

UPSC Syllabus Topic GS Paper 2 Governance – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education, Human Resources.

Making the Case for Vocational Education as an Integral Element of Schooling

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) serves as India's educational guide, revised five times - in 1975, 1988, 2000, 2005, and 2023. Aligned with the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the latest update in 2023 marks a significant shift by integrating Vocational Education (VE) into the school curriculum.

Incorporating Vocational Education: The 2023 update marks a departure from the National Policy on Education (1986), expanding VE beyond the Higher Secondary Stage. The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 4.0, initiated in the 2023 budget, mandates CBSE schools to establish skill hubs, aligning with the 2020 National Education Policy directives.

Historical Context of Vocational Training: Previously, vocational training in India mainly consisted of full-time programs through Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) under National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) recognition, alongside part-time courses offered by state boards and universities.

Teaching Vocational Education:

- Grades K-5: Develop basic work capacities through play, learning tasks like safe tool use.
- Grades 6-8: Gain hands-on experience through various vocational projects.
- Grades 9-10: Focus on specific vocations, treated equally alongside traditional academic subjects.
- Grades 11-12: An option to specialize in chosen vocations.

Benefits of Integrating Vocational Education:

- **Preparation for Employment:** Equips students with practical skills, enhancing employability.
- **Life Skills Development:** Imparts essential life skills like critical thinking and problem-solving.
- **Broad Educational Foundation:** Equal importance to VE ensures a comprehensive education.
- **Local Relevance:** VE subjects align with local needs, making education more community-relevant.
- **Social Equality:** Combats biases, promoting respect for all types of work.

Challenges of Integrating Vocational Education:

- **Practical Implementation:** Requires careful planning to practically integrate VE within the existing school system.
- **Societal Perceptions:** Overcoming the view that VE is inferior to mainstream education is a challenge.
- **Philosophical Bias:** Addressing historical biases that perceive VE as non-essential or less intellectual presents a challenge.

UPSC Syllabus Topic GS Paper 2 International Relations – Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Prospects and Challenges of the India-UK Trade Deal

India and the UK are in the final stages of concluding a free trade agreement, with expectations of signing by the end of the year.

Bilateral trade between the two countries surpassed \$44.3 billion during the 2022-23 financial year.

India achieved a trade surplus of \$8 billion by exporting goods and services worth \$25.8 billion to the UK.

Benefits of the India-UK FTA:

Benefits for India:

1. Increased Export Competitiveness:

- Tariff elimination in the UK market will particularly benefit sectors like textiles and apparel, contributing \$5 billion in exports.

2. Services Sector Expansion:

- Eased UK visa processes could spur growth in Indian IT services, a significant contributor to the UK market.

3. Investment Inflows:

- Simultaneous negotiations on a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) enhance investment protection, potentially attracting higher UK investments in India.

Benefits for the UK:

1. Tariff Reduction in India:

- UK products like cars and Scotch whisky, currently facing high tariffs in India, may see reduced tariffs, enhancing market competitiveness.

2. Level-Playing Field:

- The FTA aims to provide UK companies access to India's government procurement market, creating a more balanced competitive landscape.

3. Industrial Benefits:

- UK exports like silver, facing significant tariffs, stand to gain from reduced Indian tariffs, increasing competitiveness in the Indian market.

Challenges Associated with the FTA:

1. Tariff Negotiation Challenges:

- Some Indian goods already with zero tariffs won't benefit, while highly taxed UK exports may see reduced but not complete elimination of tariffs.

2. Environmental and Labor Standards:

- India is cautious about committing to stringent sustainability and labor standards, fearing they may become non-tariff barriers.

3. Market Access and Equal Treatment:

- The UK seeks equal market access in all sectors, particularly in India's government procurement market, which India may resist.

Recommendations:

1. Negotiate Social Security Contributions:

- Include a totalization agreement to exempt Indian workers from UK social security payments for their short stays.

2. Treaty Alignment:

- Align FTA and BIT negotiations to complement each other effectively.

3. Safeguard Digital Economy:

- Maintain a strong stance on data protection to preserve India's digital sovereignty.

4. Prepare for Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism:

- Negotiate FTA terms considering the potential impact of the UK's proposed carbon border adjustment mechanism on Indian exports.

Terminology:

• Totalization Agreements:

- Bilateral deals preventing double payment of social security taxes by workers abroad, ensuring they don't pay taxes to both their home country and the country where they work on the same earnings.

UPSC Syllabus Topic GS Paper 2 Governance – E-governance – applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential.

Navigating the Transition to e-FIR: Proceeding with Caution

The concept of 'e-FIR' involves acquiring information or complaints through electronic means using a national portal, followed by obtaining the physical signature of the complainant within a specified timeframe to convert the complaint into a formal First Information Report (FIR).

Law Commission's Stance on e-FIR:

According to Law Commission of India Report No. 282, the commission recommended allowing e-FIR registration for all cognizable offenses, particularly when the accused is unknown. In cases where the accused is known, e-FIR registration may be permitted for cognizable offenses with a punishment of up to 3 years under the Indian Penal Code (IPC). For offenses carrying a punishment of more than 3 years, the conventional registration method outlined in the IPC should be followed. The report emphasizes the necessity of obtaining the complainant's signature within 3 days for e-FIR registration.

Benefits of e-FIR:

1. Automatic Receipt Generation:

- The system generates a receipt automatically, ensuring nearly cost-free crime registration and compelling the police to take cognizance of the complaint.

2. Preservation of Complaint Contents:

- The police are prevented from altering the contents of the complaint, maintaining the integrity of the reported information.

Issues in the e-FIR Debate:

3. Lack of Clarity and Awareness:

- The Commission's report lacks detailed clarification on the concept of 'e-FIR,' with the provided procedure addressing only cases where the accused is known.

4. Omitted Discussion of State Models:

- While acknowledging that eight states are implementing e-FIR, the Commission does not delve into the specific models adopted by these states.

5. No Automatic FIR Registration:

- Contrary to misconceptions, 'e-FIR' does not imply automatic FIR registration through electronic means.

6. Absence of e-Authentication Technique:

- To replace a paper-based signed complaint with an electronic document, an e-authentication technique or digital signature is required. However, the Commission does not discuss the use of e-authentication techniques defined in the IT Act, 2000, for signing complaints.

Recommendations:

1. Mandating e-Authentication Technique:

- There should be a mandate for using an e-authentication technique to verify complainants.

2. Immediate e-FIR Registration through e-Authentication:

- Instead of the current 3-day delay in obtaining the complainant's signature, immediate e-FIR registration should be facilitated through e-authentication.