



VITAL ECONOMIC OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT (VEOM)

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

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ONLINE TRAINING FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Pakistan, like other countries faces a trade-off: immediately open the economy and risk resurgence in cases of COVID-19 or keep most of the economic activity closed and face a serious short-term economic crisis. Post COVID-19, several industries/markets are not likely to recover in the short-run (for example hospitality) and numerous trades, skills and jobs might see a sharp decline in demand. The world after COVID-19 will have demand for different sets of trades and skills.

“Therefore, in the post pandemic economy, one of the major areas of concern for the government will be job creation, especially those people who would have been unemployed. In many cases, the labour market demand for skills might be such that a worker would need to retool their skillsets.”

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has incurred significant losses due to the pandemic in terms of life, health, remittances and socio-economic well-being of the people. According to a recent assessment, unemployment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will increase from 8.1% to 14.5%.¹ Moreover, as per the Labor Force Survey, approximately 881,861 people will be unemployed. This shows that the economic downturn has severely impacted the migrant labour as well as the local workers such as daily wagers, contractual workers, street vendors, skilled artisans, petty transporters, home based and domestic workers, etc.

The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has taken several timely measures to mitigate the adverse impact of the economic downturn by announcing a relief package to support 2 million vulnerable workers and daily wagers. However, this immediate response needs to be supplemented with skill development interventions for long-term and sustainable recovery. Skill development initiatives will enable the vulnerable people to enhance or to acquire new skills resulting in increased employability. These programmes will introduce emerging skillset requirements, help businesses find employees with required skillsets, prevent longer term unemployment, lead to better compensations and increase labour productivity.

As employability is crucially linked with the level of competencies, skilled human resource will lead to better employability, which in turn will contribute to economic growth and poverty reduction. Moreover, as industries are closed and labour force is not occupied, this downtime is an opportunity for them to benefit directly as under normal circumstances of time constraints and employment conditions do not allow them to enroll in such programmes. The impact of COVID-19 has created an extremely challenging time for the labour workforce. There is a dire need to identify trainings that remains a priority during this period to ensure there is a skilled and competent workforce.

Vocational trainings and skills development programmes will create an opportunity out of an adverse situation. According to the World Bank, skill development programmes can play a vital role in three phases, coping phase, intermediate phase and recovery phase. In the current “coping” phase, when markets are partially closed, the labour can be used to address needs for healthcare workers and other frontline workers, such as

¹<https://www.brecorder.com/2020/04/21/591041/provincial-impact-of-coronavirus/>



those engaging in production of relevant medical equipment (including personal protection equipment, face masks, hand sanitizers), or those who provide essential childcare and eldercare services to COVID-19 patients and families.

In the intermediate phase, when schools and businesses gradually reopen, the need for health and safety measures will increase. At the same time, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems can provide much-needed socioemotional skills support to teachers and students to manage the mental health impacts resulting from the crisis. In the recovery phase, TVET can play an important role of reskilling and upskilling, especially for those who have been economically affected by COVID-19.²

INTERMEDIATE PHASE

In this phase, when schools and business gradually reopen, the need for health and safety measures will increase. At the same time, TVET systems can provide much-needed socioemotional skills support to teachers and students to manage the mental health impact resulting from the crisis.



COPING PHASE

In the “coping” phase, when markets are partially closed, the labor can be trained to address needs for health-care workers and other front-liners, such as engaging in production fo relevant medical equipment (such as PPEs, Masks, Sanitizers), or those who provide essential childcare and elder care service to Corona patients.

RECOVERY PHASE

TVET can play an important role of reskilling and upskilling, who has been economically effected by Covid-19.

As the classical model of classroom training is difficult to sustain due to COVID-19, an alternative approach is to develop digital content on training and disseminate it digitally. Training approaches can vary and might use a variety of methods which include virtual classroom sessions with trainer interaction, e-learning including video-based, and observation of practical competence. Though, distance learning isn't a long-term substitute for classroom based and practical skills training, it could be an effective solution within the short-run.³

CASE STUDY 1:

Previous pandemics provide insights about the potential held by TVET programmes during crises. During the 2014/15 Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone, a National Ebola Training Academy was set up to offer a platform of clinical training modules for frontline Ebola healthcare workers. The intensive short-term training provided through the Academy was found to have contributed to controlling the outbreak.⁴

²<https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/tvet-technical-and-vocational-education-and-training-times-covid-19-challenges-and>

³<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/About/News/COVID-19-Essential-training.aspx>

⁴<https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/tvet-technical-and-vocational-education-and-training-times-covid-19-challenges-and>





CASE STUDY 2:

In the Philippines, to combat COVID-19, labour is being trained to manufacture personal protection equipment and hand sanitizers for healthcare personnel and 3D print medical devices. Moreover, a study on the Employability of Technical and Vocational Educational Training (TVET) Graduates concluded that out of the 999,346 TVET graduates in the 2015 labour force, 718,277 (71.87%) were employed. Around 307,426 TVET graduates (83.40%) secured a job less than 6 months after the training. Male TVET graduates (72.23%) have higher employment rate than female TVET graduates (71.54).⁵

In the short-term, online trainings can equip people to earn a respectable livelihood. Whereas, in the long-term, a skilled workforce can play an important role in improving socioeconomic conditions through increase in productivity, job creation and poverty alleviation. The suit of trainings can be created by benchmarking with other countries and identifying gaps in current TVET trainings. The population of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is estimated to be more than 35.53 million. It is estimated that a minimum of 60% of the population is composed of youth (under 35 years of age).⁶ According to the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, around 26% of overseas Pakistani workers belongs to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which makes it logical for the provincial government to immediately initiate online training courses of demand-driven trades/skills for both local and export labour market.⁷ Currently, around 26,500 students are enrolled in 98 (13 female, 85 male) public sector TVET institutes. According to a survey, the share of Pakistani labour holding skills certificate is only 8% compared to India (36%) and Philippines (39%).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to conduct a quick assessment, in collaboration with Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority, the Chamber of Commerce, the Ministry of Commerce, the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment and other stakeholders to identify demand-driven trades/skills, in the current situation of COVID-19, for both local and export labour market.
- Conduct consultative sessions with Civil Society Organisations and Non Government Organisations working on TVET to identify demand-driven trades/skills.
- Equip individuals with the necessary toolkits required in their respective fields or areas of interest leading them to productive employments or businesses.
- Introduction of new demand-oriented trades to increase job opportunities through creation of market linkages, placement of competency-based management systems and international accreditations for the training system.
- Initiate TVET online courses, which will still be in demand after COVID-19, with online learning strategies and should be set-up to offer large-scale online solutions. The following courses are likely to be in demand:

S/N	COURSES
1	Nursing
2	Mental Healthcare
3	Stitching Machinist
4	Entrepreneurship
5	Computer-Aided Design (CAD)
6	Computer-Aided Manufacturing (CAM)

⁵<http://www.psa.gov.ph/content/psa-grants-clearance-2018-study-employability-technical-and-vocational-educational-training>

⁶http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/PAKISTAN%20TEHSIL%20WISE%20FOR%20WEB%20CENSUS_2017.pdf

⁷<https://www.theiqc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Amjad-Arif-2014-Working-Paper.pdf>