



Article

Making Vocational Training Effective for Employability

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Abstract

Vocational training is important for empowering youths to link them to formal labor markets. This review paper highlights the role of vocational skill development program in addressing unemployment especially among marginalized groups and youth in Nepal. The study follows a qualitative approach with thematic analysis to explore the relationship between short-term vocational training and its outcomes. After reviewing various national and international studies, the paper focuses on key challenges, such as gender disparities in employment outcomes and other common barriers. Once there is underemployment and skill mismatch, which is evident from market saturation and economic conditions, the ultimate goal of vocational training is not achieved. These happen because the job market changes and sometimes gets too full. The paper therefore argues fair and inclusive training are imperative, while support after training is equally important. Only fair and balanced approach helps in creating equal chances and supporting long-term growth in the countries like Nepal.

Keywords: vocational training, youth employment, gender disparities, underemployment

Introduction

Vocational training is instrumental in reducing poverty and unemployment issues in the developing countries. It helps individuals gain skills to meet labor market demands, which further increases employability and supports to find work and earn money (Messerli, 2012). The programs under vocational training are popular for skilling people quickly. In Nepal, vocational training that focuses the marginalized communities especially for women are important tool to their empowerment. It prepares them to work and fit into labor market. It helps people move from learning to doing. Many people have

lack of skills demanded by the labor market. To this, the vocational training helps them learn skills. In addition to creating chances for self-employment, such as starting small tailoring enterprises in the community, learning tailoring skills also gives trainees a sense of empowerment and autonomy. In Nepal, where women are socio-culturally restricted in exercising their right to freedom of movement and choice of work, modifying training might serve as a suitable and feasible way for them to earn money at home or in a supportive community settings. It contributes to their economic empowerment

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and social standing by preparing women as active economic agents.

In Nepal, the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) is the apex body assigned suitably with the responsibility of managing the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). It provides a range of diploma, pre-diploma and short-term vocational training programs with the purpose of enabling more people, especially the youths who cannot afford to join purely academic education. These skill-oriented programs play an important role to build human resources necessary for the country. The trained persons have the potential of employability in Nepal and abroad as well (Bagale, 2015). However, people are not fully aware how the short-term vocational training programs prepare graduates for immediate entry into gainful employment or self-employment, especially toward adaptation to rapidly changing industry sectors. In Nepal's Tarai region, different vocational training programs have supported people to learn skills and reduce unemployment along with income generation (Kharel, 2020). It is, however, not the same case because long-term results are not clear. There is not enough evidence to show if these programs really supported to increase employment opportunities and changes.

The vocational skill training programs helps women move out of their social and cultural limits in addition to empowering them to enter the labor market with various required skills. These programs teach hands-on skills;

they also boost confidence in them. The technical skills therefore pave way for career opportunities, jobs, self-enterprises among women (ILO, 2021).

In recent years, employment has grown up rapidly because of several factors like huge labor market demands, economic development, political and government situations. The ILO reports that in 2019, Nepal's unemployment rate was 3.7%. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this scenario altered suddenly, and by 2021, the rate had risen to 5.1%. However, as the majority of individuals work in the informal sector or are underemployed, statistics cannot give a full picture. The Government of Nepal has implemented a number of policy measures aimed at fostering economic expansion and job creation in an effort to lessen the issue of unemployment. Different reports state that more than 400 thousands youths join Nepal's labor force every year. However, there is an acute shortage of skilled human resource in the market. This demand-supply gap in skilled human resource is also caused by the ignorance of the youth about other career options. Due to such circumstances, many youths are forced into menial jobs with minimal earning potential. The need of the hour is quality vocational training institutes that meet the national and international standards of industry and market.

The TVET sector has been growing in Nepal. Different national and international agencies have been investing in training to bridge the gap seen in the labor market. In

the training providing institutions, people learn market-oriented skills. The skills-based training makes them easier to find jobs and support in securing stable income opportunities, thus contributing not only to human resource development but also to broader economic growth in the country as a whole. These skill training programs are also helpful in removing barriers that stop young people from getting good education, like high fees and few learning chances. This provides a chance to learn practical skills for careers, who are drop-outs from the formal education. To make it better, governments and communities need to join their hands. More supports and access will improve people's dreams and meet what employer wants.

However, skill development training programs have some issues. These programs support gaining technical skills, but the graduate's ability to obtain a job is hindered by the absence of structured job placement services, post-training services, and ongoing assistance. This makes it evident that the real effects of vocational training programs are shown in engagement only; the individuals try their best to get employment, but it remains only training used for engagement instead of income-generating activities. Workers with only basic vocational training are not competent in labor markets that are marked by skill mismatches and unpredictable employment prospects (Brunello & Rocco, 2017). Even though there are numerous examples of vocational training helping participants acquire employable skills, it is

still thought to have shortcomings in terms of helping graduates find long-term sustaining jobs.

With this in the background, the paper focuses on employment and engagement aspects of graduates in the context of short-term vocational training. Thus, this study aims to review existing literature to understand how vocational training contributes to employment or engagement: which support to understand whether vocational training leads to sustained employment or only engagement.

Methodology

This paper followed a thematic analysis using a qualitative approach. This method helps to sort and show themes in the data by looking at different issues (Boyatzis, 1998). As per Alhojailan (2012), thematic analysis supports researchers to closely explore the relationships between concepts and compare them with repeating data patterns. It also eases to link different views and thought shared by researchers.

I reviewed 21 different selected literatures to perform the thematic study. The review covered recent publications. The main purpose was to explore and summarize research into how vocational training supports employment, with a particular focus on Nepal. The methodology included a systematic collection, evaluation, and analysis of scholarly articles, research papers, reports, and policy documents that help in understanding the relationship

between training and resulting employment opportunities. Materials were collected by conducting intensive searches on academic databases, such as JSTOR and Google Scholar, and government sources related to TVET. Every source was selected based on relevance and quality to ensure that its content had a close link with the research purpose. I found and reviewed literature by using keywords, such as vocational training, analysis of youth employment, relevance to Nepal and developing countries. Each study was reviewed in full, coded manually, and divided into themes relating to employment outcomes demographic differences and structural constraints.

Training for Employment and Self-Employment

The vocational training programs bring close relations to the world of work. In Nepal, CTEVT is the apex body that promotes technical and vocational education and training for employment and self-employment. It develops and conducts relevant vocational training to meet the current market demands with practical skills suitable for both the formal and informal sectors among the youths in the country through its polytechnic institutes. It follows the principle of competency-based education and training, blending theoretical input with practical exposure so that a graduate is immediately productive upon employment. It works in collaboration with industries, employers and local governments to make the training curriculum responsive to labor

market demand for better employability of graduates. In addition, it also promotes self-employment initiatives through entrepreneurial training, access to micro-financing, and promotion of small businesses at the local level. The role of vocational programs is enhancing employability among youths (Silwal & Bhatta, 2017).

While unemployment among youths is still a serious problem in many countries, vocational training remains one of the key pathways to enhance employability and take up self-employment opportunities among young people, particularly in regions with high unemployment rates. These programs have their double roles. It teaches individuals practical skills that match with labor market needs. This helps people create their own enterprises and is also helpful to find jobs. For example, a study by the Employment Fund program in Nepal showed that participants had a 50% increase in non-formal employment, while their monthly earnings increased by 72%. This shows how vocational skill training can change job chances (Chakravarty et al., 2016). A study from Pakistan, the FATA-DA training programs shows significant enhancement in the livelihood of employed ones, with employment rates increasing by 1.94 times after training (Ullah et al., 2021).

The vocational training is not always useful in finding a formal employment. But, it supports self-employment in a strong way. These programs provide hard skills and soft-skills, which cover many needs in the

labor market. Quality vocational training boosts confidence and make people aware of their abilities. This builds motivation and helps them stay involved in their work. For people, this mix of skill and personal growth is very important as they enter in a competitive job world. Vocational training also includes entrepreneurship skills. This makes self-employment a real option that props up local economies, where there is high youth unemployment. Vocational training creates opportunities through targeted skill development (Silwal & Bhatta, 2017). Such training also serves as a motivating factor especially where the formal employment jobs are rare.

The special skills are catered during the vocational training along with the blend of practical and theoretical skills. These programs focus on real, practical skills that match with different industries. Employers usually see them as strong workers, which can lead to better performance and higher productivity. This makes vocational graduates more employable because they received hands-on working experience and other relevant skills. These open more paths for them. Several vocational training programs open more career paths for people. It also direct to better paying jobs once people gain their work experience or receive more knowledge on it. A study in Pakistan also supports these ideas. The vocational training meaningfully increased employment rates and also experienced higher earnings among youths in the tribal areas of Pakistan (Ullah et al., 2021). By the entrepreneurship training,

it enables individuals to create their own businesses, which can bring in high earnings and contribute to economic growth. After vocational training programs, the possibility of higher earnings through self-employment is also reflected in various studies that show entrepreneurs are better prepared to handle market challenges (Rabail & Babar, 2021; Sanam, 2021).

Outcome of Training Differs across Demography

Not only knowledge and skills are transferred through vocational training but also attitudes fostered by it. However, its results witness significant variations. In the context of Nepal, it includes different demographic groups, and factors such as age, gender and socioeconomic background that influence the outcomes of training programs. Studies on the training program outcome across different groups show what factors make the programs more effective (Stöterau, Kemper, & Ghisletta, 2022).

The impact of vocational training also changes strongly by gender disparities. Women often gain more in terms of self-employment, especially in the developing countries. But at the same time, many women are pushed into low-paying fields. These jobs follow obsolete ideas and prevent women from entering better-paying, and male-dominated trades. This limits their chances to earn more and grow economically. It underlines the need for gender-friendly policies that encourage women to enter a wider range of skills and higher-paying fields. Research

shows that Nepal's Employment Fund program successfully supported women in overcoming traditional labor market barriers through targeted training and life skills development (Chakravarty et al., 2016). But even with these gains, gender gaps still appear. However, vocational training programs frequently shows gender segregation, channeling women into traditionally low-paying occupations, such as tailoring and beautician, thereby reinforcing occupational stereotypes and limiting access to higher-paying roles (Kharel & Silwal, 2023). Similarly, a study by Ullah et al. (2021) found that young men had to achieve higher employment rates after post-training compared to young women. This shows the need for training programs that understand the special challenges women face. With more gender-sensitive planning, women can move into better jobs and have stronger economic futures.

Socio-economic background also plays a vital role in varying outcomes of vocational training. Many people from low-income families face deep problems like limited financial support, poor training quality, and weak social opportunities. These challenges make it hard for the marginalized groups to use the full benefits of the training. Because of this, they often fall back into underemployment and face unstable income again and again. Studies shows that training programs in low and middle-income countries usually give better result for the marginalized groups because their starting job level and economic conditions are very

different (Stöterau, Kemper, & Ghisletta, 2022).

But, even now, many people from the disadvantaged backgrounds still face severe problems. They lack access to financial support, post-training support and quality training. It further worsens poverty and unemployment problems (Rabail & Babar, 2021). These barriers create a cycle that is hard to break. So, vocational training should look deeper into the social and economic issues that affect how well people can benefit from it. These differences show why training programs must be designed carefully. They should include gender-friendly policies, special support for new or inexperienced learners and the clear plans to deal with crowded job markets. Understanding how demographic factors and training interact will help leaders design programs that are fairer. This can improve access and outcomes for people from many different backgrounds.

Other Factors behind Low Employment

Although the vocational training is often seen as a path to better jobs, it sometimes creates a cycle of underemployment and skill mismatch. One problem is publication bias. Positive result gets shared more, while negative experiences are not reported as much. This gives people an unrealistic idea of how well these programs work. It leads to too much attention on training models that do not fit everyone (Wagma et al., 2021).

Market saturation is another big issue. When many young people learn the same type of skills, the job market fills up fast. Too many

people compete for the same work, and rate of task decreases in market. This makes the values of training go down because employers can hire easily for low pay. Ullah et al. (2021) also point this growing problem in their research.

The success of the vocational training programs also depends a lot on the economy and what labor market needs at the moment. Even well-trained people struggle to find jobs when the economy is weak or when industries change. This leads to more underemployment and fewer chances to use their skills (Ullah et al., 2021). Other structural problems like weak industry linkages, lack of financial assistance and support, and the training that does not consider gender needs draw equal concern. These barriers keep many people trapped in low-quality works that do not contribute to job market (Shiferaw, 2020). The main barrier is not the training itself, but training remain only for engagement.

Although the vocational training increases employability, its result requires close observation. The vocational training should not be a scheme to create a self-reinforcing cycle of problems, so it needs rupturing systemic barriers by better aligning the content of training with market demand, incorporating strong post-training support, and developing closer industry partnerships. Vocational training outcomes assessment needs honing evaluations so the programs can retain usefulness and fairness. It becomes instrumental in creating long-lasting job opportunities that are more equal for everyone.

Conclusion

This thematic review summarizes that vocational training is an important way to reduce unemployment and improve economic opportunities in the developing countries, especially in Nepal. The study depends on secondary literature and includes studies with varied method and outcomes measures. It is clear that vocational training programs have strong potential. They can help people find jobs and even start their own small business. But these programs also face serious challenges that must be fixed for them to work well. The vocational training gives individuals with real skills, and it helps many women join the labor market and explore business opportunities. However, the gender and socioeconomic backgrounds shape the results in different ways. People from poor families face barriers that stop them from using their new skills fully. The study also points out worrying trends. Sometimes vocational training can create underemployment and skill mismatch unknowingly. When too many people learn the same skills, the job market gets enough human resources with similar skills and wages decreases accordingly. This is why training programs must change with the labor market. They need strong follow-up support, not just training alone. Policy makers should also bring in gender-sensitive ideas to make training programs more inclusive. In the Nepali context, vocational training alone cannot overcome structural labor market weaknesses. Without collaborative efforts among employers, local authorities and financial institutions, training is likely to become a short-term activity instead of a lasting solution.

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