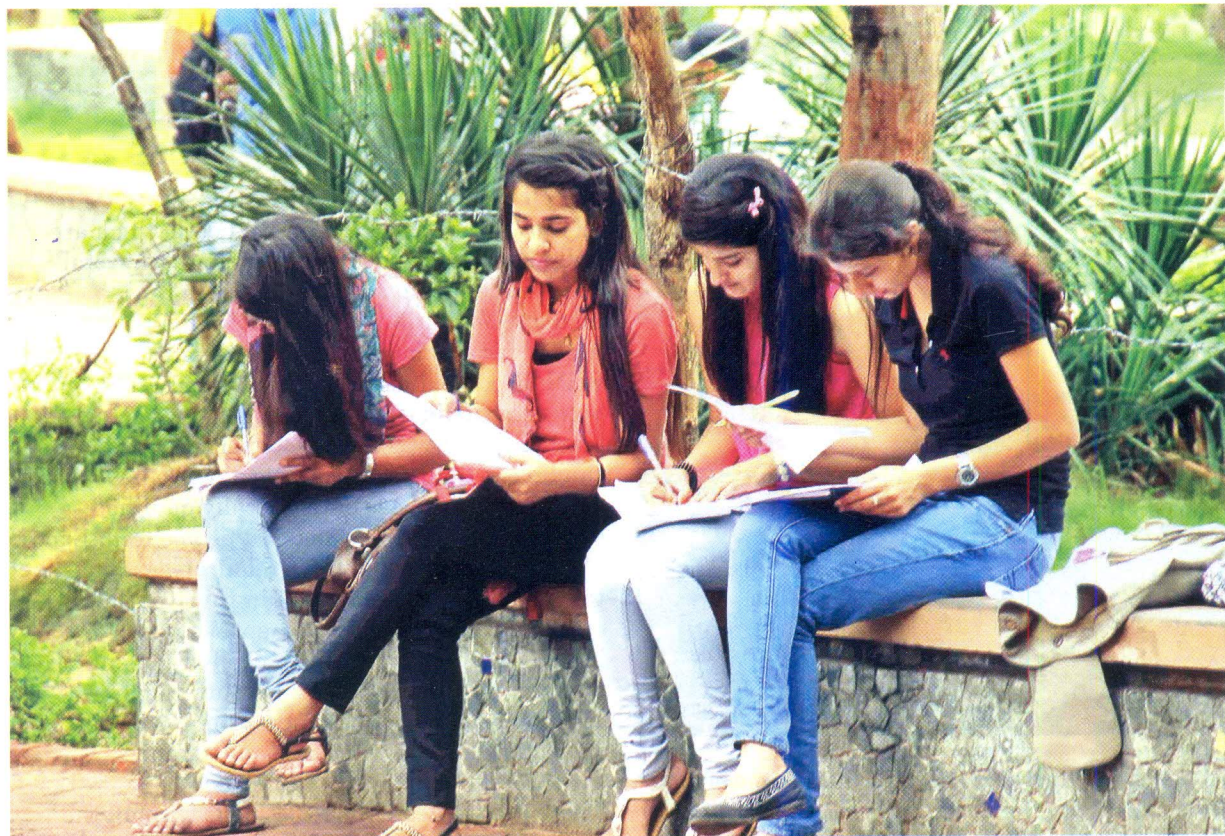


Imparting Skills the German Way

Photo : Hrishikesh Bhatt



Though need for skill development among youth has been belatedly realised back home, a book by a scholar from Germany can show the way to academics and policy makers for speeding up skill acquisition and solving rampant unemployment, writes **G Palanithurai**

Recently I was invited to be part of a book launch function in Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, as a contributor of a chapter in the edited volume "India: Preparation for the world of work- Education system and school to work Transition" edited by Prof Mathias Pilz from Cologne University, Germany, and published by Springer. The book was released by Consul General of Germany Jorn Rohde. It is a book on how the educational institutions in India from schools to higher learning institutions prepare students to the world of work.

It is an issue and challenge to Indian academics, researchers and policy makers. But it was brought out by a German Publication, edited by a Professor working in Cologne University, Germany, and released by Consul General of Germany. Why Germany evinced keen interest in skilling our youth in India? What made them to focus on Indian educational issues? are the curious questions one would raise. If I give a little background of it, it is easy to understand the background of the issues and the contributions of Germany to both academics and policy community in facing the challenges in

converting the youth to the world of work as workforce in India.

The edited volume is the outcome of an International Conference held in Germany in 2014. When I was in Cologne University as visiting professor for a semester in 2011, I had a meeting with Prof Mathias Pilz who is considered as a specialist on vocational education to explore the possibility of sensitising Indian academics and policy communities in India on the issue of skilling our youth for the world of work as we found enormous work opportunity for our youth in India and abroad in the context of globalisation. I was tempted to deliberate on this issue after visiting several vocational schools in Germany and it was also facilitated by Prof Pilz. I found a total struggle in the educational process in Germany to prepare the students for the world of work.

After visiting the schools I had several meetings with many academics and I wrote several popular articles in Tamil Newspapers to sensitise policy community and opinion makers. Because our politicians made rhetoric that India is going to achieve demographic dividends by skilling 500 million youth in India. While seeing the reality at the ground as an Indian to make the dream a reality I felt that we have to go a long way to achieve the desired goal. But we have to bring all seriousness among the policy community, opinion makers and academics on this issue and hence, I wanted to do something and with this objective I broached this idea with Prof Pilz. In order to evoke enthusiasm from the German partners I informed them that Germany can contribute substantially to India in helping our educational and training institutions to prepare our youth to the world of work. By doing this both the countries can get benefitted. In this regard, Prof Mathias Pilz took the initiative by organising an International Conference in Germany.

A team of academics and researchers presented papers based on their research in the conference. On the sidelines of the conference we had a deliberation to move forward on this issue. Finally, we have agreed to bring out a volume based on our contributions in the conference. It was decided to publish the book through a reputed publisher.

Springer came forward to publish the volume and it was supported by DAAD, Germany for publication. As a result, it is now ready to be placed in the market. Having seen the importance of the issue the same DAAD, Germany, subsidised the price to 50 percent for the Indians with an aim of reaching out to every policy maker and every academics who teaches and researches on the issue of skilling youth in India.

When the book was released, the Consul General Jorn Rhode made a few observations about the book and the context which are so important at this juncture. He said that there is a close correlation between the efficiency in building the skill among the youth and their employability. He indicated the fact that wherever the skill education is effective and efficient, unemployment rate is very low. He cited the examples from many countries in the world. He further said that there is a close correlation between the skilled jobs and the quality of life.

Higher the professionalism, higher will be the salary of the workforce and in the same way higher will be standard of living and quality of life. In order to transform the workforce in unorganised sector in India, these observations are more relevant. Following the remarks of the Consul General, the editor of this book Prof Mathias Pilz made some remarks which are also highly relevant

Higher the professionalism, higher will be the salary of the workforce and in the same way higher will be standard of living and quality of life. In order to transform the

workforce in unorganised sector in India, these observations are more relevant. Following the remarks of the Consul General, the editor of this book Prof Mathias Pilz made some remarks which are also highly relevant. He said that skilling 500 million is not an easy job. It is a movement by itself. It is a movement for professionalisation. This process will happen properly only when hard core academics do research on those issues and guide the policy community and the academic communities who are involved in skilling the youth. He further said that he hardly found academics in India evincing keen interest on this issue on a sustainable basis. Very few are doing quality research on this issue. Even to edit this book he found difficulty in searching for scholars in India who are specialising on vocational education. A country of this size needs more scholars and institutions to do research on vocational education and training to guide properly the policy makers and bureaucracy and academics to achieve demographic dividends by using the new opportunity **PP**