

CHAPTER 9

The Role of Technical Education in Enabling the Creation of a Knowledge Economy and Society: The Indian Experience

Ramamurthy Natarajan

Education in general, and professional and technical education in particular, has long been considered an important prerequisite for industrial, economic, and social development. The importance of education has been heightened with the advent of the present information age. In recognition of the importance of education to their national economies, countries around the world have been putting together policies to link education with national economic development.

This chapter describes the relevant features of the Indian experience in regard to developing and harnessing technical education for national economic development. The systems of higher education and technical education in India are among the largest in the world. Moreover, recently there has been a substantial increase in the number of institutions, as well as in the intake capacity in these systems. Especially in the knowledge-based information technology (IT) sector, both enrolments and economic activity have expanded considerably.

The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has statutory authority for promoting and regulating technical education in India. It plays an important role in leading technological and related economic development. Globalization and internationalization policies and initiatives worldwide have an impact on the situation in India, as elsewhere, and efforts are under way to respond to them.

Recently the prime minister of India released a document entitled *A National Vision for a Knowledge Economy and Society*. Its focus is knowledge-related policies and activities, and these have been further elaborated by the planning commission (Government of India 2001). The widening digital divide is a matter of serious concern, and certainly has considerable