

Vocationalisation of Education in Assam

Linking Education with Employability

India is one of the youngest nations in the world with more than **54%** of the total population below 25 years of age. India's workforce is the second largest in the world after China's. While China's demographic dividend is expected to start tapering off by 2015, India will continue to enjoy it till 2040. Moreover, there has been a substantial increase in the enrollment numbers at the primary and middle education level and a subsequent decrease in dropouts at every level with the implementation of schemes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA). However, India's formally skilled workforce is approximately **4.96%** - which is dismally low when compared to the figures for China (47%), Japan (80%) or South Korea (96%). Thereby, it is extremely important to leverage our demographic dividend more substantially and meaningfully.

It is in this context that this report presents key government initiatives and schemes aimed at addressing the above-mentioned issue at the school and higher education level as well as highlight Assam's performance on the mentioned schemes.

Secondary and Higher Secondary Education in Assam – At a Glance

Assam has a total of 1633 Higher Secondary Schools and 7124 Secondary Schools with a total enrolment of approximately 12.75 lakh students.¹ Also, there are 14 Special Focus Districts² (SFDs) – Kokrajhar, Dhubri, Goalpara, Bongaigon, Barpeta, Darrang, Marigaon, Nagaon, Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi, Kamrup, North Cachar Hills (Minority SFDs) and a ST SFD – and 81 Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs).

Name of District	Number of Secondary Schools	Number of Senior Secondary Schools	Total
Golaghat	172	23	195
Nagaon	287	63	350
Total (Assam)	4649	748	5397

Source: http://www.rmsaassam.in/semis_statis2.html

Key Government Initiatives for Vocationalisation of Education

Vocational Education (VE) has been considered crucial by policy makers in the country in order to address the shortage of skills among students as well as to link education with employability. The National Policy on Education, 1986 has accorded a very high priority to VE in the educational re-organization. Moreover, with the introduction of the National Vocational Educational Qualification Framework (NVEQF) and the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF), there is even greater emphasis on vocational skills acquired through formal, informal or non-formal education and training while also focusing on learning outcomes to organize various qualifications. The Government of India and the Government of Assam have taken

¹ State Brief Information – Assam, RMSA

² Special Focus District (SFD) is identified on the basis of key indicators such as programme indicators (infrastructure gaps, gender gaps, retention rate, etc.) and Social indicators (SC & ST concentrated districts, Minority concentrated districts, Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected & Border Area Districts).

various initiatives as well as introduced policies to provide an impetus to vocational education. This section takes a look at some of the key ongoing schemes and policy decisions.

I. Vocationalisation of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (VSHSE)

The Ministry of HRD launched the Vocationalisation of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (VSHSE), a Centrally Sponsored Scheme to 'enhance the employability of the youth through demand-driven, competency-based modular vocational courses and at the same time reduce the dropout rate at the Secondary level' in FY 2011-12. VSHSE is aligned with the NVEQF and aims to cover NVEQF Levels 1-4 by introducing vocational trades in schools at the secondary and higher secondary education level.

VSHSE is a component under the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA – Centrally Sponsored Scheme with the Centre-State sharing pattern as 75:25; 90:10 in case of the North-East states) and seeks to integrate vocational education with school education by introducing demand-driven vocational education from Class IX onwards and preparing skilled people under identified sectors.

Key Features of the VSHSE:

1. Making Vocational Education a Part of Education

Under VSHSE, Vocational Education will be taught as an additional subject at the secondary level and as a compulsory subject at the higher secondary level. Each state selects two vocational trades to be introduced in the schools approved under the scheme. The State/UT Department of Education and Boards of School Education implement the scheme.

VSHSE seeks to provide multi-level entry and exit opportunities as well as vertical mobility to the student. It would enable the candidate to seek employment after any level and rejoin education as and when feasible to upgrade qualifications/skill competency. States can also engage accredited skill knowledge providers (79 SKPs accredited by the AICTE) to provide quality skill training.

2. Process of Planning and Implementation

Each State/UT is required to select 2 vocational trades per school based on the skill gap assessment conducted by the National Skill Development Council (NSDC), identify schools located close to industry and modify 'Scheme of Subjects'. During the selection of schools for implementation of the VSHSE scheme, the state/UT should attempt to cover all the districts uniformly so as to focus on the Special Focus Districts (SFD) as well as Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs). The curriculum and courseware has to be developed in compliance with the National Occupational Standards (NOS) and vetted by the Pandit Sunderlal Sharma Central Institute of Vocational Education (PSSCIVE), Bhopal.

3. Financial Assistance to the State/UT

The State/UT is allocated funds for the Vocation Education component under the RMSA based on the project proposal prepared by them. Under the scheme, one time non-recurring and annual recurring grant will be sanctioned by the MHRD to the State Governments for implementation of vocational education.

Under the scheme, each school will introduce two vocational courses and it is expected that there will be 25 students in each course in each class. Therefore, there will be a total of 200 students pursuing the courses in each school. Accordingly, the school will get access to a recurring grant of INR 22.20 lakhs, which includes a flexible pool of INR 14.50 lakhs for engaging resource persons. Along with this, it will get a one time non-recurring grant for construction of 2 workshops/laboratories of measurement 10 X 10 sq. m and INR 10 lakhs for purchasing different physical infrastructure such as tools, computers, equipments, etc.

II. Schemes in Higher Education - Promoting Vocational Education in Univ/Colleges

The UGC introduced two schemes – *Community Colleges and Introduction of B.Voc. degree program* - in Colleges and Universities (UGC-recognized as well as self-financed institutions) during the XIIth Five-Year Plan in order to leverage the provisions of the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF notified by the Government of India on 27th Dec, 2013) and with an eye on expansion of skill-based programmes in higher education. These schemes were launched as part of a concerted effort to address the fact that institutes of higher learning in the country had failed to understand and incorporate the requirements of the industry and workplace in its curriculum. The two schemes seek to expand the scope of vocational education and allow institutions to produce employable and well-groomed graduates, while also providing vertical mobility option for students passing out with vocational subjects.

Both these schemes also seek to promote multiple entry and exit opportunities. For instance, a person who has completed a Diploma and subsequently joined a job can always enter an advanced diploma course directly in the 2nd year of the course, later in their career. This promotes co-existence of learning and working to enable a person to get a job and also leverage their skills. These schemes are open for Class XII pass or equivalent students.

Setting up Community Colleges

Existing colleges/universities to introduce vocational courses and these would be called Community Colleges (CCs); **financial assistance INR 50 lakh per course/year.**

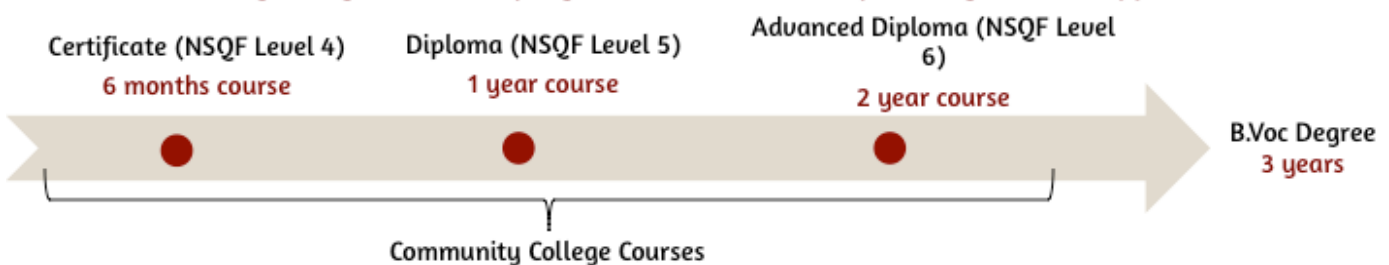
Each CC has to set up a **separate Board of Management (BoM) and Board of Studies (BoS)** - from academia, industry and relevant SSCs. The BoS will decide the programme offered by the CC and the curriculum; **skill component to have 60% weightage of total credits.**

Introduction of B.Voc. Degree Programme

The UGC issued guidelines for introduction of a 3 year B.Voc. Degree programme in Universities/Colleges and implementation of the same has been **approved for 186 institutions across the country (as of 31.07.2015).**

Under the programme, each selected institution has been **allocated two courses initially and financial assistance to the tune of INR 1.85 crore over three years.**

Community Colleges and B.Voc programme Promote Multiple Entry and Exit Opportunities



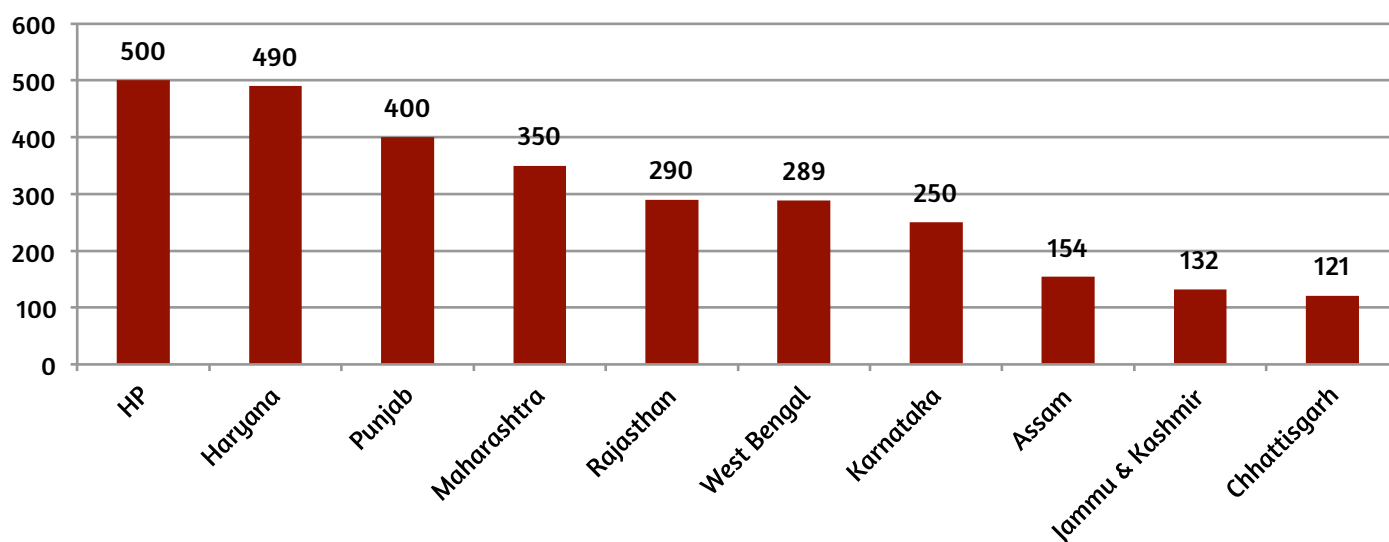
Assam – a front-runner in implementation of Vocational Education Schemes

Assam is among the best-performing states in the country with regards to implementation of the Vocational Education schemes specified in the previous section.

When it comes to VSHSE, Assam was one of three states where the scheme was initially launched (West Bengal and Haryana being the other two) and 59 schools in the state were selected under the same. Assam also partnered with Pearson to launch the vocational skills training in the selected schools. The two sectors identified by the state are: **IT & ITes and Retail.**

Today, Assam has **154 schools implementing the scheme** and 95 of these schools were selected in the FY 2015-16. It is ranked among the top 10 states across the country in terms of number of schools selected under VSHSE. The state has received an allocation of **INR 2553.96 lakhs for the Vocational Education component of RMSA in FY 2015-16.**

Top 10 States - Number of Schools Approved under VSHSE (2011-16)



The list of schools selected under the scheme from Nagaon and Golaghat are:

KALIABOR GIRLS HSS, HATHBOR	18100603403	IT & ITeS	Retail
NAGAON GOVT. BOYS HSS	18101106101	IT & ITeS	Retail
PURANIGUDAM RADHA KANTA BARUAH HSS	18101015703	IT & ITeS	Retail
BOKAKHAT GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL	18180501205	IT & ITeS	Retail
BOKAKHAT TOWN HIGH SCHOOL	18180502006	IT & ITeS	Retail
DERGAON GIRLS HSS	18180312502	IT & ITeS	Retail

The countrywide number of Colleges/Universities that have been selected for introduction of the B.Voc degree programme is 186 (as of 31.08.2015) and the number of Community Colleges is 157 (recently 106 more CCs have been included and 15 colleges from Assam are also on the approved list but the exact details with regards to fund allocations haven't been made public as of now). Assam has **13 colleges, which have introduced B.Voc degree programmes** and they have received a total grant or fund allocation of INR 23.3 crore (all-India grant is INR 304.21 crore); it has the 4th highest number of such institutions, after Maharashtra (42), Punjab (23) and Kerala (17). Similarly it has **15 Community Colleges** [30 if we consider the recently approved list as well], which have received a grant of INR 15 crore (figure for the entire country is INR 139.11 crore).

These numbers clearly highlight the fact that Assam is among the leading states in vocationalisation of education at both the school and higher education level.