

SOCIAL LEGISLATION

THE APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

A. M. SARMA

This paper reviews the main features of the Apprenticeship Training Scheme including the Graduate and Technician Apprenticeship Scheme. Apprenticeship training needs to be made more effective in order to achieve its economic and social objectives. There is necessity for greater co-operation and collaboration between all the parties concerned and also better appreciation of this vital scheme for achieving satisfactory results.

Dr. A. M. Sarma is Reader in the Unit for Labour Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay.

In our modern technological era, untrained manpower constitutes a waste of national resources. Proper and effective utilisation of such a vital economic resource is essential for all productive efforts and for the rapid industrial development of the country. Training effort is a key to human resources utilisation and thereby to the development of industry. Apart from this, in a developing industrialising society like ours, systematic and scientific training arrangements are necessary to produce requisite skills of all types, to provide trained manpower to industry who can ply every job in every vocation. Though there were a few voluntary schemes in the past for apprenticeship training, they were not anywhere near the scale needed for rapid industrial development and productivity. Several bodies like the Indian Labour Conference (1951), the Technical Training Committee of the Small-Scale Industries Board (1956), the Special Apprenticeship Committee of the Small-Scale Industries Board (1958), the Working Group of Technical Education (1959) and the National Council for Training in Vocational Trades (1960), have recommended legislation to regulate and enforce apprenticeship training in the country.

The Government of India enacted the Apprentices Act in 1961 to supplement the programme of institutional training with on-the-job training and to regulate the training arrangements in industry. The Act came into force on 1st March, 1962 and is applicable to the whole of India. Since January 1963, it has become a very important vocational training scheme for the production of the skilled work force needed for the industrial growth and economic development of India. The following are the main objectives of the Apprentices Act.

- (1) To organise on a systematic basis, the training of apprentices in industry with a view to meet the increasing demand for skilled craftsmen
- (2) To utilise fully, the facilities available with the industry for the training of apprentices
- (3) To ensure the training of apprentices in accordance with the programmes, standards and syllabi drawn up by the expert bodies
- (4) To improve the employment opportunities for educated young people by equipping them with various types of employable skills.

Trade Apprenticeship Scheme

Under the Act, it is a statutory obligation for all employers in the notified industries to engage apprentices as per the ratio prescribed for the designated trades. The Act lays down that no person shall be qualified for being engaged as an apprentice to undergo apprenticeship training in any designated trade unless he is at least 14 years of age, and satisfies such standards of education and physical fitness as may be prescribed. Under the

Act, every apprentice or, if he is a minor, his guardian is required to enter into a contract of apprenticeship with the employer and it should be registered with the Apprenticeship Advisor. The period of apprenticeship training is to be specified in the contract of apprenticeship, which shall terminate on the expiry of the period of training. A contract can be terminated by either of the parties with the consent and approval of the Apprenticeship Advisor. However, where a contract is terminated for failure on the part of the employer to carry out the terms and conditions of the contract, the Act requires the employer to pay to the apprentice such compensation as may be prescribed. Similarly, for such failure on the part of the apprentice, he or his guardian is required to refund to the employer, such amount for the cost of training as may be determined by the Apprenticeship Advisor.

The apprenticeship training for trade apprentices consists of three parts: (i) Basic training or off-the-job training (ii) Practical training or on-the-job training and (iii) Related instruction. The apprentices are entitled for stipend, casual leave, medical leave and extraordinary leave during the period of their training.

The duration of apprenticeship training (including basic training) for most of the trades in our country is three years. But for some trades, the period of training varies from six months to four years. Candidates trained in ITI or other institutions recognised by the National Council for Training in Vocational Trades are allowed a rebate in the time of apprenticeship.

The programme consists of basic training in the first year which is followed by on-the-job or shop-floor training in the subsequent years. The basic training is the responsibility of the Government (if the establishment employs less than 500 workers), or the employer if it employs more than 500 workers. The employer has to open his own basic training institute in the premises, or elsewhere, as approved by the Government. The Government provides basic training in the ITIs. At the end of the training, the candidates are required to appear for a final All India Trade Test conducted by the National Council for Training in Vocational Trades (NCTVT).

The implementation of the Act involves, on the part of the employer, submission of reports and returns to the Apprenticeship Advisors. The Act provides for penalties if any employer contravenes the provisions of the Act and the rules made thereunder. The Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET) in the Ministry of Labour, Government of India, looks after the development and administration of the apprenticeship training programme for trade apprentices besides several other training programmes at the national level to ensure the regular supply of skilled manpower at different levels required by the industries. For the promotion and implementation of the trade apprenticeship programme in central establishments, five Regional Directorates of Apprenticeship Training have been established in different parts of the country. The state governments and union territories have appointed State Apprenticeship Advisors for rendering services to private and state undertakings in their respective jurisdiction.

Graduate and Technician Apprenticeship Scheme

The Apprentices (Amendment) Act, 1973, was passed by Parliament in June 1973 for the regulation and control of training in respect of engineering graduates and diploma holders. Under the amended Act, it is a statutory obligation on all the employers in the notified industries to engage graduate and technician apprentices on the basis of training places located by the authorities under the Act. The main features of the scheme are:

- (i) Apprentices are to be engaged only during the months of July-August every year
- (ii) Contract in the prescribed form is required to be prepared in triplicate and sent for registration

- (iii) The duration of training is one year from the date of engagement as apprentice
- (iv) The scheme provides stipend for engineering graduates, diploma holders/technicians, and so on
- (v) There is only shop-floor training but no prescribed theoretical training for the final examination

The implementation of the programme has two distinct administrative aspects, *viz.*, (i) to control and regulate the training (ii) to implement the scheme by survey and follow up. The Central Government has set up a central apprenticeship council, an advisory body for the purpose of advising it on the training policies, standards to be attained, course contents, and other relevant aspects. Tripartite apprenticeship councils are also constituted for the states on the same lines as that of the central apprenticeship council. For the promotion and implementation of the apprenticeship programme, four regional directorates of apprenticeship training have been established, each under the charge of a regional director-cum-regional apprenticeship advisor. All state governments and union territories have also appointed state apprenticeship advisors. The National Commission on Labour (1967) recommended that every state government should place its apprenticeship organisation under the Department of Labour in order to have a unified approach and better collaboration between employment and training.

In many cases, the managements utilise the apprentices as unskilled workers to get their work done. Investment in apprenticeship training is regarded by some of the employers as non-productive. The need and importance of the scheme should be impressed upon the managements through constant dialogue, regional seminars, and meetings, to enlist their wholehearted cooperation in the implementation of the Act. The concerned authorities should undertake extensive and intensive surveys to assess the availability of training facilities in various trades. The identified training facilities should be fully utilised and efforts will have to be made for a wider coverage of technical and commercial trades and expansion of training facilities to meet the requirements of the industries and the country.