



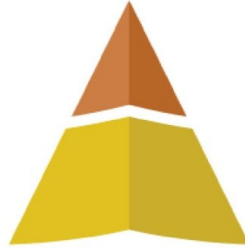
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Training Institute, Pune**



Michael & Susan Dell
FOUNDATION

Interim Evaluation Report

Vikalp Voucher Program



VIKALP

कौशल्य विकासातून स्वावलम्बन



N • S • D • C
**National
Skill Development
Corporation**



CENTRE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Summary: Key Findings

The Objective of the Study was to map the various areas of the program that have worked well and areas which are posing critical challenges. This objective was pursued through a survey aimed at two key stakeholders – Training Institutes and their trainers. The MIS feedback data was used to gauge views of the third stakeholder, i.e. students, enrolled under Vikalp.

Training Institutes response to Vikalp

1. 87 percent of the training institutes were satisfied with overall experience under Vikalp
2. More than 60 percent of the training institutes were content with the empanelment criteria and component of career guidance mela in the program
3. The poor communication skills of the target segment affected the placement outcomes of the institutes

Performance of Students (Basis Trainer Feedback)

1. Two thirds of the surveyed trainers were satisfied with the overall performance of the students enrolled in the program
2. The students performed marginally better on theoretical rather than on practical aspects of the program
3. More than half the surveyed trainers rated the communication skills of the students to be average

Performance of Vikalp compared to Non Vikalp programs

1. The student selection process, with a component of choice offered through the career guidance melas, fared better than the selection criteria for non Vikalp programs
2. The voucher payment process for Vikalp also fared better compared to the payment systems offered through Non Vikalp programs
3. The institutes believed that level playing field led to a lesser numbers of students for executing their contract under Vikalp as against their experience of having higher number of students for carrying out pre-decided contracts
4. The institutes felt that student response for the courses offered under non Vikalp programs fared marginally better compared to the student response (targeted beneficiary profile) under Vikalp

Quality of Training (Feedback by students)

1. More than 95 percent of the students were satisfied with the trainers for their respective course.
2. More than 50 percent of the students indicated their willingness to migrate to other regions for job opportunities

3. More than 65 percent of the students were keen on taking jobs post completion of the program
4. More than 75 percent of the students felt that they were given relevant job opportunities with respect to the course they undertook
5. It was observed that there is a strong need for industrial exposure in the courses offered under Vikalp. Unfortunately, due to the shorter version of the courses students are not provided the much needed industrial exposure
6. Based on the qualitative data, a need for including more advanced courses under the program was observed

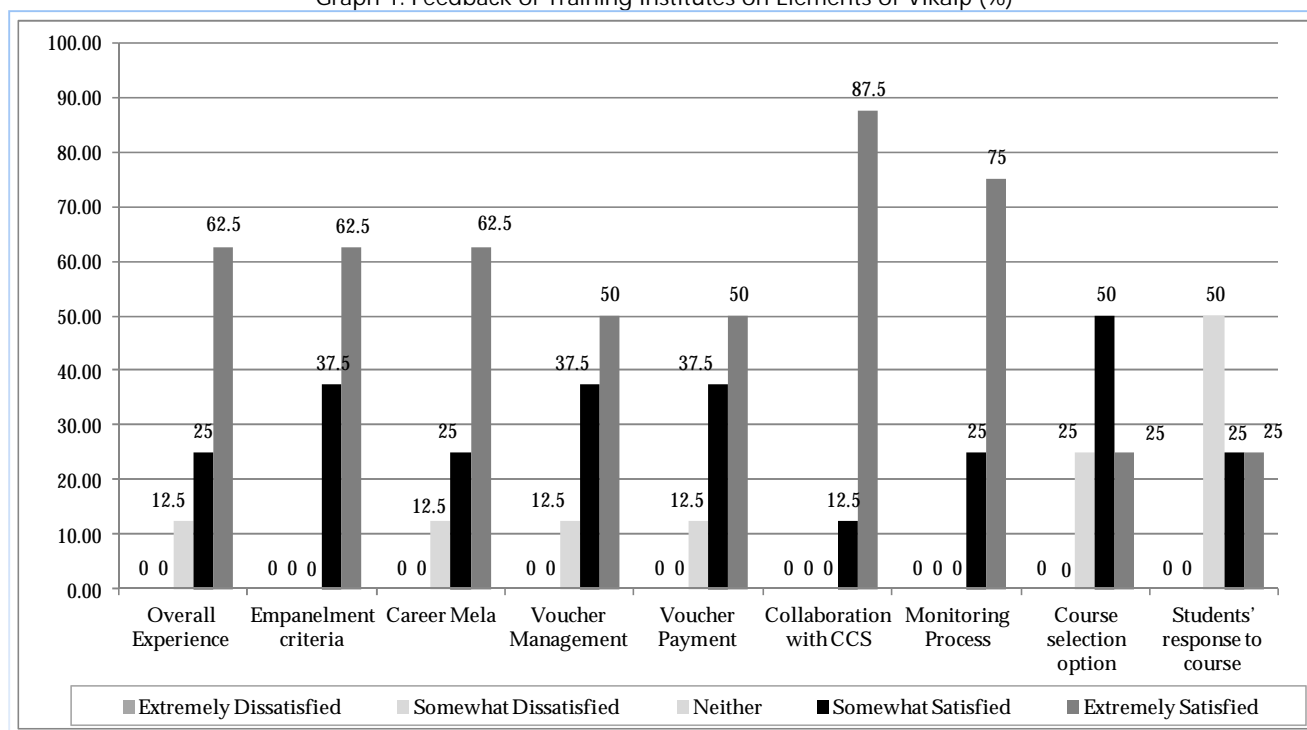
1. Feedback of Training Institutes & Trainers – Key Takeaways

General Feedback: Key Findings

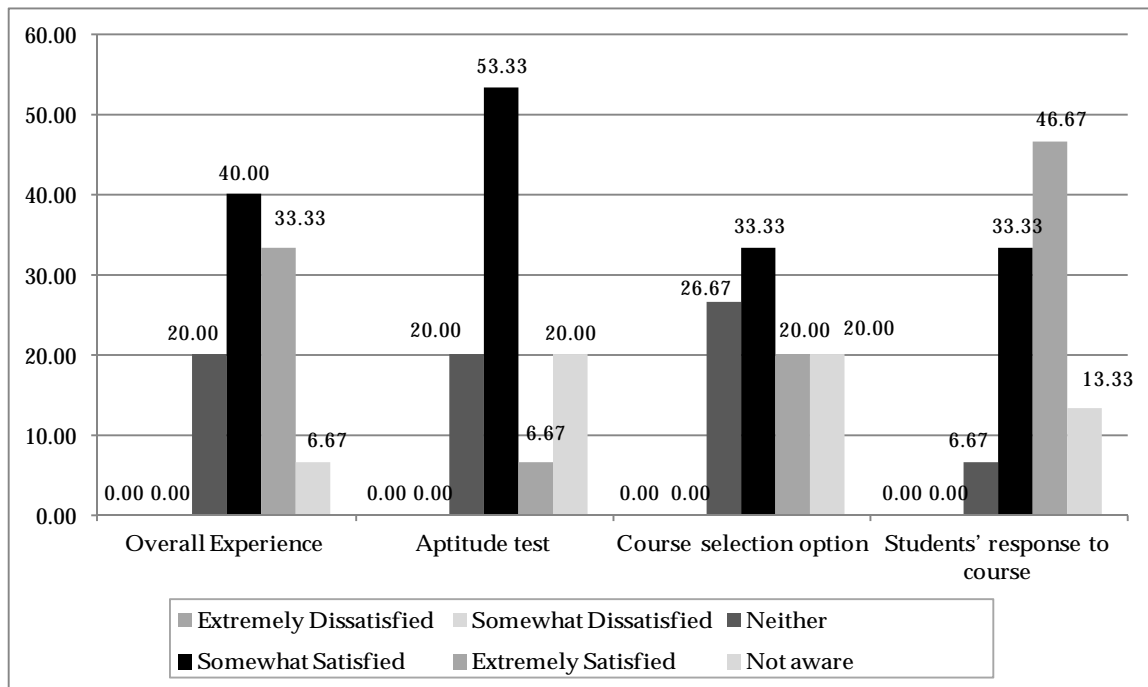
According to feedback data, 73% trainers and 87% of Institutes were satisfied with their experience under Vikalp. Training Institutes were primarily satisfied with the support and cooperation from Centre for Civil Society (CCS). Key aspects of Vikalp such as the monitoring process, payment and management systems also received good ratings. The best rating, however, was given by trainers to the student responses to the course.

The cornerstone of the program, i.e., choice given to students to select their course, did not receive great ratings by either training Institutes or trainers. (Refer Graph 1 & Graph 2(a))

Graph 1: Feedback of Training Institutes on Elements of Vikalp (%)

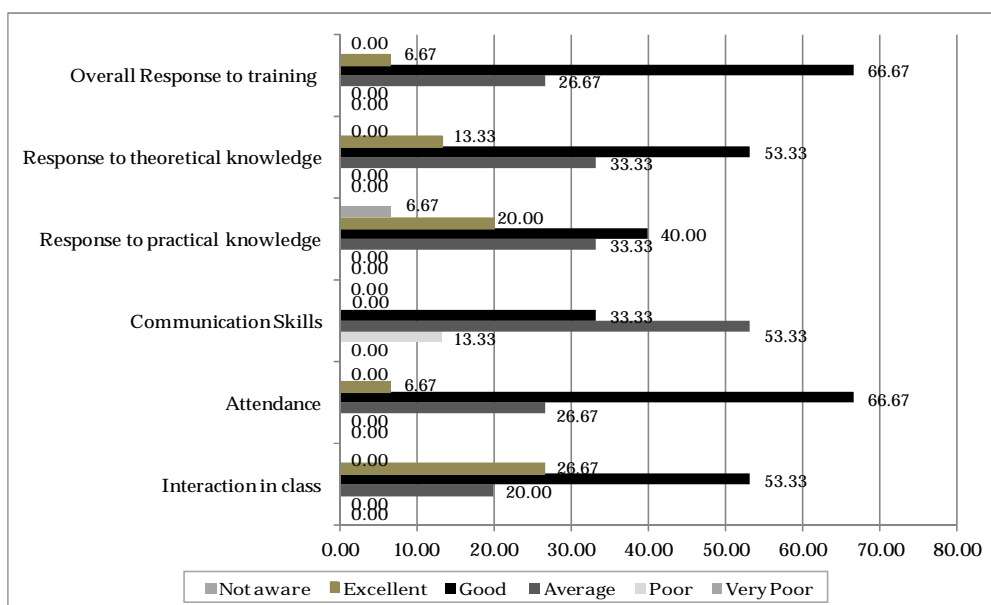


Graph 2 (a): Feedback of Trainers on Elements of Vikalp (%)



The data also indicates that Vikalp students responded marginally better to theoretical rather than practical knowledge. A major concern highlighted by trainers relates to the communication skills of Vikalp students. 53% trainers found the students' communication skills to be average and 13% rated it as poor. This highlights the need to improve soft skills of these students. (Refer Graph 2(b))

Graph 2 (b): Feedback of Trainers on Performance of Students (%)

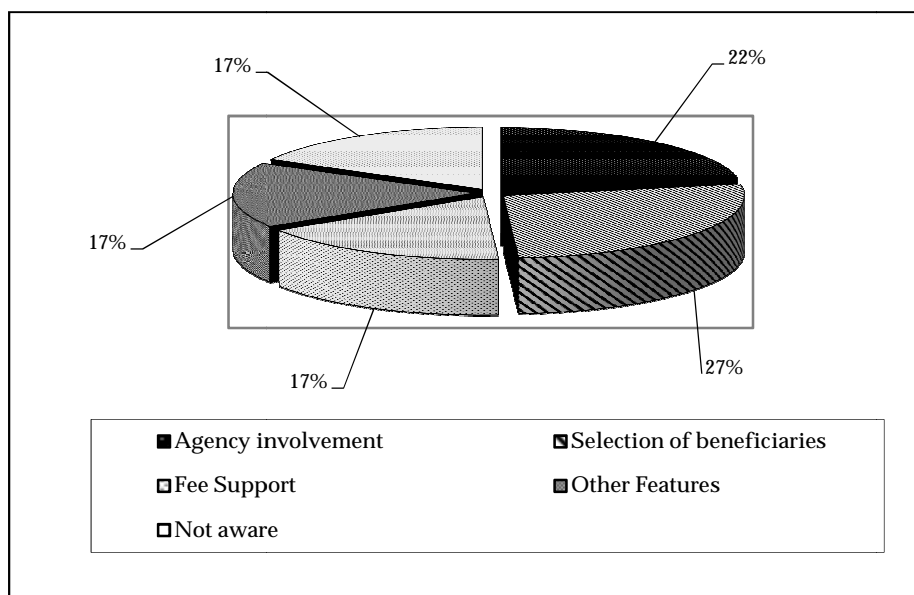


Key Issues: Preferences of Institutes & Trainers

Feedback of 23 respondents' (both trainers and training institutes) revealed that the most favoured element of the Vikalp Program was its choice or selection of target beneficiaries (Refer Graph 3). Around 27% of respondents felt that SC students were ideal beneficiaries for skill development training. Some of the key reasons cited for the same included provision of opportunity for SC students to grow and be able to compete in the job market, lack of good opportunities in the current scenario and the high focus of Vikalp on students' aptitude and interest.

The cooperation and support received from the implementing agency, CCS, was well rated by the Training Institute managers. Agency involvement was cited as the favourite feature by 22% of the respondents.

Graph 3: Most Favoured Aspects of Vikalp (% of Respondents)

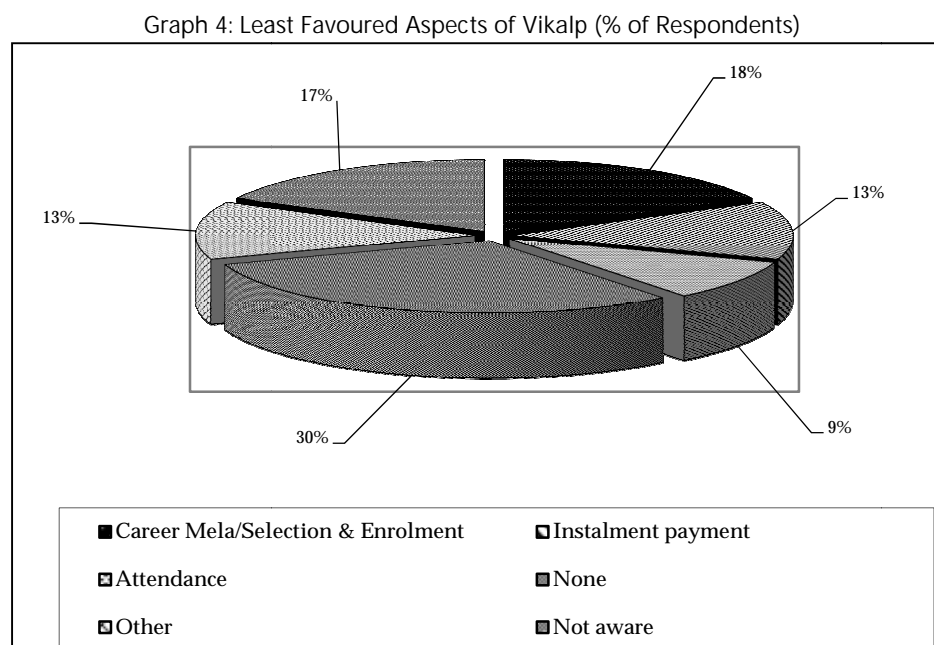


Of the respondents, 17% felt that fee support or sponsorship through the Voucher system was the best feature of Vikalp. They felt that the voucher ensured that expensive, job oriented courses are made affordable. Moreover, the involvement of good training institutes increased access to quality training with low fee requirements on the part of the student.

Other favoured features include the career mela seminar and funding structure. The Career Mela was cited as a good platform through which to build awareness; and the three-tier funding structure was seen as a model for better transparency.

According to the feedback, around 48% of the respondents did not indicate any specific aspects of Vikalp that they disliked. This includes 31% who had no dislikes and 17% who were not aware of the various elements of Vikalp.

A few aspects were cited as concerns for trainers and training institutes. (Refer Graph 4). 17.4% of the respondents reported dislike towards the overall enrolment and selection process, which included the career mela and selection of beneficiaries. Few trainers alleged that the career mela presentations could be misleading. According to them, presentations exhibited few domains such as IT as a more lucrative choice due to a higher salary figures, thereby influencing parents and students. Another concern regarding the enrolment process was related to selection criteria. Institutes and trainers felt that selection of students needs to be stringent. For instance, one institute highlighted the need to review the financial background of students in order to improve the mapping of target group. Even among the SC group, there was a suggestion to focus on deserving candidates, providing sponsorship to students based on their caliber.



13% respondents indicated their dislike towards the installment payment system. Under Vikalp, payments are linked to student placement. Criteria for installment payment system include submission of appointment letters. According to a few institutes, such criteria are problematic, as it results in payment delays. They complained that the caliber of students may prevent them from getting placements. Poor attendance of Vikalp students was also cited as a demerit by few trainers.

Key Concerns: Challenges

The impact assessment survey also identified few aspects that have posed specific challenges for trainers and training institutes. The primary concern for both was the poor communication skills of Vikalp students. They complained that since students came from a Marathi background, they were not comfortable speaking English. Training institutes, therefore, had to conduct the course in multiple languages and focus on spoken English. The main contention here was that poor communication skills had a negative impact on the placement outcomes of students.

Attendance is also an ongoing problem for institutes and trainers. For a few of the institutes, the lackadaisical attitude of students was seen as the reason behind poor student attendance. Another challenge was related to the duration of the course. Trainers complained that the time period was not sufficient to make students aware of the field. A few institutes also complained about the Vikalp processes, in particular about the documentation requirements. For one institute, the need for caste certificates resulted in drop-outs. They reiterated the need to simplify processes.

Institutes also found it difficult to enroll students in their courses. For instance, one institute complained that it was difficult to convince students to even opt for the part-payment option. Such a situation resulted in institutes accepting enrollment numbers much below their expectations. This made the course financially non viable in some cases.

Industry View: Role of Vikalp

From an industry perspective, training institutes acknowledged that Vikalp is a very critical initiative. The low availability of skilled professionals is a challenge and Vikalp was found to be useful since it helped to increase the skilled manpower needed by the industry, providing students with valuable skill-training at a low cost.

One institute stressed on the need to improve employment in the organised sector – which is helped by training of students of lesser privileged backgrounds. Others agreed that the placement was the main focus of the program. However, considering the background of students, they reiterated the need for soft skill training. For instance, Trade Wings, an institute offering courses in travel and tourism, commented that in the services industry, strong communication skills were a prerequisite, irrespective of whether the job was front or back office. According to another institute, Finplan, finance sector employers have high expectations and employ only smart, analytic and well-presented students. Keeping in mind training for jobs, institutes suggested extending the duration of courses for improving the exposure to sector.

For instance, Pratham commented that it was difficult to teach a three-year nursing program in a three-month course.

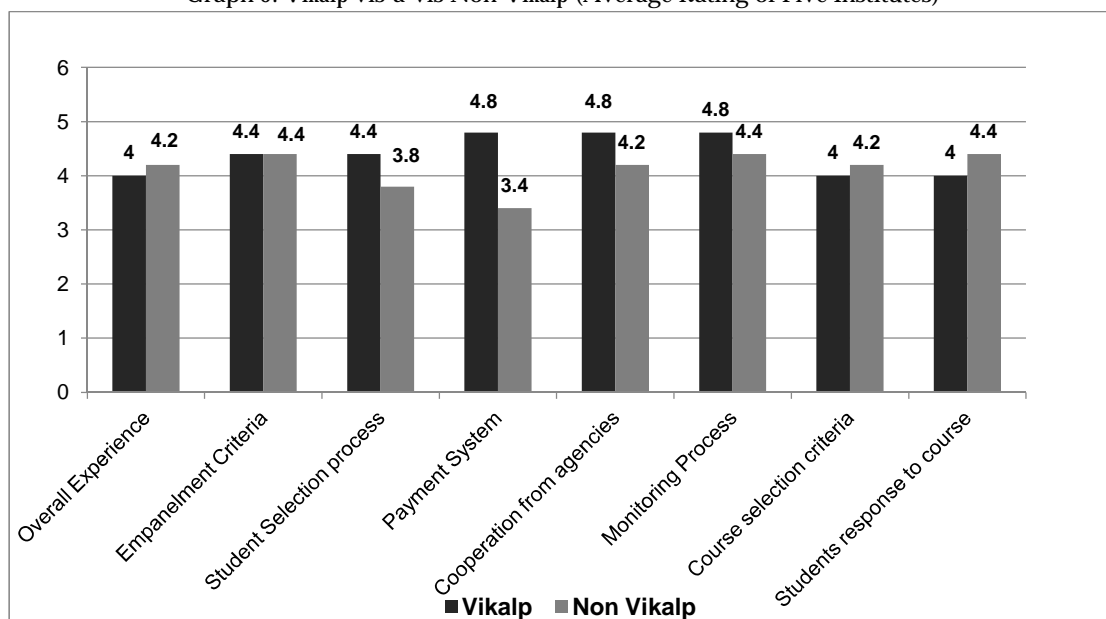
Vikalp Program vis-à-vis Non-Vikalp Programs

According to the feedback, only 35% of respondents were aware of other skill programs whereas a staggering 65% had no knowledge of such programs. The notable areas of differentiation cited included type of courses, target beneficiaries, course duration, funding structure, placement orientation, planning and mobilisation.

Another area of the survey has compared the average ratings of five institutes on their experience with respect to Vikalp and Non-Vikalp programs (Refer to Graph 5). These institutes have offered training under Government initiatives such as STAR Scheme, North East Rural Livelihood Promotion Society, Additional Skill Acquisition Program, Government of Kerala & MP and NCVT.

The Vikalp program has performed better in terms of student selection processes, payment system, co-operation from agencies, and monitoring and evaluation processes. This is a reiteration of the previous sections where selection of SC students through career mela and engagement with CCS were well rated. However, Non-Vikalp programs fared better in terms of overall experience, course selection criteria and student's response to training. This was an expected rating, given the concerns of institutes, and their assertion that courses need to be assigned as per the student's caliber and interest.

Graph 5: Vikalp vis-à-vis Non-Vikalp (Average Rating of Five Institutes)



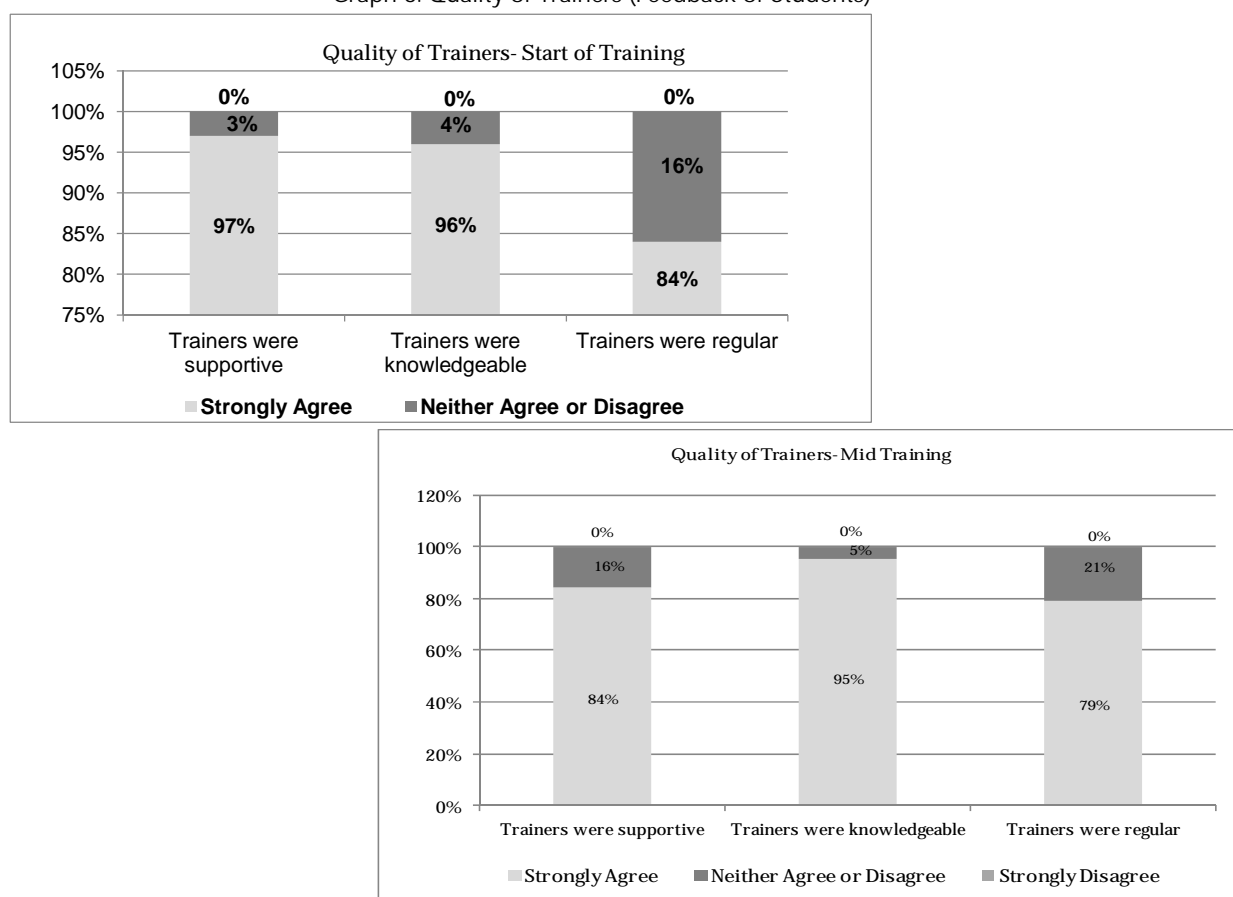
2. Feedback of Students: Key takeaways

Phase 1 & 1.1: Periodic Progression (Start & Mid)

(A) Quality of Trainers

The trainers at institutes such as Edulight, Trade Wings, IIFLY, Financial Planning Academy and Pratham received excellent ratings from their students at the start of training. The MIS data¹ reported that 97% students agreed that their trainers provided them additional support. 96% students agreed that the trainers had the relevant knowledge for the subjects they taught. Regularity and punctuality of trainers received an approval by 84% students. This rating however marginally fell during the mid training period (Refer Graph 6). The positive rating for trainers is not surprising. The qualitative data² reported that most students cited their interaction with trainers as the best element of the program. Students found trainers to be encouraging, supportive, knowledgeable, cooperative and friendly.

Graph 6: Quality of Trainers (Feedback of Students)



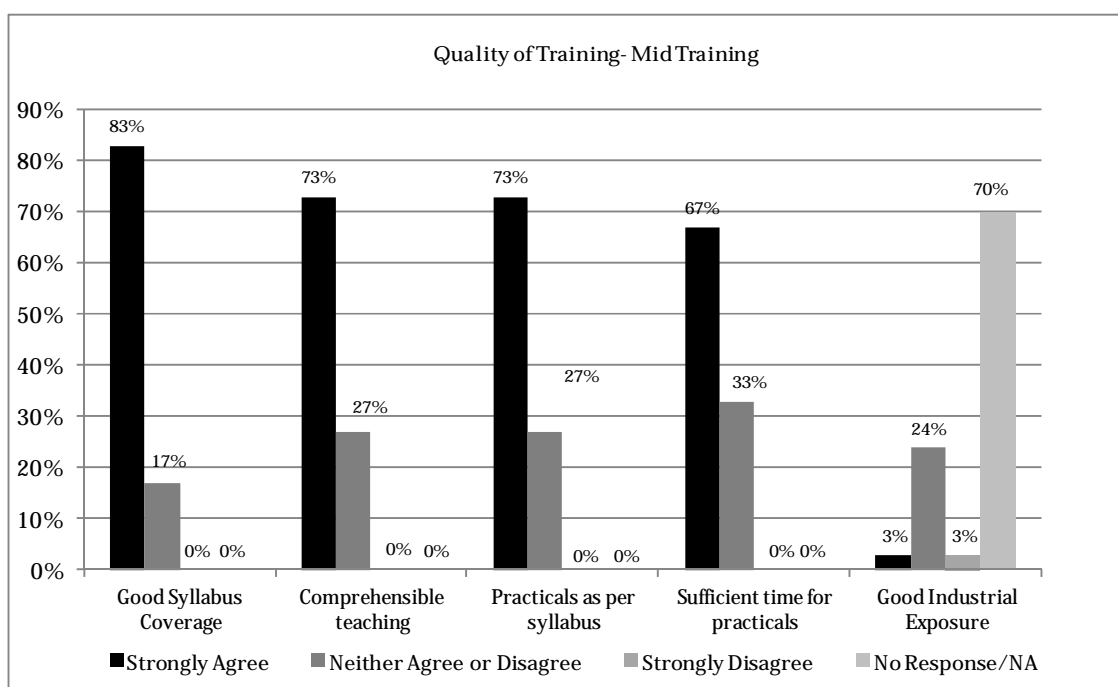
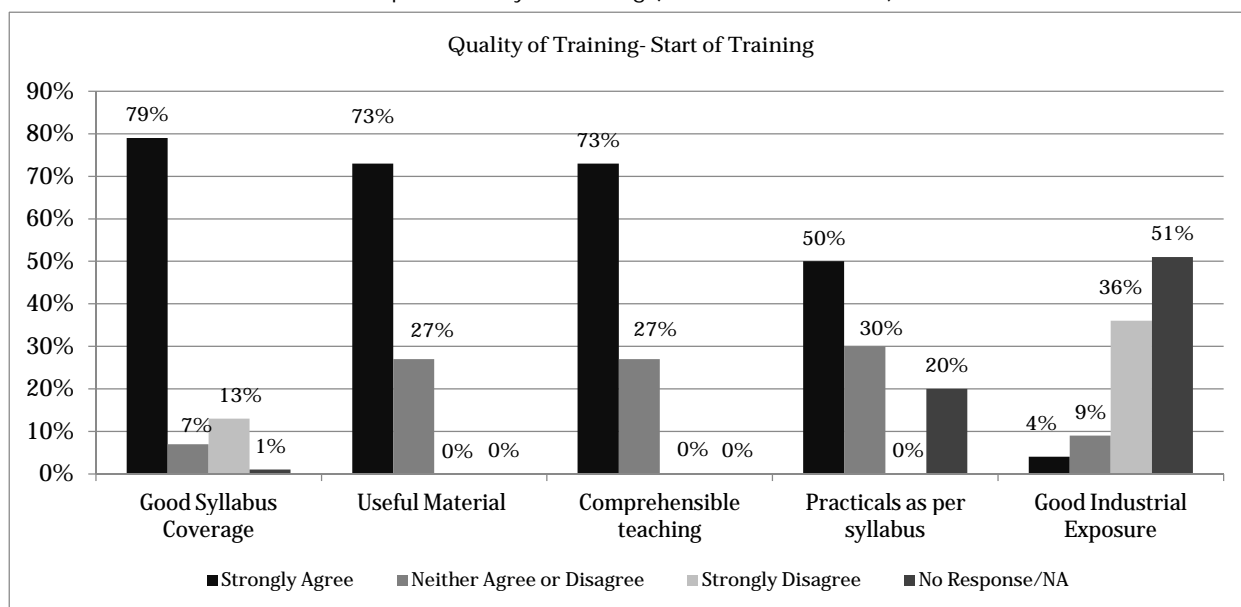
1- Note* MIS start & mid feedback data includes feedback of Phase 1 & 1.1 batches of only 5 institutions. The sample number of students is around 150.

2- Qualitative data of start & mid training forms

(B) Quality of Training

The quality of training is an essential criterion, often linked to the overall experience of students. Most students gave positive ratings to indicators such as syllabus coverage and course material during both periods. Students also expressed that there was proper comprehension of lectures. This was reiterated in the qualitative data where students indicated their preference towards use of video tutorials.

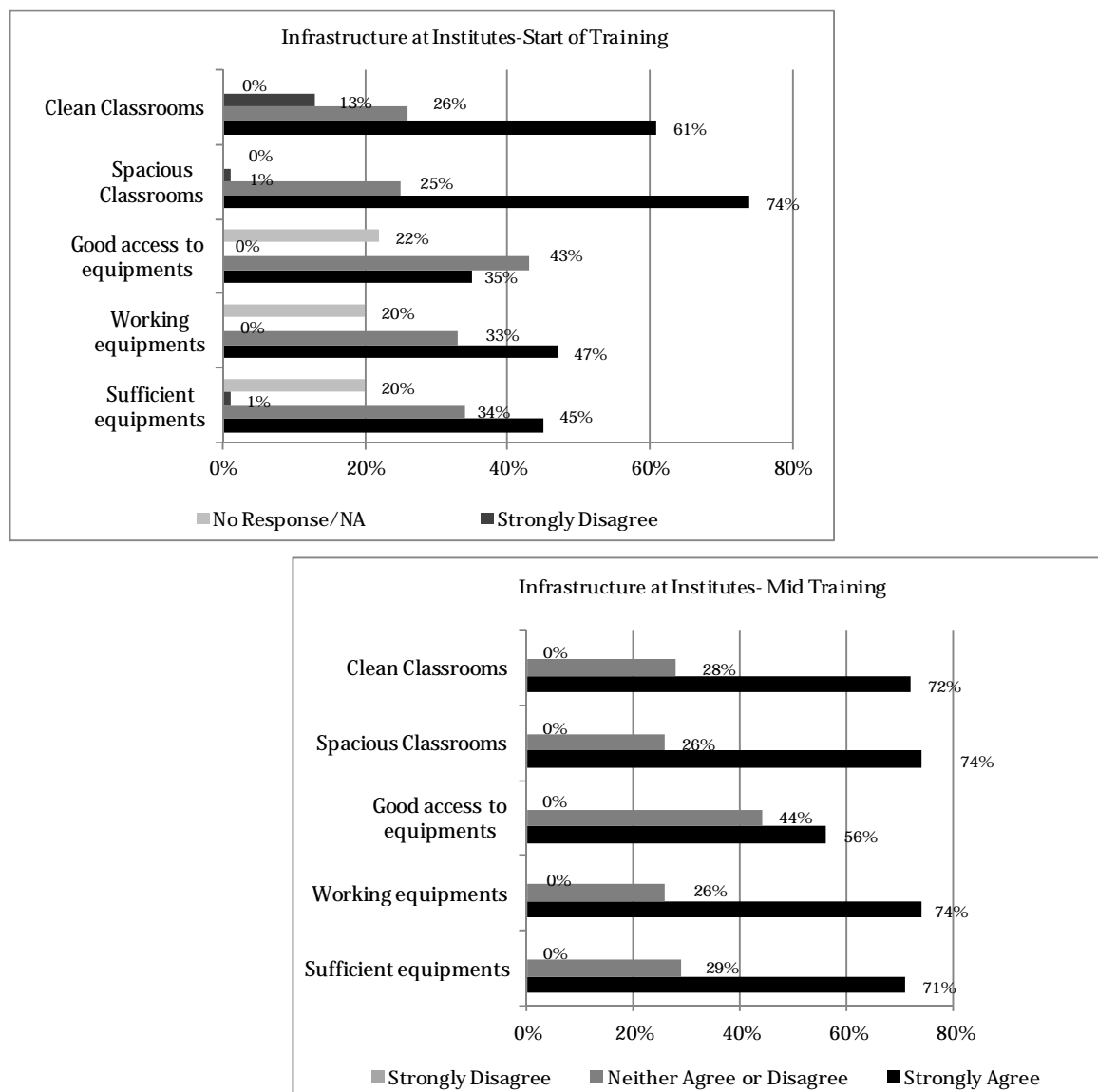
Graph 7: Quality of Training (Feedback of Students)



However, institutes did not fare well on the other two indicators. The MIS data reported that, in spite of availability of good trainers, institutes were not able to match students' expectations on key criterion such as practical knowledge exposure. Only 4% students agreed that industrial exposure visits were conducted regularly at the start of the training. This declined to 3% in the mid-training period (Refer Graph 7). Qualitative data also reiterated the demand for practical and industry exposure. It is important to note that few institutes did not provide any practical training and hence may have fared poorly on this indicator. A high percentage of students in institutes such as Trade Wings, Edulight and IIFLY reported this factor as 'non applicable'.

(C) Infrastructure and facilities at Institutes

Graph 8: Infrastructure at Institutes (Feedback of Students)



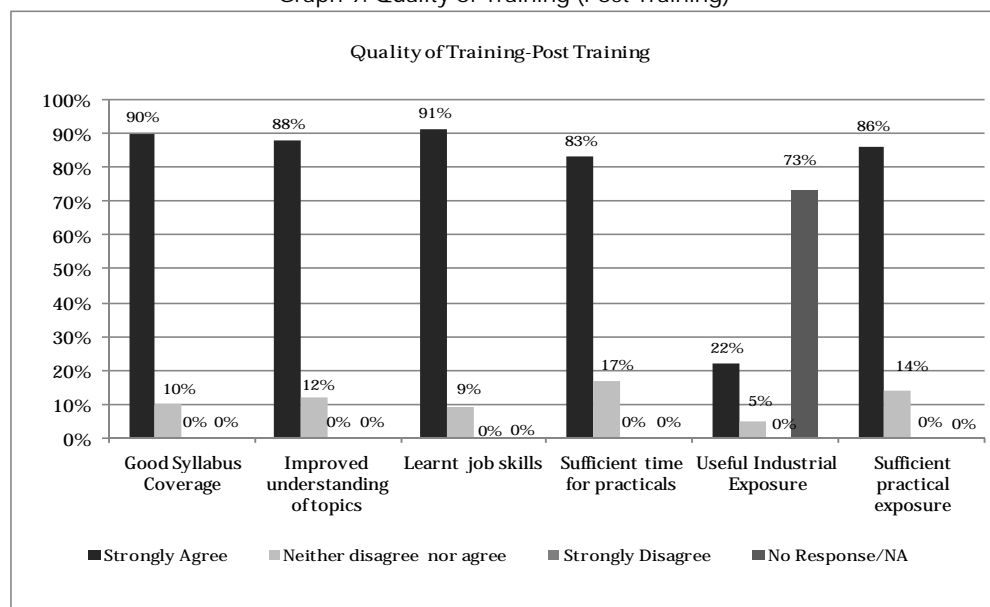
Most students agreed that Institute classrooms were spacious and clean. However they reported the need for better access to equipment at start of training. Only 35% students were very satisfied with their access to equipments and 45% found the equipments to be sufficient. 47% students agreed that the equipments were in working condition. However, a vast improvement on the three indicators was reported during the mid-training period. The other indicators also fared better during this period. (Refer Graph 8)

Apart from concerns identified by the quantitative indicators, qualitative data identified additional issues. At the start of training, students also demanded a change in duration of the course. They felt the duration was insufficient for learning. A change in timings was also proposed, especially by employed students. Mid-training data reported the need for including more advanced courses. Students suggested the need for more industry specific courses.

Phase 1: Post Training Data

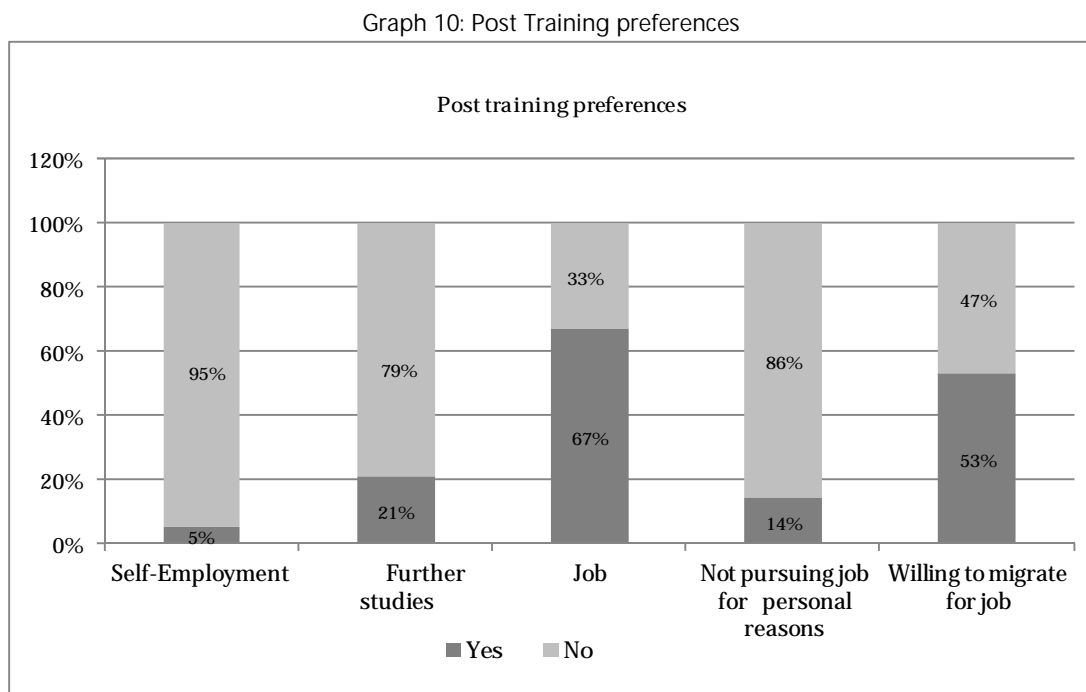
90% students³ reported good coverage of syllabus topics. However, the rate of success of Vikalp was highlighted by another key indicator – provision of skills. 91% students agreed that Vikalp has helped them learn skills that will be required at the work place in the future. 88% students agreed that Vikalp helped them improve understanding about the course topics. 83% students agreed that sufficient time was given for practicals and 86% students agreed that practical exposure on job training was sufficient. However, only 22% students agreed that the industrial exposure visits were useful for getting acquainted with industry environment. There is hence an urgent need for institutes to focus on practical training and industry exposure. (Refer Graph 9)

Graph 9: Quality of Training (Post Training)



3- Post Training data: Includes only feedback of students in 3 Institutes of Phase 1

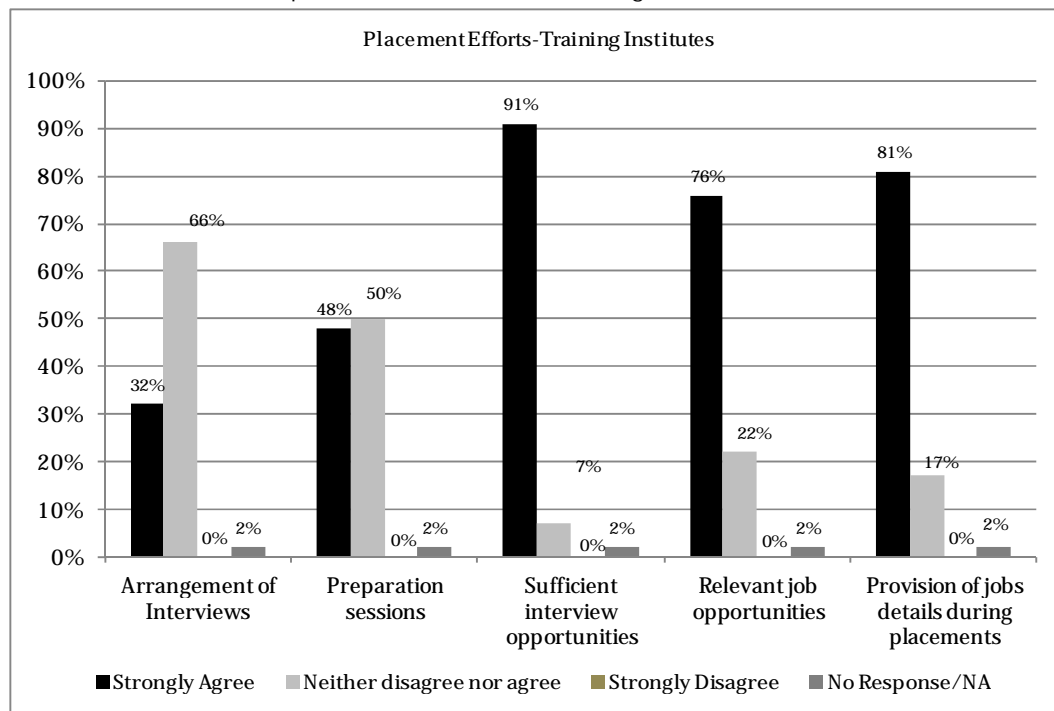
Feedback data also revealed that 67% students would pursue work after their training under Vikalp. However, only 53% of these students indicated their willingness to migrate to other regions for job opportunities. The data also reported that 33% students who did not opt for employment would most likely go for further training. Self-employment was a preference for only 5% of Phase 1 students. (Refer Graph 10). Considering the objective of Vikalp, this data indicates the accurate selection of students for the program.



Considering placements is a criterion for the last installment of payment, institutes efforts towards placements is an important indicator of success of the various elements of Vikalp. According to the feedback, only 32% students strongly agreed that institutes had organised interviews. This is surprising, since a staggering 91% found the interview opportunities to be sufficient. Moreover, 76% students found the opportunities to be relevant to their skills. (Refer Graph 11)

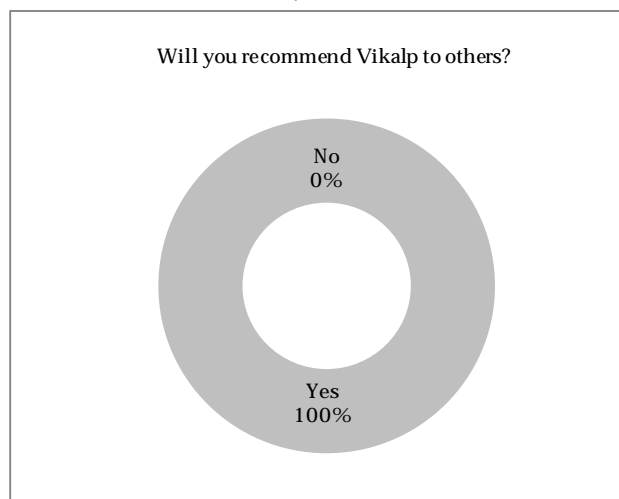
48% students reported their agreement to arrangement of preparatory sessions for interviews and recruitment. This was also reiterated in the post training qualitative data, where few students demanded soft skill lectures.

Graph 11: Placement Efforts: Training Institutes



For most skill development programs, advocacy is a critical factor for success. The data hence answers one critical question i.e. "Will the students recommend Vikalp to others?" The answer to that question is 'Yes'. All students who were part of the sample³ reported that they would recommend the program to their friends, relatives and other acquaintances. (Refer Graph 12)

Graph 12



Similarly, qualitative data indicated that many students did not feel the need for changes or improvements in Vikalp. However, the other students reported the need for including advanced level courses under the program. They also reiterated the need for additional soft skill training. According to the data, students reported the placement assistance, soft skill training, class lectures and trainers as the best elements of Vikalp.

Conclusion

Key elements of Vikalp i.e. increased choice of course and Vikalp financial support did not receive mention in the student feedback data. Students' were primarily concerned with placements and training. An important question this report addressed is: "Does Vikalp provide candidates access to 'Good Quality' courses?" The MIS data revealed that most students were satisfied with the training. However, their industrial and practical exposure remained stagnant. Considering Vikalp is a placement-oriented skill program, this is a critical concern and needs immediate attention.

With respect to institutes, it is important to understand if this program model helps institutes get rewarded for delivering industry-specific courses. The main issue here is greater enrolment of students in respective institutes to make the batches financially viable. Attendance and drop-outs are a key concern. Institutes had expressed the need to improve the student selection process to make Vikalp sustainable.

The communication skills of students were a concern to both trainers and institutes. Students also demanded additional soft skill training. However, all Vikalp courses are of short duration, thereby limiting the learning for students. Hence, the need to improve the duration of course was highlighted by all three stakeholders – trainers, students and institutes. To students, this would improve their exposure. For institutes and trainers, this would mean better feasibility.

Keeping in mind these aspects, it is important to review the broad areas to improve Vikalp. Hence, a stakeholder SWOT table was prepared with the objective to identify how each stakeholder can be leveraged to build Vikalp into a better program. (Refer table below)

Stakeholder	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Training Institutes	Empanelment of institutes providing high quality training at low costs High infrastructure capacities of institutes Provision of placement support Flexible in catering to training requirements of students	Unable to fulfil high monitoring requirements Prefers students with good communication skills Small batches are unviable	Build strategic alliances/ tie-ups for mobilisation & placements Empanelment of institutes providing high demand and skill-oriented training, specific training Increase course fee cap to allow institutes to provide advanced courses	Empanelment of institutes with low placement possibilities Empanelment of institutes providing low industrial exposure
Trainers	Proficiency in multiple languages helped in training SC students from vernacular medium Trainers with good industry knowledge increased quality of training Supportive and cooperative trainers improved experience of students	NA	Help in mapping competencies and weaknesses of students Help in structuring course syllabus as per industry requirements	Involvement of trainers providing low quality training Involvement of irregular and inexperienced trainers
Students	Entry into job market with industry-specific skills Provides agencies feedback to improve implementation	Poor communication skills Lackadaisical attitude indicated through poor attendance, drop-outs Course duration insufficient to provide them sufficient exposure	Application of soft skill training would generate better placement outcomes Include income proof, common entrance test for better selection of students	Selection of students with lackadaisical attitude/low interest towards course Selection of students who can easily pay course fees Negative publicity by students

Disclaimer: This is not a third party report. The evaluation has been conducted internally by Centre for Civil Society to assess the strengths, challenges and threats of the Vikalp Voucher Program.