**[Towards a more employable work force](https://nation.com.pk/11-Feb-2020/towards-a-more-employable-work-force%22%20%5Ct%20%22_new)**

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Pakistan has a burgeoning young population but, unfortunately, a weak industrial base which cannot absorb this young workforce entering the job market. Government of Pakistan (GOP) has set up various technical training institutes under Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) - established in various provinces, to impart technical and vocational trainings to youth for employment in local industrial. Presently, it is also being emphasised that youth should use their vocational skills to start their own businesses, as local industry can only provide these many jobs.

However, lately, local industry has generally complained that education and training provided by technical and vocational training institutes do not meet the needs of local industries which are, recently, rapidly passing through upgradation. Accordingly, TEVT authorities in various provinces, in consultation with local stakeholders and with cooperation of foreign development agencies, are revising curriculum to the needs of industry. This would help increase employability of workforce, and help improve productivity and quality of products of our local industry.

Also, another option for controlling rising unemployment is to train and export workforce, which would also help in earning foreign exchange for the country. Traditionally, Pakistan has been exporting workforce to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Although, opportunities in GCC countries helped ease employment issue and generated remittances, but the workforce exported was generally with low employable skills, while our competitors such as Indian exported workforce, which was / is more educated/ skilled and thus more employable.

Therefore, with the emphasis on finding more avenues for exporting our workforce to ease unemployment at home and contribute to foreign remittances, the requisite education and skills imparted to our workforce need to be upgraded so that they become more competitive and productive at international level.

However, certain factors are hampering the upgrading of employable skills of our workforce, both at home and abroad. First, educational curriculum in technical and vocational institutes do not equip workforce with necessary analytical and troubleshooting skills, which then affects their performance in dynamic and challenging environments. Second, generally, vocational and technical institutes do not facilitate hands-on experience opportunities, which would help students to find employment or establish businesses after training. Third, level of sophistication of equipment existing in technical and vocational institutes is generally low-tech. Thus, workforce trained on these technologies struggle for employment abroad. Where

suitable level of technical equipment is available, instructors lack the capability to help students fully exploit the technical resources. Fourth, a robust system is in not in place to regularly update the technical and vocational training curriculum against local and international changing industrial trends. Finally, ideas are being forwarded for setting up TEVT universities and new centers of excellence, but given our meager resources, the question is: whether it’s wise to wander into new ventures or try to improve and upgrade existing infrastructure, workforce and curriculum? Thus, for more employable workforce, both at local and international level, aforementioned issues need to be addressed through a more holistic policy, both at national and provincial level.

Moreover, along with traditional GCC markets, new opportunities in Far Eastern and Central Asian countries may also be actively identified, quantified and workforce accordingly trained and exported to these markets. In short, with our burgeoning young population there is no one sure way of addressing unemployment issue but devising and implementing a multi-pronged policy, which has inputs from all the relevant stakeholders and markets.