

EXPLORING INFORMAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING (IVT) AND ITS MISSING ACCREDITATION LINK WITH FORMAL VOCATIONAL, TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY IN A CITY OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Aim. This empirical study aims to conceptualise the prevalence of Informal Vocational Training (IVT) in India. It also explores the missing link at accreditation level between IVTs and other formal vocational, technical and professional courses and depicts their implications in the occupational, economic, social and cultural lives of people.

Methods. This study was conducted in the Srinagar city of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir in India. Both the survey method and the case method were used for collecting the primary data and applying triangulation methodologically.

Results. This study reveals that elites generally dominate in the prestigious technical and professional courses because of better accessibility and affordability, and that the vulnerable sections miss many of these opportunities. The vulnerable sections very often get the benefits of IVTs learnt outside the formal system in finding some employment, but such employment attracts lower prestige and income than what they get through formal technical and professional courses. IVTs find no academic recognition in the existing accreditation system, and so people culturally and socially associated with these IVTs continue to remain deprived.

Conclusion. There is a need to develop a credit-based link between IVTs and formal vocational, technical and professional courses so that the skills learnt thro-



ugh IVTs could get transferred to the formal system and attract better occupational and economic rewards. The findings are relevant for both developing and developed societies, but more particularly for societies having a considerable presence of informal economy because IVTs exist more within these economies.

Keywords: Informal vocational training (IVT); Vocational education and training (VET); Technical and professional education; employment; structured inequalities

INTRODUCTION

Vocational education and training (VET) is a dominant discourse in the domain of employment oriented and skill-based education (Bolli, et al. 2018; Boonk, et al. 2021; Chatterjee, et al. 2021; Pantea, 2021; Wallenborn, 2010). VET programme is attracting increasing interest in many countries. The role of VET remains quite visible in most of the recommendations of international organisations such as the World Bank (Haddad et al. 1990) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (1990), where it is argued that VET plays a crucial role in ensuring the transition from school to work. According to Paul Hopper (2012), the case of VET receives further support after the experience of East Asian countries, where prudent vocational and technical educational reforms enable them to combat many challenges of development, especially unemployment. Maria-Carmen Pantea (2021), on the basis of qualitative research conducted with over 250 young people aged 16–18 years in Romania's initial vocational education and training (VET) system, found that mobility was, inevitably, a cross-cutting theme that mattered to all interviewees, and explored the different types of mobility caused because of their engagement with VET. Junmin Li and Matthias Pilz (2021) after conducting a comprehensive review of literature on the international transfer of vocational education and training found that the transferability of VET systems is a central issue within international comparative VET research. These authors found that scholars in all relevant disciplines stress the need for cultural sensitivity, adaption, and long-term planning when transferring policy from one country to another. Hence, it is imperative to look at the issues related to the transfer of VET and its adoption in new territories in cultural and structural context of the adapting societies.

Although unemployment is a serious problem in India, a very small proportion of people in India has any VET (World Bank, 2007). According to an Indian government report, the prevalence of formal skill training is much higher in developed countries like the United Kingdom (68%), Germany (75%), the USA (52%), Japan (80%) and South Korea (96%), but this is very low in India as only around 2.3% of the workforce has undergone formal skill training (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015). The poor prevalence rate of these skill among India's workforce are often attributed to a dearth of formal vocational, technical and professional edu-

cation among people. Very often, it is also argued that the technical and professional courses do not impart the necessary skills required for adequate employment. Mohammad Akram (2012) emphasized the need for vocationalization of formal education in India, and argued for identifying the missing link between vocational and formal education within the formal setup. Sheshadri Chatterjee et al. (2021) have tried to identify the factors that would impact use of technology for VET in India, and to assess how peer influence and government support would moderate such impact. This study concluded that the moderating effects of peer influence and government support could enhance the intention of the users to use technology for vocational education and training.

This paper argues that the poor state of vocational and other forms of technical and professional education and training in India, as represented in policy documents and survey reports, is caused not only because of limited availability, affordability and accessibility to technical and professional education, but also because of lesser exploration and conceptualisation of vocational training existing at informal level in the form of Informal Vocational Training (IVT), mainly prevalent among marginalized sections of the society, and the inability of the government to link the skills learnt as IVT with the formal vocational, technical and professional education and training at formal accreditation level.

IVT, as proposed in this paper, generally prevails outside the formal educational environment and even outside the formal occupational institutions, and operates primarily within the community, caste, religious sect, neighbourhood and family level agencies. IVT is skill training, provided informally and experienced through personal networking within the community and this training is an important pathway through which people, especially deprived and marginalised people, prepare themselves for the future job market. It is necessary to mention here that IVT is different from “informal learning at workplaces” undertaken by adults during their work lives, often referred to as “community of practices” (Billett, 1996; Boud & Middleton, 2003; Fuller & Unwin, 2010) as the later takes place in the workplace after starting work, whereas IVT takes place at community level before actually becoming part of the workforce with or without any formal education.

IVT is a kind of training, a practical skill of how to do a job requiring specific skill, even without having curriculum based formal theoretical knowledge or education. IVT operates informally and largely prevails in societies having a substantial presence of informal economy, but IVT is not coterminous to the informal economy or informal sector. As explained by Jan Breman (2004), Keith Hart (1973), and Pravin Visaria and Paul Jacob (1995), informal sector represents an economy which is not well defined in terms of rules and regulations (laws), and largely represents the unregulated and unorganised nature of the economy. India, like many developing countries, has a substantial presence of informal economy.

This empirical study discovers the background characteristics of the pupils who acquire IVT, VET and other technical and professional education and training, collectively identifying all of these as Skill Training and Education (STE), and explains what benefits the pupils get from these and the larger implications of the STEs on the occupational, economic, social and cultural lives of people. It also identifies the missing link at formal accreditation level between IVT and formal vocational, technical and professional education and suggests how these can be connected by developing an accreditation and credit transfer system so that IVT can get its due recognition within the formal system, and people trained through IVT may be connected with formal vocational, technical and professional trainings.

Theoretical Concerns

VET, IVT and STEs are situated within the larger paradigms of formal and informal learning and modes of education. Emile Durkheim (1974) defined education as a social institution which transfers the norms and values of a society to individuals. Talcott Parsons (1959) analysed the school as a social system, and noted its role in the transmission of values and in the maintenance of social order and stability. Thus, from a functional perspective, the school is an agency of socialization and it contributes in the allocation of roles and statuses to individuals. However, from a conflictive perspective, education largely serves the interests of the powerful. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) argue that the achievement ideology promoted by the education system disguises the real power relations within the school, which, in turn, reflects and corresponds to the power relations within the larger society. According to them, the major role of education in a capitalist society is the reproduction of labour power. Education, with the help of a hidden curriculum, serves the interest of the capitalistic.

The notion of vocational education stretches beyond the conventional understanding of formal education, and integrates education with the skills and economic needs of the societies as well as individuals. Elements of the vocational components of education can be found in a recent understanding on education. Anthony Giddens and Philip W. Sutton (2009) say that education can be defined as a social institution which enables and promotes the acquisition of skills and knowledge and the broadening of personal horizons, and thus talk about integration of skills within the framework of education. Postmodernist, Robin Usher and Richard Edwards (1994) argue that education should teach different things and such knowledge should be provided which is useful and helps the pupil to make some profit. Thus, the concept of vocational education finds advocacy when education intends to impart the necessary skills and knowledge which could be useful for creating employment and fulfilling the economic needs of the society.

Neoliberal perspectives see education as the key to success in an increasingly competitive global market, as education provides the skills needed to compete, and the scientific knowledge and new technology to stay in the

race. With this emphasis on education and the economy, schools and colleges have increasingly focussed on vocationalism- training and preparation for occupations (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013). A reflection of increasing vocationalism in the education policies of the United Kingdom is visible during the period 1979 to 1997, when the conservative governments aimed to develop a vocational education and training system to meet the needs of industry (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013). In 1986, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications was set up there to introduce standardised vocational qualifications for particular occupations and many other initiatives were followed later on (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013).

The concept of vocational education and training (VET) is a meeting point of education in a conventional sense, and vocational training. However, there are debates regarding the role of VET. On the one hand, some scholars argue that vocational courses develop specific skills among individuals and enhance their productivity and chance of gaining better employment and wages, and thereby promote economic growth and social inclusion. On the other hand, Bowles and Gintis (1976) and Randall Collins (1979) argue that VET reproduces the class position in society by ensuring that children inherit their parents' social position, where lower-class students are typically placed in lower tracks that in turn reduce their chances of attending university and other professional courses leading to a prestigious occupation. Philip Foster (2002) proposed the concept of vocational education fallacy and argues that VET is considered second-rate because it leads to lower status occupations than the academic track.

Not all learning and skills are imparted within the boundaries of schools and educational institutions. According to Collins (1979), most technical skills are learned on the job and not necessarily in schools. Collins further states that productivity is not necessarily related to better education, and most skilled manual labours learn their skills on the job. Hence, informal learning is as important as formal learning.

In the pedagogy of the oppressed, Paulo Freire (1970) observes that narration leads students to mechanically memorize the content. Freire wanted learners to be able to both, "read the word" and "read the world" as the former will increase literacy and the latter develop the ability to understand the larger socio-political scenario that influenced and, especially, restricted people's life chances. For Freire, education should also lead to action. Education therefore is a "praxis". Learning at community level along with schools is very visible in the writings of Freire. Freire, thus, not only talks about the practical learning of skills in day to day life but also advocates the bringing of formal and informal learning together, and enhancing formal learning by embedding informal learning of skills within it.

The present attempt to explore informal vocational training (IVT) and its missing link with formal vocational, technical and professional education is situated in this larger theoretical context in general and the contributions made by Collins (1979) and Freire (1970) in particular, as Collins emphasi-

ses the importance of informal learning and Freire talks about embedding informal learning within the formal system. The notion of IVT needs to be seen in the context of the efforts of the marginalized groups to develop skills and learning outside the formal education system, and also outside the curricula of formal vocational, technical and professional courses. Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen, in the Indian context, also argue that education has far reaching potentials when it acts as an enabling factor for the realisation of other economic, social, and cultural goods, as well as a catalyst for positive societal change (Drèze & Sen, 1995). IVT when linked appropriately with the formal accreditation system will definitely bring the advantages of informal learning in the formal system for the vulnerable social categories who get exposed to these IVT because of their social connections and cultural practices and a formal credit transfer will also enhance the social recognition of the IVTs.

Conceptual Framework

Professional practice is based on specialised knowledge, and acquiring it takes time, effort, and formal instruction, especially university-based training (Volti, 2012). The work of a professional is deemed to be of great value, both to society as a whole and to the individual who makes use of professional services. Hans Gerth and Wright Mills (1946) have translated Max Weber's works and according to them, Max Weber has seen professionals as specific occupational groups having controlling access to scarce marketable skills. Weber also identified the relative superiority over the working class as an important feature of professionals (Gerth & Mills, 1946). The distinctive roles and specialised skills of professional confer on them considerable power. Contrary to professional education, technical education is formal education, meant to impart the technical knowledge and skills underlying different processes of production with a wider connotation than vocational education imparted at secondary or higher level (UNESCO, 1990). The encyclopaedia Britannica has differentiated technical education from professional and vocational education. Technical education mainly aims at preparing pupils for occupations that are classed above the skilled crafts but below the scientific or engineering professions. It emphasizes the learning and applicability of basic principles of science and mathematics, and not attainment of proficiency in vocations which use manual skills (Gaur et al, 1998).

Mark Kirby (1999) and Sally Tomlinson (2017) argue that the larger discourses which are surrounded by professional and technical educations suggest that these are attended by middle class and upper class children, and thereby reproduce the elite structure of society. Even Pierre Bourdieu (2016) perceives that higher and professional education, which is considered the passport to a prestigious occupation, is virtually the monopoly of a selected people with particular accumulated capital. According to Bourdieu:

Capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility. (p. 84)

According to All Indian Council of Technical Education (AICTE), vocational education or VET could be offered at elementary, secondary or senior secondary levels, and it prepares pupils for jobs which are based on practical activities or manual work and not necessarily academic in nature and thus related to some specific vocation or occupation (AICTE, n.d.). However, this definition does not take into consideration the heterogeneity of the agencies engaged in imparting vocational trainings historically as well as culturally, and primarily assumes that the agencies are necessarily *formal educational institutions*. Further, most of the policy documents and government reports dealing with *education* in India provide overlapping definitions of professional education, technical education and VET. AICTE uses vocational education synonymously with technical education while National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) (2016) combines vocational education with technical/professional education and fails to define each of them separately, creating confusion and conceptual overlapping.

Christiaan Grootaert (1990) talks about the existence of formal and informal systems of acquiring vocational and technical education (VTE) in Cote d'Ivoire. In the formal system, students may enrol in institutes which offer secondary and post-secondary curricula, and such institutes are an integral part of the education system. The informal system consists of small enterprises and learners join these in the form of apprenticeships, where they get no cash wages but opportunities to learn the job/trade at a practical level. Grootaert's description of the prevalence of informal VTE appears to be close to the notion of IVT as explained by us. But this informal VTE, as explained by Grootaert, is provided to long term apprentices at an informal level, and these young adults are working full time in small enterprises. IVTs, on the other hand, are acquired not as apprentice or full time worker but at household or community level even before starting to work as a full time worker. However, they do show some similarities.

Alan Coetzer et al., (2020) talk about opportunities to participate in formal and informal learning activities, and in this context use the term "informal learning activities", but such activities refer to informally learnt activities in the context of workplaces and so they are different from IVTs. Rishi Kumar et al., (2019) have talked about vocational training and education (VET) in India and used NSSO data for this. They have categorised VET as "formal" and "non-formal" and argued that non-formal vocational training includes hereditary and self-learning, and these are clearly not the

optimal way for acquiring skills. Although non-formal vocational training comes very close to the concept of informal VET, Kumar et al. have not collected primary data and used NSSO data in which a description and details of the category is not available.

Skill training and education (STE) as used in this paper includes all that training and education one of whose main purposes is to develop specific job-oriented skills among people, and they link the individual with a specific occupation. STE, in principle, will include all vocational education and training (VET), IVT, professional education and technical education together. The different components of STE such as professional, technical and vocational courses, often reflect a hierarchy (especially in societies witnessing structured inequalities) as they have different objectives and operate within different socio-cultural contexts. The socio-economic characteristic of the students, like educational qualification, occupation, income, caste, and family background determine the academic success of pupils, and those belonging to the upper strata enjoy the advantages. VET in general, and IVT in particular, finds its social relevance in this situation of the dominance of elites in professional and technical education. This sociological study examines all these components in their specific social background and macro contexts.

Context of the Present Study

There was a cry for occupational education at a higher level in India from the time of British rule, and a number of educational committees (such as the Wood Dispatch of 1854, the Hunter Commission of 1802 and the Sargent Commission of 1944) focused on skills education (Tilak, 1988). After independence (in 1947), it was felt that VET could pave the way for the socio-economic development of such a diverse society as India, and consequently various initiatives were taken to introduce VET. The Indian Education Commission (1964-1966), National Policy on Education, 1992 and New Educational Policy Draft (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2016) talk about the mainstreaming of vocational education with formal education. The National education Policy 2020 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020) has made flexible provisions for promoting vocational education at every possible level.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The paper has three objectives: (a) to explore the prevalence and patterns of STE, including IVT, VET, technical and professional education at ground level; (b) to study the implications of the different forms of STE on employment, occupation and income of the incumbent; and, (c) to identify the missing accreditation link and connection between IVT and formal vocational, technical and professional education and suggest the ways by which the two-way link could be established.

Sampling and Universe of the Study

This study is part of a larger study which was conducted to explore employment and unemployment situations and their relationship with education in Srinagar city of the Kashmir region of India. The respondents were identified as people who were part of the "labour force", and the universe of the study included even those women who were primarily taking care of the family but willing to join any paid job if getting any opportunity. Present active enrollment at any educational institute was an exclusionary criterion as existing students were not considered part of the labor force in India. Age was also an important factor in inclusion, and only those people were included who were between fifteen to sixty-five years of age. This study was conducted in the Nalabal, Alamgari Bazar and Baghi Ali Mardan Khan areas of district city Srinagar of the state (now Union Territory) of Jammu and Kashmir, India, and these areas were selected purposefully to include an occupationally heterogeneous population.

Research Design and Research Methods

This study was completed in two stages: first the Survey Method was applied using an Interview-Schedule, and later selected Case Studies were conducted. The survey method study covered 245 households consisting of 704 respondents. An interview schedule was used for collecting the required information from all 704 eligible respondents available in the research area. The interview schedule is a list of questions put and filled in by the researcher on the basis of the responses given by the respondents (Lazarsfeld & Rosenberg, 1966). Forty well defined questions were asked of the respondents that included specific questions on demographic, socio-cultural, occupational, educational and economic profile of the respondents, and other questions related to their employment, unemployment, education, vocational training and informal vocational training etc. The information was collected in the local language and the information was entered in the individual Interview-Schedules. Specific quantitative data was analysed by using SPSS. Keeping in mind the descriptive nature of the problem under study, only percentages were calculated and statistical calculations and tests were avoided. Many respondents providing specific and unique information were included in the case studies, and they were interviewed separately using the Interview technique. Many respondents were contacted multiple times for collecting additional required information, as required in the Case Study method. The transcripts of the interviews were translated verbatim into English. However, the names of the respondents included for the case studies are changed in this paper in order to maintain their privacy. Informed consents were taken from all respondents. Such case studies have helped in developing insights and applying triangulation.

FINDINGS

The Prevalence of Skill Training and Education (STE): Informal Vocational Training (IVT), Professional and Technical Education

Although STE conceptually includes informal vocational training (IVT), vocational education, professional courses and technical education, the findings of this study reveal that formal vocational education is not found to prevail in the research area, and thus for all practical purposes, figures related to STE include the IVT, professional and technical education. It is observed that vocational training in our research area is largely taking place informally in the form of IVT. IVT as imparted in Srinagar at informal level includes skills related to the following activities: (a) handicraft and handloom; (b) papier-mache; (c) tailoring, electrician, computer and mobile repairing, mechanic; (d) carpenter, copper-smith, plumber, painter, driver, barber and parlour artist. Professional education as identified in the research area includes following courses: (a) engineering; (b) medicine; (c) law; (d) management/ social work; (e) journalism; (f) Bachelor of Education/ Master of Education (B.Ed/ M.Ed). Similarly, technical courses as prevailing in the field include training related to: (a) engineering and computers; (b) agriculture and allied activity; (c) nursing and health; (d) hotels and hospitality.

Table 1

Gender and Age Composition of All Respondents in Terms of Skill Training and Education (STE)

Category		STE						
Age (in years)	Gender	Informal Vocational Training (IVT)	Professional Education	Technical Education	Total	Not having any STE	Total Number	Total Percentage
15 to 30	Male	14.0%	19.8%	2.3%	36.4%	64.0%	86	100%
	Female	14.0%	24.0%	2.0%	40.0%	60.0%	100	100%
	Total	14.0%	22.0%	2.2%	38.2%	61.8%	186	100%
30 to 45	Male	16.5%	15.0%	3.9%	35.4%	64.6%	127	100%
	Female	19.2%	19.2%	0.8%	39.2%	60.8%	130	100%
	Total	17.9%	17.1%	2.3%	37.3%	62.6%	257	100%
45 to 60	Male	28.1%	6.2%	1.6%	35.9%		128	100%
	Female	27.4%	5.5%	0.0%	32.9%	67.1%	73	100%
	Total	27.9%	6.0%	1.0%	34.9%	65.2%	201	100%
60 above	Male	23.5%	9.8%		33.3%	66.7%	51	100%
	Female	44.4%	0.0%		44.4%	55.6%	09	100%
	Total	26.7%	8.3%		35.0%	65.0%	60	100%
Total	Male	20.7%	12.5%	2.3%	35.5%	64.5%	392	100%
	Female	20.2%	17.0%	1.0%	38.2%	61.9%	312	100%
Total		20.5%	14.5%	1.7%	36.7%	63.4%	704	100%

Source: own research

It is observed from Table 1 that 36.7% of the total respondents ($N = 704$) have STE and it includes 20.5% IVT, 14.5% professional education and only 1.7% technical education. Table 1 also gives the distribution of respondents in terms of age. Here we can notice that the share of STE in the age group 15-30 years is highest. This implies that prevalence of STE in terms of age structure is highest among the youth. Over the generations, there is a modest increase in STE. This expansion in STE has primarily occurred in formal skills education and training, especially among the women in the field of professional education. Further, there is a sharp decline in the prevalence of IVT over the generations (Table 1). The proportion of IVT is lowest among the respondents in the age group of 15-30.

It is further observed that women have a higher proportion than men in formal STE, especially in professional education (Table 1). Within professional education, 45.3% of women have opted for courses such as B.Ed/M.Ed, which constitutes 96% of the total respondents who have done B.Ed/M.Ed (the share of males is abysmally low in B.Ed and M.Ed courses). In all age groups the proportion of women in the professional courses such as engineering and medicine is lower. The females have not performed at par with their male counterparts in technical and scientific disciplines, and there is a gender difference in enrolment as well as outcome in these disciplines. However, women do have a significant presence in courses such as management/social work and law. Men can be seen more in courses such as engineering (40.8%) which forms four fifths of the total respondents who have done engineering.

The Pattern of Skill Training and Education (STE)

Sociological perspectives on education help us to understand that education as a social institution does not function in isolation. It is firmly entrenched in the wider social network, and is reciprocally related to other social institutions such as family, neighbourhood, and class position, occupation of parents of the students, caste, religious sect, and community structure. The relationship between family background and educational attainment is frequently studied, because the particular socio-economic profile of a student also gives them particular capital. Hence, the pattern of STE needs to be studied in the context of the socio-economic background of the respondents. This section is divided into two parts: (a) Experiences related to IVT, and (b) Underlying structures and mechanisms influencing the patterns and prevalence of STEs. Sub-section (a) provides a few case studies and explains how IVT operates at ground level. The purpose of including these case studies is to show how IVT operates at ground level. Cases related to technical and professional education are not included, because we are largely familiar with the operational mechanisms of technical and professional education at a formal level. Sub-section (b) provides explorations related to the underlying structures and mechanisms which influence the patterns and prevalence of STEs visible at empirical level.

Experiences Related to IVTs

Nazir Ahmed (case 1) is in his early 30s and has been working as driver for one of the private school for the past seven years. He also works there as a watchman, and earns a total of about Rs 7,000 per month. He is matriculate. Nazir's parents have never been to school. Nazir's mother is a home-maker and his father is a carpenter. Carpentry is their ancestral work. His elder brother is also doing carpentry, but Nazir was not interested in this work. On being asked why he didn't choose carpentry as his occupation when other family members were already involved in it, Nazir responded, "carpentry involves great physical work and this work is looked down on by our society". On being asked why it is looked down upon, he responded, "it is manual work that you learn on your own, you don't get any degree in it".

Contrary to Nazir, Hameed Bhatt (case 2), in his early 40s, presents a different story. Hameed has also left studies after 9th standard. His parents have never been to school. Hameed draws "naqaashi" on papier-mache items. Naqaashi is the art work. He has his own small firm. His monthly income is around Rs 35,000. He has learnt this skill from his brother. Through his brother he met a few experts of naqaashi work. He not only learnt naqaashi but also gained knowledge of entrepreneurship through them.

Sakina (case 3) is Shia Muslim and in her late 20's. She is a tailor and has been working at this for the past 15 years. Her father was earlier a worker in the carpet industry but became unemployed after the slowdown of the industry. The family was in financial crisis. She learnt tailoring from a close family member and started this work when she was just in class 9th. She completed her tenth class at a later stage. She had moved to a new boutique few days before. Two years earlier she was earning Rs 5,000 per month but slowly she has started her own business and now she manages to earn Rs 18,000 to 20,000 per month.

Thus, Nazir, although coming from a family having expertise in carpentry work, didn't go for IVT related to carpentry as it was not considered prestigious. Consequently, he has to work as a driver and also as a watchman. His income is low and he is not satisfied with it. He left carpentry work but could not acquire any better occupation. On the other hand, IVT learnt at family level has brought economic gains for Hameed. Hameed's monthly income is five times more than Nazir's. Thus, IVT has worked very favourably for Hameed. Sakina also started with the IVT and upgraded her skills at a later stage. She is also earning an amount which is fulfilling her needs, and she intends to go for further upgradation. So, these cases help us to understand the economic importance of IVT learnt at family and community level.

Underlying Structures and Mechanisms Influencing the Patterns and Prevalence of STEs

This study has identified several underlying structures and mechanisms like religious sect, caste, level of education of the parents and occupation of the parents which play very important role in the prevalence and patterning of the STEs. We have explained all these underlying structures and mechanisms separately.

Religious Sect. Islam is the major religion practised in Kashmir, with 96.4% of the region's population identifying themselves as Muslims (Census of India, 2011). Kashmiri Muslims are broadly divided into two sects - Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims. The Sunni Muslim forms the majority of the population in Kashmir (Snedden, 2015). In this study, out of the total respondents ($N = 704$), 244 respondents are Shia Muslims (34.6%) and rest are Sunni Muslims.

Table 2*Sect Wise Status of Skill Training and Education (STE)*

S No.	Categories and sub categories of STE	Sects		
		Sunni Muslim	Shia Muslim	Total
I	IVT	13.7%	33.2%	20.4% ($N=144$)
II	Formal STE (Professional +Technical)	17.4%	13.9%	16.2% ($N = 114$)
III	Not having any STE	68.9%	52.9%	63.4% ($N = 446$)
	Total	100% ($N = 460$)	100% ($N = 244$)	100% ($N = 704$)
I	IVT			
	Handicraft and Handloom	44.4%	46.9%	45.8%
	Papier Mache	1.6%	33.3%	19.4%
	Tailoring	33.3%	8.6%	19.4%
	Electrician, Computer and Mobile Repairing, Mechanic	6.3%	4.9%	5.6%
	Carpenter, Copper smith, Plumber, Driver, Barber and Parlour Artist	14.3%	6.2%	9.7%
	Total	100% ($N = 63$)	100% ($N = 81$)	100% ($N = 144$)
II.a	Professional			
	Engineering	24.7%	24.1%	24.5%
	Medical	9.6%	27.8%	14.7%
	Law	4.1%	6.9%	4.9%
	Management/Social Work	31.5%	24.1%	29.4%
	Journalism	2.7%	0.0%	2.0%
	B.Ed/M.Ed	27.4%	17.2%	24.5%
	Total	100% ($N = 73$)	100% ($N = 29$)	100% ($N = 102$)
II.b	Technical			
	Related to Engineering and Computers	71.4%	60.0%	66.7%
	Related to Nursing and Health	28.6%	40.0%	33.3%
	Total	100% ($N = 7$)	100% ($N = 5$)	100% ($N = 12$)

Source: own research

It is noted from Table 2 that a little lesser than half of the Shia Muslim respondents have acquired some STE. Within IVT ($N = 81$), most of the Shia respondents are having skills associated with the activities such as handloom and handicraft and papier-mache. Papier-mache is considered a traditional occupation of Shia Muslims and in this study it is also observed that 90% of respondents who have skills associated with papier-mache are Shia Muslims. Explaining the association of Shias with papier-mache, one of the respondents said that "Papier-mache is our traditional occupation and it is brought to us by 'Shahi Hamdan', the Shia leader from Iran" Shia Muslims continue to pursue their traditional occupations and maintain some kind of control over these occupations. Thus, sect identity is meaningfully associated with the IVT.

In terms of gender, the findings reveal that out of the total Sunni respondents who have any STE, 50.3% are male and 49.7% are female. Similarly, out of the total Shia respondents who have any STE, 58.3% are male and 41.7% are female. The gender gap in terms of STE is quite visible among Shia male and female respondents. When explored further, it is observed that among Sunni Muslims the share of IVT is more among men (54%) than women (46%). However, in professional and technical education, the share of women (52.5%) is higher than that of men (47.5%). Among, Shia Muslims the share of males is higher in IVT (males = 58%, females = 42%) as well as in professional and technical education (males = 59%, females = 41%).

Caste. Muslims in India are very heterogenous and not a homogenous entity. Ahmad (1981) argues that Muslims are differentiated into various groups and sub-groups on the basis of their positions in the overall social structures and these identities could be identified along ethnic, social and cultural lines (p. 1459). There are other studies which also talk about the presence of caste and caste-like structures among the Muslims in India (Mondal, 2003; Zainuddin, 2003). This study has identified 53 different surnames (family names) among the households under study (there are several other surnames in the larger area but we are keeping ourselves confined to those that we could locate with the identified households) and because of the specific socio-cultural and historical context of construction of these "surnames" and their conventional association with specific occupations and networking of social and cultural capital, we are considering them as "castes" and "caste-like groups". In this study, we have categorised these 53 castes and caste-like groups into three broad groups, namely; Group-I, Group-II and Group-III as also mentioned in our previous publication (Bazaz & Akram, 2020). Group-I and Group-II are caste-like groups and Group-III is caste group (Table 3). Group-I and Group-II are generally identified as *Ashrafs* and Group-III comprises of castes which are generally identified as *Non-Ashrafs*.

The share of Group-I, Group-II and Group-III in IVT is 17%, 38% and 64% (approximately) respectively. The IVT is notably higher among Group-III respondents and lower among Group-I respondents. Within IVT, Group-I respondents are largely having skills associated with handicraft, handloom and papier-mache. None of the respondents from Group-I have skills associated with

activities such as tailoring, electrician, computer and mobile repairing, mechanic, carpenter, copper-smith, plumber, driver, barber and parlour artist. Absence of skills associated with activities such as carpenter, copper-smith, plumber, driver, barber and parlour artist among Group-I and II respondents are significant, because these activities are considered inferior and are often associated with Group-III. It is primarily members of Group-III who are associated with activities such as carpenter, copper-smith, plumber, driver, barber and parlour artist.

Table 3*Caste Wise Status of Skill Training and Education (STE)*

S. No.	Categories and sub categories of STE	Caste and caste-like groups			Total
		Group-I	Group-II	Group-III	
I	IVT	16.7%	37.8%	63.6%	55.8% (N = 144)
II	Formal STE (Professional +Technical)	83.3%	62.2%	36.4%	44.2% (N = 114)
	Total	100% (N = 18)	100% (N = 45)	100% (N = 195)	100% (N = 258)
I.	IVT				
	Handicraft and Handloom	33.3%	52.9%	45.2%	45.8%
	Papier-Mache	66.7%	23.5%	17.7%	19.4%
	Tailoring	0.0%	17.6%	20.2%	19.4%
	Electrician, Computer & Mobile Repairing, Mechanic	0.0%	5.9%	5.6%	5.6%
	Carpenter, Copper smith, Plumber, Driver, Barber and Parlour Artist	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	9.7%
	Total	100% (N = 3)	100% (N = 17)	100% (N = 124)	100% (N = 144)
II.a	Formal STE (Professional)				
	Engineering	46.2%	30.8%	17.5%	24.5%
	Medical	7.7%	23.1%	12.5%	14.7%
	Law	0.0%	0.0%	7.9%	4.9%
	Management/Social Work	30.8%	26.9%	30.2%	29.4%
	Journalism	0.0%	0.0%	3.2%	2.0%
	B.ED/M.ED	15.4%	19.2%	28.6%	24.5%
	Total	100% (N = 13)	100% (N = 26)	100% (N = 63)	100% (N = 102)
II.b	Formal STE (Technical)				
	Related to Engineering and Computers	50.0%)	100%	62.5%	66.7%
	Related to Nursing and Health	50.0%)	0.0%	37.5%	33.3%
	Total	100% (N = 2)	100% (N = 2)	100% (N = 8)	100% (N = 12)

Source: own research

Father's and Mother's Education. The incidence of IVT is high among those respondents whose father is illiterate or who have educational qualification varying between primary to senior secondary (up-to senior secondary). In this study, it is observed that not a single respondent, whose father is having some higher qualification (professional education, technical education and graduate and above) have acquired any IVT. It is observed in the field that those parents who have some professional and technical education or some higher qualifications consider various vocational training as inferior, and believe that these are meant for people who hail from a lower socio-economic status. Further, the proportion of professional and technical education (among respondents) increases with the increase in the father's education.

The relation which exists between the father's education and their children's STE can also be observed to exist between the mother's education and children's STE. Among those respondents whose mothers are illiterate, about 75% have acquired IVT and among the respondents whose mothers have some educational qualification, they have largely acquired professional and technical training.

Father's and Mother's Occupation. It is observed that among the respondents whose father is working as daily wage workers, 90% have acquired IVT and only 10% have any professional and technical education. Within this professional training, more than half (57%) of these respondents have acquired their professional courses through B.Ed/M.Ed. Among the respondents whose father is self-employed, an equal proportion of respondents have IVT and professional and technical education, and within professional training ($N = 39$) more than half of these respondents have acquired their courses from management/social work and B.Ed/M.Ed. Similarly, the respondents whose mother comes within the occupational categories of self-employed, daily wage worker and not interested in work, have higher proportions in IVT i.e. 66.7%, 95.0% and 66.1% respectively.

The Implications of Skill Training and Education (STE) on Employment, Occupation and Income Status

The Implications of Acquiring IVT

From Table 4, it is observed that among the respondents who have IVT, 36% are working as daily wage workers, 35.4% are self-employed, about 15% are working in service sectors (government and private services) and remaining are unemployed (13.2%). When explored further, it is observed that among the respondents who have IVT and working as daily wage workers, all are working either as artists (where they are engaged in activities associated with handicraft, handloom and papier-mache) or engaged in activities associated with tailoring, carpentry, coppersmith, plumber, painter, driver, barber, parlour artist and non-works as semi or unskilled labourers. Among those who have IVT and are self-employed, the majority (77%) are the owners of small manufacturing units, and largely possess

skills associated with activities such as handicraft, handloom, papier-mache and tailoring. Among the respondents having IVT and working in the government sector, 42% are working as teachers in the handicraft and handloom departments, 33% are working as clerical/supervisor in various government department, and these respondents possess multiple skills.

Table 4

Occupation and Categories of Skill Training and Education (STE)

S. No	Categories and sub categories of STE	Occupational Category					Total
		Gov-ern-ment Service	Private service	Self em-ployed	Daily wage worker	Unem-ployed	
I	IVT	8.3%	6.9%	35.4%	36.1%	13.2%	100% (N = 144)
II	Formal STE (Professional+ Technical)	38.5%	41.2%	1.7%	0.0%	18.4%	100% (N = 114)
II.a	Professional Education	38.2%	40.2%	2.0%	0.0%	19.6%	100% (N = 102)
II.b	Technical Education	41.7%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	100% (N = 12)
I+II	STE	21.7%	22.1%	20.5%	20.2%	15.5%	100% (N = 258)
III	Not having STE	21.5%	23.8%	24.9%	2.7%	27.1%	100% (N = 446)
	Total	21.6%	23.2%	23.3%	9.1%	22.9%	100% (N = 704)

Source: own research

Table 5

Income of Employed and Categories of Skill Training and Education (STE)

S. No	Categories and sub categories of STE	Income Category						Total
		Up-to 24,000	24,000 - 48,000	48,000 - 120,000	120,000 - 300,000	300,000 - 600,000	600,000 Above	
I	IVT	10.4%	19.2%	32.8%	25.6%	6.4%	5.6%	100% (N = 125)
II.	Professional Education	0.0%	2.4%	13.4%	22.0%	17.1%	45.1%	100% (N = 82)
III	Technical Education	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%	45.5%	36.4%	100% (N = 11)
IV	Not having STE	0.6%	4.9%	31.7%	26.8%	18.2%	17.8%	100% (N = 325)
	Total	2.8%	7.7%	28.7%	25.4%	15.8%	19.5%	100% (N = 543)

Source: own research

Similarly, those who have IVT and are in the private sector, half of them are working in clerical/supervisor positions. The unemployment rate among the respondents who have IVT is lower (13%) than those who have professional training (19.6%) or who do not have any skill training (27%). The details of income related implications of different forms of STE could be seen in Table 5 but it would be enough to say here that IVT ensures some employment for most of the respondents and a minimum income, and without IVT they would have been left with no income as is applicable to unemployed people.

The Implications of Acquiring Professional and Technical Education

Among the respondents who have any professional and technical education, four-fifths are in the service sector. Further, among those respondents who have professional education and working in the government sector, the majority (67%) are occupants of class-I jobs (officer/professor/lecturer/doctor/engineer). These respondents have largely completed their professional courses in engineering and medicine. It is observed that a very small proportion of respondents have any technical education and these respondents are primarily working in the service sector (Table 4).

The Implications of Acquiring General Academics (Who Do Not Have Any Skill Training)

Unemployment, especially educational unemployment, is higher among the respondents who do not have any STE. Among the respondents who do not have any STE and are unemployed (N = 121), 55% have educational qualification varying between primary to senior secondary and 45% are graduates and above. Thus, unemployment is very high among those who have not acquired any skill-based training/ education or IVT.

The Missing Accreditation Link Between IVT and Formal Vocational, Technical and Professional Education

For a country to progress we need multiple sources of employment and not just white collar jobs. In every society vocational education is a valuable safety net that reduces the risks of unemployment and provides employment for unskilled workers by making them skilled. IVTs are traditionally fulfilling such needs of people at the grass root level in India. However, the formal institutions of education and training in contemporary societies often undermine the spirit of IVTs. As also quoted earlier, Nazir (Case 1) has stated, "carpentry involves great physical work and this work is looked down by our society". On enquiring why this work is looked down, he stated that, "it is a manual work that you learn on your own, you don't get any degree (accreditation) in it". Lack of any institutional certification or accreditation for the work learnt as IVT is distancing the work from the world of recognition and appreciation. Nazir is not working as a carpenter because of this thinking. We are presenting some of the statements of Mr. M. Hakak, to further elaborate the point under discussion.

M. Hakak (Case 4) has learnt Aari embroidery work from his father. He left his education and joined his father's occupation when he was studying in class seven. When asked why he left school and joined his father's work, he stated, "I was not expecting to join any government service and schools were not teaching these crafts, there was no point in continuing school". When asked about the overall importance of education in day to day life, he replied:

"Governments need to connect the skill learning mechanisms taking place at household level with the schools - this way, children will learn some skill to earn their livelihood and also get the benefits of education. If the government is not linking skill learning taking place at household or neighbourhood levels with schools, the poor will always go for skill learning and cannot continue in schools or colleges."

Mr. Hakak's reply suggests that some two-way accreditation mechanisms need to be developed, by which the IVTs learnt at household or community levels can be linked to the formal education systems either operating as VET or through general academics.

The formal vocational, technical and professional education, which impart skill based training and education to pupils at higher levels, do not establish channels of communication with the traditionally prevailing training mechanisms imparted informally. Hence, we can say that there is lack of interconnection and possible links between the informal and formal mechanisms of imparting skill training through VET or that technical and professional education are missing. A new two-way accreditation system will allow those having IVTs to join the formal schooling conveniently getting some credit for the IVTs, and those who are already studying in formal schools/colleges will get an opportunity to improve upon their IVTs with some dignity and social recognition.

The skills learnt through IVTs are relevant to the local economy and in the absence of any formal agency, these skills are imparted by agencies such as caste, sect, neighbourhood, community and family at informal level. But the lack of academic recognition for these skills imparted informally puts a negative impact on the wages of the employees, as is clear in the income status of those respondents who have acquired these skills informally. Hence, there is a need to develop accreditation links between the IVTs and the formal vocal, technical and professional education systems so that the gaps can be bridged for the benefit of people at large.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Most of the prestigious professional STE courses, such as engineering and medicine, are largely opted for by respondents who have accumulated social, cultural and economic capital, whereas IVT is opted for largely by those who lack such capital and remain deprived and vulnerable. IVT

is often viewed negatively and is conceived as “meant for the poor” and educationally backward section of the society. Besides this, VET in general and IVT in particular are often stigmatised because of their lower status when compared with professional, technical and higher education. Critics claim that vocational tracks are of little value, and it is simply a diversion of working-class students from the high road leading to a higher and professional education. However, by only focusing primarily on the process by which people can gain entry into the most prestigious occupations but ignoring the actual outcome of such processes and projecting the negative role of vocational courses, critics ignore the positive role which vocational courses can have in creating employment, removing poverty and fostering social inclusion. We have seen in the earlier section on “theoretical concerns” that sociologists like Collins (1979) and Freire (1970) have advocated giving importance to informal learning, and bringing informal learning and skill learning into the mainstream of learning and education discourses. Drèze and Sen (1995) have also argued that education has far-reaching potentials when it acts as an enabling factor for the realisation of other economic, social, and cultural benefits. The neoliberal perspectives also support the argument for making education more employment oriented.

Identification and conceptualisation of such informal learning is the first step towards their mainstreaming. The findings help us to situate the different types of IVT and STE within the larger discourses of education and training. IVTs have not been properly conceptualised, hence they often remain underreported. This also causes undermining of the overall contribution of STE in the employment generation, economic growth and social inclusion. However, it is important to note that preferences for professional and technical courses are increasing, especially among the young. Even within this, some underlying structures and mechanisms such as caste, sect, family background and amount of accumulated capital play an important role in the allocation of various forms of STE.

STE increases people’s productivity (in terms of an increase in income), employability, occupation and their access to the labour market. It not only creates skills among people but also provides livelihood opportunities. Its role is quite visible in the employment, occupation and income of the respondents. The employment rate is higher among those who have acquired any STE. IVTs as component of STEs promote employment and have further potential.

People acquiring IVTs can also be seen running their own small (as well as big) manufacturing units as entrepreneurs. They are working as artists, skill teachers and as clerical/supervisor staff in various government and private sectors. A good majority of them are also working as daily wage workers, but all of them are working as skilled labourers. Thus, IVT reduces the chances of workers to enter into the labour market as unskilled labour. Besides imparting knowledge and skills of the traditional and local sector,

it offers a second educational chance for out-of-school people ensuring their social inclusion. It also provides opportunities for further professional and personal development to those who already have a minimum level of general academic degree.

In order to overcome inequality and negativity against IVT and to mitigate the gaps between IVT and VET, they should be institutionally linked with the formal education structure. We need to increase the availability, accessibility and affordability of VET to address the employment issues of those who are left with only IVT. Linking IVT with VET at grass root levels will help in the growth of these specific traditional skills in the form of technical and professional courses in these areas in the long term. VET can enhance students' choices, and help them in developing proper integration in society. Such integration is very important for those students who do not possess any accumulated capital (social, cultural and economic capitals, as explained by Bourdieu (2016)). Besides these, such skills help in developing craftsmanship which is also a source of dignity (Sennett 2009).

National education Policy 2020 of Government of India (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020) has made flexible provisions for promoting vocational education at every possible level, and also introduced the notion of an Academic Bank of Credits for credit transfer at various levels of education. An accreditation system needs to be introduced within this system in such a way that pupils having exposure to IVT could get valid credits for these IVTs, and these credits get valid recognition from potential employers. School examination boards and AICTE also need to incorporate the credits earned through IVTs, as it will ensure a two-way flow of the credits and students at various levels. It will definitely be a great step in promoting vocational education at grass root level, and increase the mobility of pupils having good exposure of IVT towards the more prestigious technical and professional education. A gate-way could be opened at the entry level of technical and professional education for the entry of students having sufficient credits earned through IVT.

However, the mere introduction of these courses at school level curriculum is not sufficient. During the last few decades in India, VET has come across various weaknesses due to rigid training structure, inadequate infrastructure, poor funding and the lack of linkages with industry. Negative perceptions are an outcome of the way VET is implemented in the country. Besides addressing infrastructural issues, we need to merge vocational training and academic education and offer such courses from the early schooling stages and not after completing school education. Vocational training programmes that combine classroom education with a substantial amount of workplace and community training have the highest education and employment linkage. Further, these courses should be responsive to the labour market i.e. it should be in line with the demand of the local and national economy of the state. The New Education Policy of India, as

accepted in 2020, will certainly prove as one step forward in this direction of developing a bridge between informal learning of skills and their translation into formal skills and certification. Needless to say, this will give a boost to the long term employment generation in Jammu and Kashmir, India, and certainly in the rest of the world.

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