Vulnerability of unemployed youth highlighted

Israr Khan

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ISLAMABAD: In Pakistan every third youth is illiterate, 9.5 percent are unemployed and only six percent have technical skills. Moreover, the 32 percent of uneducated youth, with no vocational and life skills, make a lot of individuals who are vulnerable to unemployment, with females forming the majority. This was the view of local and foreign experts who gathered here on Wednesday at a two-day roundtable conference on Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) organised by the National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) with the collaboration of UNESCO.

More than 100 million of Pakistan’s youth are under 24 years of age. “Youth is available to us as a window of opportunity; if we want to turn this youth bulge into demographic dividend, they have to be equipped with marketable skills, otherwise soon we will find these young people crowded in streets, desperate and threatening to the peace of the country,” said Chairman NAVTTC Muhammad Mumtaz Akhtar Kahlol

UNESCO Representative in Islamabad Dr. Kozue Kay Nagata said, “I can see the faces of the youth, young women and men, with their potential and energy in this country. This indicates the demographic trend of Pakistan. Pakistan has human resource, which is a prerequisite for a sustainable and competitive nation’s economy. If we can find a way to equip the youth with modern skills and knowledge, at par with industrialised countries, Pakistan’s future is very bright.”

Executive Director NAVTTC Tariq Shafi Chak said, “We need to find solutions which are integrated in existing frameworks, so we can utilise our future generation fruitfully.”

While talking to participants, Education Programme Specialist UNESCO Dr. Roshan Chitrakar emphasised the need to change the image of TVET in Pakistan saying, “We are in a catch-22 situation; technical and vocational training is still considered a second-class education in this country, as compared to formal education. Due to ignorance, young people are not motivated to join TVET. At the same time, it is crucial to establish the linkages of TVET with the current industry.”