very cumbersome.

Another major challenge being faced by the scheme is ensuring the employability of the people trained / tested under the scheme. At present there is very little information available on the placement of the trainees. It was felt therefore that there was a need for information on the number of trainees and after training, their placement details.

A proper mechanism of assessing skill demands should also be developed and or utilised at state level so as to ascertain appropriate manpower requirements and make the scheme more demand driven so the training offered is more closely linked to employment opportunities. The issue of increasing communication between the employers in terms of identifying the skills required in the market and the VTPs, ITIs and the ITCs in terms of provision of training for the identified skills was also raised.

Respondents also noted that the infrastructure available with the government regulator NCVT is insufficient. For the SDI-MES scheme to be effective, close monitoring from the side of the government is required, for which neither the state nor the central government is adequately staffed.

It was also felt that there is also a problem of coordination between the various stakeholders of the scheme which is leading to a lack of uniformity and that this is partly the result of there being insufficient information provided to stakeholders regarding their functions. The absence of a preliminary workshop for new organisations involved in the scheme, or any advice or guidelines regarding the scheme makes it very difficult for the relatively newer players in the system to understand and participate in the scheme.

It was also felt that not all state governments recognize their role in the implementation of the scheme. Reference was made to Uttar Pradesh which stopped the SDI-MES scheme in May 2010 and action on the part of the state government to resume the same is still awaited. Many states face the problem of the absence of quality VTPs and the fact that trained candidates do not want to move out of the city for employment purposes.

The dynamism of the vocational system in India was recognized as was the evolving role of the Sector Skills Councils (SSC) and the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) in establishing a coordinated system of sector specific training and certification pathways that would be used by all training providers and in turn would help provide better mobility for learners and workers, both horizontal and vertical. However, the need to deliver and assess a competency based curriculum and the recognition of prior learning by the MES along with the need to shift to the National Occupational Standards based system was highlighted.

The need for a change to the apprenticeship legislation and rules that enabled articulation with SDI-MES training was also highlighted and that making this change would make SDI-MES more attractive to the employers and the learners by integrating the MES curricula with on the job training was also discussed.

Basically it was felt that the implementation and execution of the scheme needs to be improved through streamlining of processes and strengthening leadership of the scheme.

6. Issues and recommended solutions

The key challenges and recommendations suggested during the course of the forum are shown in the table below.

RECOMMENDATION/ISSUE	PROPOSED SOLUTIONS, if any
1. Poor linkages between training and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting labour force surveys to identify prospective training areas based on the demand of the employers • State governments should be required to submit action plans on the prospective training areas which would facilitate employment
2. Documentation of best practices and case studies of achievements are needed to assist with social marketing in different languages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DGET in cooperation with state governments to document success stories and undertake social marketing
3. Poor functionality of the portal and inaccessibility for long periods during the day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts underway by the government to resolve this problem should make the portal more user-friendly
4. Generation of automated training batch numbers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under process by the government
5. Development of standardized national assessment tools like a national assessment question bank.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DGET and NIMI should work with assessment centres to develop standardised assessment tools for priority MES programs as NOS become available
6. Identifying and registering VTPs after assessing the local demand for skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be done by state governments after conducting a labour market survey and then formulating a state action plan around the skills that have a potential for increased employability in the market
7. VTPs to be authorized to issue certificates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portal functionality to be amended for this to occur • Systems and procedures will be required to trace certificate numbers and safeguard integrity of the system
8. Abolition and/or reduction of assessment fee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be considered by DGET
9. Introduction of refresher courses for trained MES participants and assessors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants should be followed-up by VTPs and DGET for higher level training • Training and professional development of assessors should be more systematic • Technical training of assessors should be made mandatory
10. Gap in training and assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proposal to hold assessments the very next day after training finishes is under consideration but will require changes to the portal issuance of batch numbers. • Allotment of fixed dates and times for assessment should be made once participants are registered.
11. Delay in reimbursement of fees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DGET should compel all states to ensure reimbursement within 10-15 days of training completion
12. Lack of awareness in various segments of society regarding the SDI-MES programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal to develop standardized promotional material targeting the trainees and the public at large through channels such as the radio, television etc.
13. The difficulty faced to comply with the huge amount of formalities in schemes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DGET should maintain dialogue with VTPs and other stakeholders on a continuous basis and introduce a suggestions mechanism so that a continuous improvement approach to the scheme and its systems can be implemented
14. Development of skills for the rural sectors and imparting training specific to women for certain tasks in the industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of course and training materials should be possible by VTPs and industry themselves

15. Limited numbers of assessors and the need to monitor their quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a standardized national assessor training programme with a refresher course every 12 months • DGET to work with NSDC and NSDA to professionalise assessment as a career to meet the increasing demand
16. Need to integrate soft skills module in the existing MES modules.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some elements of soft skills should be incorporated in all modules as a part of the review cycle
17. Need to lift restriction of training modules being 180 hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominal duration to be increased on the basis of client need, including incorporation of practical exercises as a part of the module
18. Need for stakeholder meetings to be held regularly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DGET to require states to hold more regular advisory and consultative meetings
19. Incentivizing women to take part in training processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry could develop training material specific to their processes • Women to be given a 25% relaxation in fees for training purposes
20. Limited incentive for VTPs and industry to collaborate on a cluster basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DGET to allocate funds for coordination of cluster based trades in the SDI.
21. Acceptance of a different proof of identity as opposed to age and address proof for inclusion of migrant labour in the MES scheme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DGET to revise proof of identity requirements
22. PSUs or pan India companies operating in more than one state are frustrated by separate empanelment processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For PSUs or pan India companies instead of state wise empanelment, it was suggested that DGET could empanel at the central level.
23. Difficulty of recruiting participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5th grade pass pre-requisite to be reviewed for those trades where this standard of literacy and numeracy is not required • To be replaced by course specific challenge tests to test functional literacy necessary for course completion

These and other issues raised during the stakeholder interviews are grouped under specific issue areas below:

6.1 Management, administration and financing

a. Web portal

- There are often delays in uploading data and obtaining permission to start new VTP/sectors/modules.
- At times the server of DGET is down disturbs the process of candidate registration.
- The state governments are not familiar with the usage of the web portal.
- There are various technical bugs in the portal e.g the assessment fees for a non-engineering module is mentioned as Rs.800 whereas it is supposed to be Rs.500
- The implementation of the training cost bill through the portal has not yet taken place.
- There is a need for simplification and streamlining of processes relating to registration of a new VTP, allotment of batch numbers, issuance of certificates, scheduling assessments etc.

b. Monitoring of the scheme

- There is a lack of monitoring of the vocational training providers and assessment bodies at regular time intervals which compromises quality and proper implementation of the scheme.
 - Most of the states do not have a full time staff exclusively for management, monitoring and Physical inspection of VTPs for the purpose of checking the facilities, quality of training, availability of faculty, tools, machinery and other services- thus ensuring the quality of the training infrastructure, needs to be looked upon.
 - The state government is provided with finances only to meet the training and assessment cost reimbursement therefore, funds for management, monitoring and administration of the scheme at the state level are needed urgently.
- c. The number of candidates to be trained by VTPs is not defined. Allocating targets to VTPs for training a set number of candidates is an imperative.
- d. The reimbursement of the assessment and training fee is not scheduled which hampers the progress of the scheme.
- e. There exists a need for increased coordination between the government- both the centre and the state, the VTPs and the assessing bodies, the absence of which hampers the learning and assessment process of the students.
- f. A need has been expressed for increasing the training fee allocation from Rs. 15 per hour for VTPs who find it difficult to deliver training at that cost. This proposal has already been raised and could be possibly resolved by conducting a cost analysis of different programs to gain consensus.
- g. There are delays with respect to certification, reimbursement, assessment and approval of registrations which hinder the smooth progress of the scheme. These issues could be resolved by empowering the state government and the RDAT for better management and administration of the scheme.
- h. Convergence can be targeted between ministries which have a budget allocation for skill training but have lesser or no capacity for the same thereby developing an ecosystem to facilitate funds for expansion of the scheme.

6.2 Curriculum and learning resources

- a. The development of curriculum should be outcome based, linking training and employment.
- b. The modules should be based on developing market relevant competency with an allocated number of hours for soft skills (effective, social and communication skills) training.

- c. There could be combined modules in each sector (eg. AUR 101 & 207 – can be combined and made in to one module like AUR 115 with more number of hours),which would avoid the delay in registering the candidates for level 2 & would give better skills for employability.
- d. The modules can be also re-arranged as in the “Supermarket Model” which consists of core competencies including the basics and then an option to choose different modules as per ones aptitude and taste.
- e. As the scheme expands to include more trades, there is a dearth of content writers for the modules of these new trades. Although, NIMI is doing a good job in preparing the course curriculum and course material for the MES modules, a lot of course material is still pending. VTPs could be requested to prepare curriculum. Making the course material available online would also add benefits.
- f. The modules developed earlier need to be updated and restructured with minimum of 300 hours of training and incorporation of practicals into the course.
- g. Modification of modules should involve VTPs ie: involving private players who would be able to give an idea about the potential additions to the modules with regard to the market orientation and demand. This would enable them to increase the scope of employability.The government is in the process of reviewing the existing syllabus by involving private players like Javed Habib and VLCC to advise on the development of curriculum for modules.

6.3 Training delivery

- a. Some states face a problem in recruiting faculty for their courses.
- b. The quality of training imparted by the VTPs should be at par with the NCVT standards. It is therefore, necessary to monitor and improve the quality of training of the VTPs by allocating the responsibility of inspection to either the district level or the state governments to physically verify their infrastructure i.e. latest tools, machinery & equipment, classrooms, workshops, qualified trainers, an adequate power supply and a congenial environment to impart training. Registration should be provided to the VTPs only if they meet a certain threshold of the criteria.
- c. Ensuring the quality of the training imparted by organizing workshops, training programmes, periodical interactions with the training providers. These would help strengthen the ability of transfer of knowledge.
- d. It would be beneficial to encourage innovation in the ways of training to develop skills outside those developed in classroom training.
- e. There exists a need for generating awareness among the small scale & local industries, vocational/skill training providers, District/state/central ministries/mechanisms, trade unions, industrial associations etc.

- f. Encouragement of setting up of private VTPs by the government would contribute towards positive implementation of the scheme.
- g. Introduction of an awards system for encouraging employment could induce better competition among VTPs which in turn would result in a better quality of training in the future apart from better scope for employability.
- h. Fostering partnerships and piloting best practices so as to develop a model that could be followed for effective implementation of the scheme.

6.4 Assessment and assessment centres

- a. The major problem exists in the delay of assessment. Presently, there is a large gap between the completion of training and assessment. This could be countered by the DGET by ensuring optimal management of assessing bodies and working towards increasing the number of assessors.
- b. The assessors need to be full time and committed. A clear cut criteria to develop a benchmark for assessors in terms of knowledge, skill and behaviour should be developed. NOS for assessors should be developed.
- c. The assessors should also undergo domain training as per the different modules and levels so as to ensure quality assessment.
- d. The allotment of assessment batches which is currently manual should be automated to reduce the time lag.
- e. There exists a need for standardization of the assessment procedure. Currently, different assessing bodies have different formats for data collection, assessment and assessment processes. The assessment tools should be standardised for all assessment bodies so as to not compromise on the quality of assessment.
- f. A video of assessment could be done during the theory and practical assessment along with assessor in order to monitor the quality of assessment.
- g. Assessment fees could be increased as assessment bodies find it difficult to break even at Rs. 800. This would enable assessments to be more effectively implemented.
- h. The assessing bodies fail to declare the result of the assessment within the stipulated time.
- i. As the MES is a competency based scheme, the assessment should mainly be dependent on practical examinations.

6.5 Certification

- a. Although the certificates are issued by NCVT, they are not accepted by some departments. For example the certificate for ICT 101 (Computer Fundamental, MS Office & Internet) course cannot be used in the place of DOEACC's BCC and CCC courses. Therefore, DGE&T must issue instructions to ensure uniform recognition of all the certificates across the government and the industry.
- b. Currently, the agencies accredited to provide certification are way too small in number and the certification process ends when the training is completed. If expanded, they would enable the students to get additional certifications even when they have entered the job market thereby ensuring constant upward mobility.
- c. Defining certification levels linking MES modules with ITI diplomas and other programs in the NSQF eg: two modular certificates in the same trade could be made equivalent to a one year ITI diploma.
- d. There is a major problem of delay in issuing certificates for students who have completed the training.

6.6 Funding and links with other major government schemes

- a. Average costs could be looked at so as to enable balancing of finances between low cost and high cost modules.
- b. Supplementation of finances to the permissible amount allocated for training by people who wish to undergo extra training should be allowed.
- c. There is a large scope of convergence between the SDI-MES scheme and other schemes run by different ministries which have funds allocated for training purposes. These schemes can utilize the infrastructure that has already been developed for the scheme and contribute towards more effective expansion and implementation.
- d. It should be ensured that there is no overlapping of goals between schemes. A uniform training channel needs to be developed between ministries so as to avoid duplication and enable the expansion and strengthening of the scheme. It would also help minimize confusion of the stakeholders and the beneficiaries of the schemes. Online services and web bases administration can be used as tools for the same.
- e. Formation of separate departments for MES in every state which would have a direct interaction with the DGET.

6.7 Promotion and marketing

- a. There is a need for a national media campaign with advertisements and publicity of the scheme through electronic and print media for the promotion and marketing as many people are not aware of the scheme and hence cannot participate in it.
- b. Proper communication of the goals and capacity of the scheme would also help dispel the myths associated with the scheme.
- c. The government should utilize funds and target small districts and villages in areas where there is not much awareness about the scheme.
- d. The branding of the scheme can be done by state governments and hired agencies in regional languages as well in order to target the population at the grass root level.
- e. Promotion of direct liaison with the industry would help in improving the employability quotient of the scheme.

7. Major opportunities for the SDI-MES scheme in the next 2-3 years

Workshop participants and respondents felt expected the scheme to flourish in the years to come with the potential to affect the country in a positive way with many more people being trained, thereby increasing productivity and income, improving performance and building confidence among people. The major opportunities envisioned for the SDI-MES scheme are:

- a. Continuous improvement of the scheme so there are periodical refinements.
- b. Utilization of Aadhaar/ UID nos. for tracking trainees, so that a large no. of people working in the informal sector can be provided suitable training, certification and up gradation of any existing skills to ensure better jobs and livelihood for them.
- c. Developing partnerships with more players so as to increase the scope of the scheme and meet skill needs both within the country and globally.
- d. Better branding of the scheme so as to increase awareness, generate a healthy debate and in turn increase participation in the scheme.
- e. The establishment of assessment as a new profession, which would help in the formation of new assessment bodies and increase the number of assessors in the country. Many talented, retired people in the country can be included in the assessment committees.

- f. The expansion of the existing modules to include more practical sessions to facilitate hands on training which is increasingly being demanded by the expanding industry.
- g. The focus on all-round development of students by including soft skills training in every module could help in improving the behavior and communication skills of the student pool.
- h. The development of a system of testing and certification so that a student who is already working in a specific industry can be sent directly to an advanced course of the same industry if he possesses the qualification and experience required.
- i. The extension of existing training modules to about 400 hours by clubbing modules together so as to equip people better to become employable. The MoLE is already in the process of developing mega-modules which are directly linked to outcomes.
- j. Establishing regional placement cells and ensuring the registration of trained candidates in these placement cells to promote employability and enable tracking of candidates after completion of the training process.
- k. An independent evaluation of the scheme during the 11th five year plan, as per the report of the National Productivity Council would be of help in fine tuning the scheme.

8. Adaptation of the MES-SDI scheme to the emerging skills ecosystem

Workshop participants and respondents also keenly felt there was a need for the SDI-MES scheme to adapt to the emerging skills ecosystem where the sector skills councils and the National Skills Qualifications Framework will have a major bearing.

The scheme already has provision of recognising prior learning which is an important aspect of the NSQF. Similarly, the assessing bodies who test trainees under the scheme are industry bodies and associations which establishes automatic linkages with SSCs which are also industry bodies facilitating the adaptation of skills recognition in the emerging skills ecosystem.

Whilst the SDI-MES scheme may contribute to meeting the demand of skilled manpower, there is a need for those who have completed the MES training to move forward. This can be facilitated by linkages with the NSQF but there is also a need to link MES certification with the certification offered by the other agencies. Aligning the MES scheme with the NSQF would also help in tying together various training programmes offered by different agencies in order to ensure uniformity and avoid duplication.

As the NOSS and curriculum developed by SSCs become available, SDI-MES course curriculum, VTPs and assessors need to be in tune with the benchmarks set by SSCs. The MES curriculum can continue as a foundation to be supplemented by other existing curriculum resources and those developed by the sector skills councils.

The adoption of NSQF will help in further defining the duration and scope of modules and will help meet the need of having courses with relevant level descriptors. A combination of curriculum resources would help in the development of modules classified as basic, advanced and specialized to target different competency levels desired.

There is also a need to rationalize the ecosystem formed by these agencies so as to avoid clash of interests and maintain the integrity of the system.

9. Annexure

9.1. Annexure 1: Questionnaire

Name of the respondent:

Organization:

Q1. What, in your opinion, are the major achievements of the MES scheme to date?

Q2. What are the major challenges facing the MES-SDI scheme currently?

Q3. What do you think are the major issues that the scheme faces in the following areas:

- a. Management, administration and financing.
- b. Curriculum and learning resources.
- c. Training delivery/VTPs.
- d. Assessment/assessment centres.
- e. Certification.
- f. Links with other major government training schemes.
- g. Promotion/marketing.

Q4. What are the major opportunities that you envision for the scheme in the next 2-3 years?

Q5. How do you think the MES – SDI scheme should adapt to the emerging skill ecosystem where sector skills councils and the National Skills Qualification Framework will have a major bearing?

Q6. Do you have any other suggestions for how the MES scheme can maximize its contribution to the national skills mission of the country?

9.2. Annexure 2: List of respondents

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9.3. Annexure 3:

Workshop Report

Experience-Sharing Forum on Skills Development Initiative – Modular Employable Skills (SDI-MES)

24 May 2013, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

1. Mr. Paul Comyn from the ILO, delivering the welcome address mentioned that the ILO has been working with the MoLE since the beginning of the SDI-MES scheme, on its development and implementation in different locations and programmes. He added that the ILO has been involved in the implementation of the SDI scheme under a number of its initiatives including the Convergence project of the ILO to combat child labour. He said that the skills and the vocational systems in India are extremely dynamic and the reforms are underway. While the sector skills councils are being developed by the National Skills Development Corporation, the National Skills Qualification Framework would serve to establish a coordinated system of qualitative pathways that would be used by all training providers and in turn would provide better mobility, both horizontal and vertical. He also added that there is a need for the government, training providers and employers to realize the need to move away from a theoretical base and develop a practical base for learning, encompassing competency based training, a goal which is in the process of being attained by the MES scheme.

The need to deliver and assess a competency based curricula and the recognition of prior learning by the MES along with the need to shift to the National Occupational Standards based system was highlighted. The need for a change to the apprenticeship legislations and making this change attractive to the employers and the learners by integrating the MES curricula with on the job training was also discussed.

2. Mr. Dinesh Nijhawan, Director, DGET highlighted the capacity constraints of vocational training in India and the need for integrating on and off the job training for those who cannot afford to be away from work for long periods of time- the purpose for which the MES scheme was introduced. Explaining the mechanism for becoming a vocational training provider (VTP) and the system of assessment of the training delivered at the institutions of the VTPs and the process of certification and allocation of funds, he mentioned that 17 lakh people have been trained till now, 500 VTPs have been registered and 1422 modules have been developed. He also mentioned that there is a need for coordination between the employers in terms of identifying the skills needed and the VTPs in terms of provision of those skills.
3. An open discussion was then held where participants highlighted some of the issues that they faced in implementation of the programme. The main points of discussion are as follows:
 - Explaining the need for and mobilizing students for training purposes in industries such as the bangle and glass making industries which have a multitude of skills and semi-skills which have traditionally been passed on for generations.
Mr. Nijhawan responded by saying that the MES scheme provides flexibility to the industry to design modules specific to that industry.
 - The certification of the education requirement for various courses to have passed the fifth grade.
 - Incorporating flexibility in the programme to relax educational qualifications for people who possess expertise in their respective skills.

This issue received suggestions in terms of either developing a bridge course for the uneducated or the conduction of a functional literacy and numeracy exam, the person who passes which, could take the training.

- The problem of paperwork for assessment bodies as a result of which the target group disperses and the problem of non-functioning of the web portal.

Mr. Nijhawan responded by saying that the DGET is already working on removing unneeded information and questions in the forms and is working towards making the web portal more user friendly.

- The problem of parents being reluctant to send their girl child to a faraway place to procure training.
- Retention of students in training programmes after initial mobilization.

4. The ILO experiences of SDI implementation were then discussed for the Convergence project of the ILO and the Moradabad and Firozabad clusters.

Mr. G.L Narasimhan, speaking about the Convergence project mentioned that the project firstly, had a family centric approach wherein if a child was given skills, his/her siblings would also be provided skills and the parents would be linked to certain central and state government schemes and secondly, the project focussed on convergence among different departments of the government for linking the family members with certain proposed schemes. He also mentioned that even though the project is coming to an end, its practices have a great deal of sustainability.

Ms. Reshmi Dey and Ms. Harmeet Sarin proceeding to talk about the implementation of the SDI programme in the glass industry of Firozabad and the brass industry of Moradabad, India. The target areas and the aspects of the operationalization of the SDI programme including the sensitization and active participation of various stakeholders, extension of training to include socially relevant issues, facilitating holistic development for health and security and participation in local trade fairs were then spoken about. An inadequate skill base was identified to be one of the root causes of the factors constraining the growth of the industries.

Specific to the Glass industry in Firozabad, Ms. Dey spoke about the work in progress under constant facilitation from the ILO and consultation with the DGE&T which has resulted in the industry becoming more forthcoming to reap the benefits of the SDI, a technological change for production of glass and the development of learning and training guides among a variety of other things. Ms. Sarin, speaking specific to the brass industry in Moradabad, spoke about the work in progress in the implementation of the SDI scheme which includes the development of training manuals, competency standards and facilitation of collective action of workers on socio-economic activities and a dialogue among stakeholders for voice and representation.

5. Mr. Narasimhan from the ILO then spoke about the need for engaging NGOs and private players in order to combat the shortage in the supply of training providers. He also mentioned that the intervention of the Convergence project has been successful and that the VTPs are here to stay. Following which, he invited the VTPs from various areas under the Convergence project to share their experiences. The main points of discussion are as follows:

- The representative from Surat mentioned that the ITIs have been proactive and training centres have been extended to small areas from where people could not travel for training purposes wherein 120 girls have been trained till date. Also, about 7-8 centres have been set up in slums.
- The representative from Vadodara mentioned that the ITIs couldn't work out as their beneficiaries were not in proximity however, in the vocational training institute set up by the representative, level 1 had been completed for 200 students but problems of payment, certification, provision of toolkits prevail and prove to be a hindrance to the effective functioning of the scheme.

- A representative from ITC Dharamgarh raised an issue about migratory workers and made recommendations including the increased implementation of child labour programmes and increased communication with assessors and with respect to government schemes.
- The representative from Cuttack mentioned that since the beneficiaries were scattered, the involvement of the ITIs was almost nil however, the VTPs were successful in imparting training to people both at the basic and the advanced levels. Challenges with respect to the slow assignment of TPN numbers and the delay in assessment were then highlighted.
- The VTP representative from Jabalpur also mentioned about their success in imparting training to a number of people but also mentioned about the challenges pertaining to the reimbursement of funds by the government and the delay in the provision of toolkits and assessment.
- The representative from Ujjain shared that there is no private VTP but the two ITIs that are present have skilled about 200 adolescents. However, the concern of what to do beyond May with the culmination of the Convergence programme was expressed.
- The representative from Sitamarhi, Bihar also mentioned that 1 ITI and 2 ITCs have been able to impart training to 136 people. However, problems in scheduling assessment and unavailability of electricity constrict the full capacity of training provision.
- The representative from Katihar, Bihar spoke about the decrease in the participants due to a lack of knowledge about training programmes. He also mentioned that since there is no private VTP, the VTP from the neighbouring district has been mobilized to impart training. However, in this case also, the problem of assignment of TBN numbers persists.
- The representative from Ranchi spoke about the delay in assessment of the first training batch that has already been completed and the unavailability of toolkits from the government.
- The representative from Sahibganj spoke about the challenges that he faced in trying to change working traditions. Presenting a positive outlook, he also spoke about the success in imparting training for hand embroidery and the fact that attendance and retention of students does not pose a problem.
- The representative from Firozabad, giving an example of the construction sector, posed a question about the future in terms of the provision of a market for trained people. He also mentioned that excessive paperwork poses a hindrance to the progress of the SDI scheme.
- The representative from Moradabad spoke about how women are now involved in the industry, are beginning to be acknowledged for their efforts and are a part of training programmes. A recommendation that was offered was the development of a separate programme for women so that they do not face any problems in acquiring training.

Mr. Nijhawan responded to the queries and issues raised by mentioning that firstly, the government wants the states to send in action plans for further action on the scheme. He also mentioned that placement of the trained people is a priority area for the government as well. Secondly, to take care of the problem if delay in issuance of certificates, the government is developing an automated system on the web portal so that the VTPs can issue certificated on their own. Thirdly, for the case of delay in assessment, the government will now be giving a fee directly to the assessing bodies to make the process faster. Fourthly, responding to the questions about the future of the scheme after the end of the Convergence project, he encouraged the VTPs to continue operations and keep training students.

6. In the next session, representatives from FICCI, CII and the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, Moradabad, U.P, presented the views of the industry on the MES.

Ms. Ritu Tiwari from CII gave an overview of the assessment body of the CII which comprises of industry members and government officials from the ITIs and is operational in the southern-eastern region of India. She mentioned the issue of reimbursement of assessment fee as a problem being faced by them.

Mr. Deepak Gupta from FICCI highlighted the importance of spreading awareness among the VTPs about the MES programme. The issues that he spoke about were the non functionality of the web portal, the delay in the reimbursement of assessment fee by the government and the need for identification of demand for skills in areas where there is no provider. Some recommendations that were made by him as a part of an assessment body were automating the assignment of TBN numbers, giving enough notice to assessment bodies in order to bridge the gap between training and assessment, registration of VTPs based on local demand/trends and the development of NIMI question banks and books for ICT 101.

Mr. Tyagi from the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, Moradabad, U.P spoke about the shift in production technology that has taken place after the ILO partnership in 2004, the increase in the market demand for the products of the same industry and an increase in the number of people interested in undergoing training. The issues and recommendations that he made were: Firstly, the need for a decrease in paperwork to enable fast certification, the need for skill development in rural areas and the possibility of developing a sector in the brassware industry purely for women.

7. Father Noble George from the Don Bosco training institute spoke about some issues faced by the VTPs namely the inadequacy of assessing bodies for the large number of VTPs and the problem of the quality of assessors not being up to the mark. He also recommended the introduction of soft skills in the existing MES training programmes.

A representative from the glass industry of Firozabad recommended the possibility of offering training modules in local languages to increase their outreach, the sensitization at the Zila level of the scheme and the development of a system of communication to facilitate coordination between the different parties involved.

8. Mr. Nijhawan, taking up the issues raised during the various sessions one by one, suggested the following that is/will be in the process of being taken up by the government:
 - The proposal for auto generation of TBN numbers and simultaneous knowledge of the same to the states.
 - The proposal for the TBN number to serve the purpose for the entire scheme, thus eliminating the use of ABN numbers.
 - Allotment of fixed dates and times for assessment.
 - The proposal of revision of courses for the popular modules.
 - The proposal to increase training time to a minimum of 300 hours for some modules.
 - The possibility of development of a separate soft skills module instead of an addition of soft skills training to the existing modules which might increase training time and discourage participation.
 - The proposal of the government of India to allot 70 crores for publicity of the initiative by means of TV slots, development of modules in regional languages, slots on the radio.
 - The possibility of having the assessment exam in regional languages.
 - The updation of technology in assessment centres.
 - Coordination with NIMI to develop question banks and course curricula.
9. The last session consisted of integrating the issues and recommendations for the ILO that were spelled out during the course of the forum. These have been included in a table shown earlier in this report.
10. The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to everyone present for enabling a rich exchange of information.

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