

ONE-WINDOW SOLUTION TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF WAR-STRUCK YOUTH OF NORTHERN REGION OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT: *The counter terrorism operations have severely affected the residents of Khyber PakhtunKhwa (KPK) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) due to their displacement, loss of jobs, businesses, homes, friends and means of education. Making these regions Taliban-free is not enough; the government of Pakistan needs to offer a one-window solution to sustainable economic independence of the people in the war-struck regions. They must be equipped with vocational skills in employment promising sectors in Pakistan as well as in international markets. The one-window solution for high quality skills development system can be achieved by focusing on curriculum development, job placement in industry & self-employment generation, as a whole process. The working mechanism of technical training institutes must include industry leaders, relevant government bodies, micro-finance creditors, training providers & other stake holders as associates who will work as consortium to provide one window solution for developing employment generation skills amongst the unemployed & unprivileged section of society and improving their living standards.*

KEYWORDS: Vocational Training, Internally Displaced Persons, Afghan Refugees, Human Capital Development, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is suffering from a host of economic as well as socio-political maladies such as unemployment, low earnings, inflation, corruption, exploitation, rapid population growth and, above all, political instability resulting from low literacy rate. Most importantly, the war on terror initiated in Pakistan few years ago has changed the security landscape of the region specially KPK and FATA. Swat, Peshawar, Kohat & Bannu are the most affected districts due to militancy operations since last several years. Major counter terrorism operations and suicide attacks in these volatile regions have jeopardized the social, economic and educational systems significantly.

The government has adopted 'flush out' approach to clean those areas of Taliban Groups involved in act of terrorism in Pakistan and several areas have been cleaned out in last few years. However, it's not the end of terror-war episode. The effect of this war remained

devastating not only for the northern region but the whole country, economically as well as socially.

The north-west region of Pakistan including FATA and later KPK province saw the biggest and fastest conflict-induced internal displacement in the world in year 2009 (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre-IDMC, 2013) according to Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). The estimated number of internal displacement people (IDP) from the region remained between 2.7 & 3.5 million due to the re-launching of security operations against the Pakistani Taliban-led tribal militants; including two million people from Swat Valley, 190 thousand people displaced from Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber and Orakzai Agencies who fled sectarian violence and up to 430 thousand civilians from South Waziristan (PIPS-Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, 2009).

Kohat & the surrounded region have been the key destination points for the displaced 400,000 households from FATA and KPK regions (UNOCHA-UN office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2009). Many lived with host families while others moved into camps setup by government of Pakistan. The children and youth based in camps remained away from the basic need of schooling and education. According to UN's coordination of human affairs department (2014), almost 1 million people are still displaced in Pakistan due to war on terror, while the rest have moved back to their native places. On their return, the first challenge confronted to them is to become economically self-reliant, which is very difficult with little or no education and/or technical skills.

Kohat & adjoining districts are not only housing the one million IDPs, but are also confronted with the challenge of accommodating thousands of afghan refugees in the region. Despite of the return of millions of Afghans back to their homeland, still 1.6 million refugees are registered in different areas of Pakistan (UNOCHA, 2014); out of which approx. 62% are settled in KPK; Nowshera, Kohat, and Hangu are included amongst the top ten districts of afghan residence (UNHCR, 2011). Large majority of 84% afghan families in Pakistan have no intention to return home in near future. Most afghans (71%) living in this region have no formal education whereas 16.6% of afghans have informal (religious) education and only 10.9% have attained education at primary school level. A small fraction of population holds technical & vocational education (0.03%). 71% of afghans have no income & 89% have no skills. 20% registered population is active in labour market amongst which 48% are employed as unskilled or day wage laborers due to which they provide cheap labour in the region. 83% of afghan refugees earn below Pakistan's minimum wage level of Rs. 4000, out of which 71% earn nothing & 8.2% earn less than Rs. 1000 per month (UNHCR, 2011).

Now the major challenge confronted to our government is the achievement of economic independence and implementation of socio-economic transformation for IDPs and the Afghan refugees in these regions. Mere distribution of few hundred thousand and house hold stuff is not sufficient to start their life from the scratch. Market mechanism alone cannot accomplish this task hence resort needs to be made to provide them with the job opportunities. The youth inhabited in the vicinity must be developed and trained by

imparting technical education and skills useful for respectful earning and meeting their basic needs of life.

Current Standing of Technical Vocational Training

Technical training is known to play a pivotal role in the socio economic development of any country. Government of Pakistan has emphasized on its significance through several policies & documents with the aim to promote it in the country for ensuring self-reliance and work-security for the public. However, efforts seem to be fruitless. The current technical educational system meets very small portion of market demands. It is producing people with skills that are not directly relevant to the current needs of industry. A number of policies and innovative programs have been launched by the public as well as private sector to promote skill training but have failed to cater to the market dynamism & yield the desired results, mainly hampered by inadequate physical infrastructure and facilities, shortage of trained and motivated teachers, and inadequacies related to quality and relevance of curricula. At the same time, the input from important stakeholders 'business sector' is not adequately considered while shaping the content, structures and certification of study programs resulting in complaints from the employers on the substandard quality of skills available in market (Ministry of Education, 2009). Likewise, due to lack of adequate skills base Pakistan has not been able to capitalize the advantage in labour market globally. Despite of having increased demand of services in global markets, technical vocational training is not looking forward to it as an opportunity for contributing to country's growth substantially.

The regions with maximum population of internally displaced persons (IDPs) & afghan refugees have limited provision of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutes. Reason for this disadvantage is the fact that there is limited number of industries in these areas. Out of 58 tehsils of KPK, 28 are without TVET institutes. Only two Government TVET Institutes, one for male & one for female, are working in Kohat with capacity of sixty seats each which is in no way sufficient to train millions of IDPs & Afghans. Similarly, a single Government Institute for males is furnishing the needs of technical education in Karak with the capacity of 96 seats & one in Hangu with courses & capacity similar to that of Karak. In Nowshera, a female TVET Institute is functional with the capacity of 60 seats and there is no vocational training institute in Orakzai Agency yet. The Ministry of Education (2002, 2009) has been expressing its concern in National Education Policy that in spite of its growth, the technical education imparted was not in line with the needs of job market. Because of poor coaching, and curriculum limitations, students are badly trained failing to help in securing jobs. In comparison, India has developed a wider and more qualified skill base to the point that it can export high value added services.

Pakistan needs to establish technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institute in the vicinity of KPK and FATA, to cater the vocational training needs of IDPs & Afghans based in adjacent districts of Hangu, Karak, Nowshera & Orakzai Agency. After being trained in employment promising sectors, trainees can also move to the industry concentrated areas in other regions of Pakistan for jobs & self-employment purposes as

well as qualify for international market standards. Employment, within the country or in the foreign country will improve the living standards of the population living under the poverty line, thus, striving towards socio-economic development of the country. The training available to women and girls is only in a narrow, more conventional range of courses having poor links with formal labour market and lower incomes. Therefore, non-traditional courses need to be introduced to increase the low level of women's participation rate (28.82%) in labor force. There is a dire need to establish a quality technical & vocational educational setup in KPK, to improve spatial coverage and access to technical education in the vicinity of region, including Hangu, Karak, Nowshera, Orakzai Agency and areas nearby, with the goal of training IDPs & Afghan Refugees settled in these areas, thus, enhancing the employability of disadvantaged community for socio-economic development of the region.

Providing One Window Solution to Human Capital Development in Pakistan Northern Region

Kohat University (2009) explored the profile of technical education imparted in 32 technical colleges in KPK & identified that the curriculum is outdated, theory-oriented and stereotype. Similarly building, transport, first aid, hostel, fire-fighting facilities, latest reading material, online research facilities, and budget, are not sufficient in the institutions of technical education. Teachers are academically sound but not abreast with modern teaching techniques, nor are a budget allocated for their training. Technical education is not helpful in employment, nor is improvement made by periodical evaluations. There were no guidance and counseling services in the system. There is no link between industry and technical education due to which they offer generic courses in limited number of sectors which do not correspond to the diversity of actual economic activity. Trades in which presently training is provided are men dominated and women hardly benefit from them. Sustained socio-economic development is not possible by mere capital investment unless it is reinforced with proper supply of adequately trained technical manpower & up-to-date curriculum. Therefore, the technical institution needs to provide multiple solutions to human capital development of the region by offering one/two year diplomas and three/six months certificates to unskilled, semi-skilled & school dropouts at primary & secondary level. Those completing two years diploma after matriculation must be provided a way forward to four years graduation degree program, in collaboration with higher education institutions, thus, giving the opportunity of tertiary education to the deprived masses (figure1).

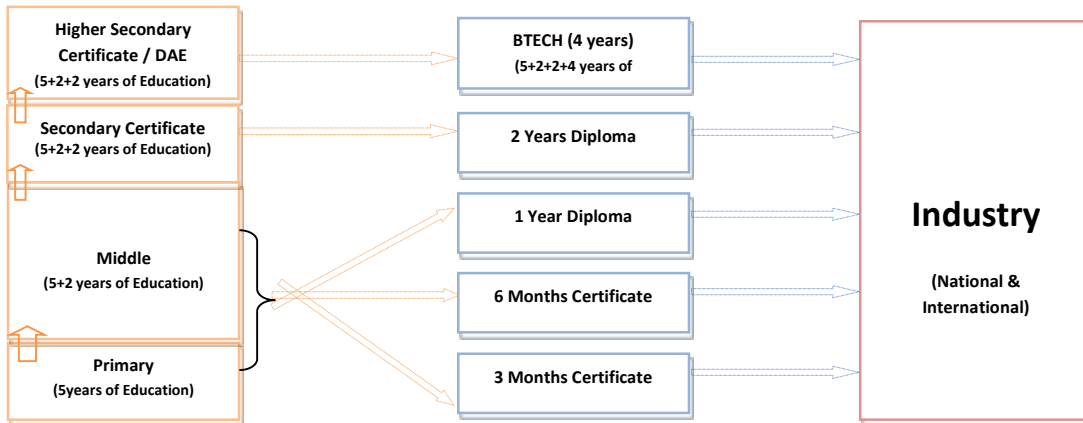


Figure 1. Proposed Qualification Framework of TVET Institution

Along with full-time courses, part-time, evening shift & holiday programs also need be introduced to provide flexible delivery mechanism for people in work or bound by responsibilities. Structure of training programs must be adapted according to the needs of wider range of target market with training methodology based on class room lecturers combined with workplace practical on-hand training.

Trainees with technical, trade specific skills must be provided with career guidance, participation in job fairs to help placed on jobs by job placement centres & information must be given about self-employment options and requirements supplemented with guidelines from relevant government bodies & finance from micro-creditors needed to establish and sustain them. Hence, to create a high quality skills development system, promoting and sustaining social & economic development, the technical training institute must focus on 3 key areas: curriculum development, job placement in industry & self-employment generation, (figure 2). Performance of the institute must be measured against these set of indicators to monitor outputs and outcomes for trainees & re-engineer the training process based on the corrections suggested after periodical reviews.

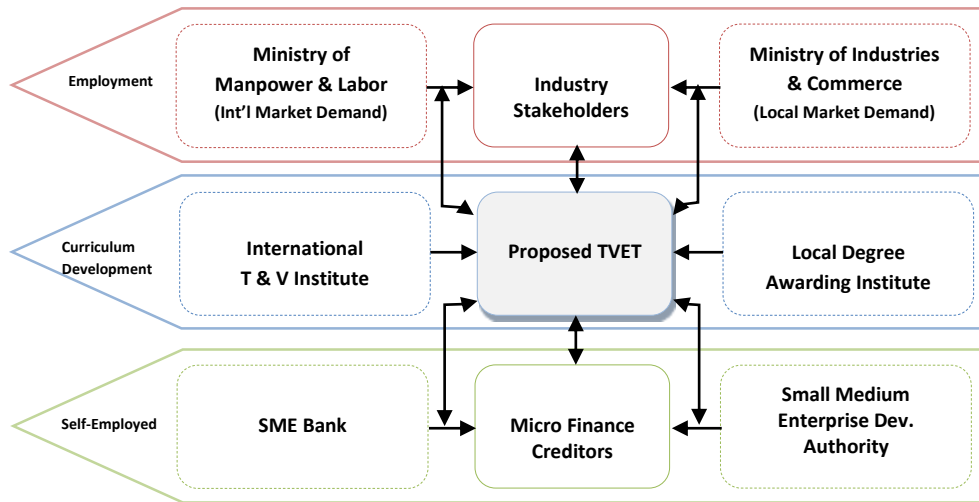


Figure 2. Proposed Working Model of TVET Institution

The working model must include industry leaders, relevant government bodies, micro-finance creditors, training providers & other stake holders as associates who will work as consortium to provide one window solution for developing employment generation skills amongst the unemployed & unprivileged section of society.

Local Industry Intelligence Unit (LIU)

Instead of providing generic courses, LIU must identify priority areas for developing workforce skills based on the demands of region specific local industry in consultation with industry leaders. It should provide industry intelligence about current & future skills needs & training requirements by carrying out periodic sector surveys, indicate new & emerging areas and update competency standards for workers (as per recommendations of the ministry of education in its national policy 2009).

International Market Intelligence Unit (IMIU)

The types of skills demanded in the international job market must be assessed and courses must be introduced or revised to commensurate with international standards. Skilled workers planning to go abroad should be supplemented with language courses & equipped with preparatory information regarding the market & culture of the host country; following the supply strategy of our neighboring country India.

Curriculum Development Unit (CDU)

Curriculum must be developed by the unit in accordance with the region specific local industry demands at par with international standards & endorsed by internationally recognized TVET institute & industry representative body (as suggested in national education policy 2009).

Staff Training Unit (STU)

The unit must be entrusted with the task of collaborating with other staff training institutes for professional development of staff and provision of master trainers.

Job Placement Unit (JPU)

Career guidance must be provided with access to information regarding new job openings in the market thus facilitating the trainees in job placement.

Entrepreneurship Development Unit (EDU)

In collaboration with Small Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA), the unit must provide trainees with guidelines from relevant Government bodies in establishing their own businesses & also liaison with micro-finance creditors to provide trainees with startup capital needed to establish and sustain them at easy conditions.

CONCLUSION

Sizable majority of the country's population from northern region of Pakistan is having less access to respectful jobs due to incomplete primary or secondary education; dampening the potential of the labor force to significantly contribute to economic growth of the region. The deficit permeates through all sectors i.e. industry, agriculture, services & commerce. Improvements in the skill levels of the our human capital will increase efficiency and competitiveness of the local industry, attract international investment and allow overseas employment of Pakistanis generating a flow of foreign remittances.

The one-window solution providing technical institutions must model the institution-industry linkages to enhance relevance of training to the requirements of job market; revision & updating of curricula with the participation of experts from commerce & industry shall be made a continuing activity to keep pace with changing needs of the industry and accommodating the new developments, reinforced with proper supply of adequately trained technical manpower. It will play an effective role in reducing poverty by building a viable workforce capable of self-employment as well as securing stable employment in the industry. It will be working closely with the industry, its related associates, and academia, thus, bridging the both and fulfilling the identified human resource deficiency.

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