

Vocational education

The MoU between the State government and Tata Technologies Limited for upgrading technical institutes covering all aspects of curricula, training and equipment is a welcome step for consolidating the spheres of vocational and semi-technical education in the region. Even as skill development has become the buzzword due to its intrinsic link with employment generation, the situation in the State remains one of despair, with local youths reluctant to take up these vocations. This is despite the fact that these areas are highly rewarding and the need for such professional engagements is only increasing. The agreement will now bring 34 polytechnic colleges and 43 ITIs under its ambit with the goal of transforming those into centres of excellence. The existing centres of vocational training have been functioning below par in the all-important job of training and empowering the youths in tune with the industry requirements. One hopes the new arrangement would lend some much-needed vitality to the sector. Under the initiative, Tata Technologies will invest Rs 2,390 crore, while the State government will contribute Rs 366 crore with 12,000 square feet area in each technical institute for setting up technology labs and workshops in addition to another Rs 800 crore for the joint initiative. This is expected to result in producing some 15,000 technically efficient personnel in the State.

Linking the vocational educational sector with industry and self-entrepreneurship is a welcome development and such public-private partnerships can serve as a platform for integrating skills, training and qualifications in these institutions. Indeed, generating skill-based employment is a dire need in view of the huge demand for such enterprises as also the burgeoning unemployment in the State. Over the years vocational education has remained a much-neglected area with the result that the increasing demand for skill-based jobs is being filled up by people from outside the State. Every year we witness a large segment of students not faring well in the HSLC and HSSLC exams. Many of them can be absorbed in vocational education if the adequate facilities are there. Expanding the scope of vocational education, therefore, should be a priority with the State government and side by side there should be a campaign to attract students to the vocational sphere. Together with new institutes announced by the State government, we also need to streamline the functioning of the existing ones. In fact, expanding vocational and technical education has to figure at the core of the State's education policy. Along with more ITIs, polytechnics and engineering colleges, another imperative need is to increase the number of seats in the existing technical institutes. Apart from having an adverse impact on the growth of technical education in the State, the situation has also been triggering mass exodus of students to outside the State every year. The government should consider phase-wise induction of more seats at degree and diploma levels besides setting up more institutes so as to achieve the desired student intake in the engineering colleges and institutes.