

Reimagining Vocational Education and Skill Building

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Introduction

The National Education Policy 2020 proposes the revision and revamping of all aspects of education, including the educational structure, regulations and governance, to create a new system which is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st century students. According to the policy, by 2025, at least 50% of learners through the school and higher education system shall have exposure to vocational education, for which a clear action plan with targets and timelines are to be developed. The policy aims to overcome the social status hierarchy associated with vocational education and integration of vocational education into mainstream education in all educational institutions in a phased manner. Beginning with vocational exposure at early ages in middle and secondary school, quality vocational education will be integrated smoothly into school and higher education. Every child will learn at least one vocation and is exposed to several more. This would lead to emphasizing the dignity of labour and importance of various vocations involving Indian arts and artisanship. By 2025, at least 50% of learners through the school and higher education system shall have exposure to vocational education, for which a clear action plan is required. As part of Shikshak Parv the webinar on “Reimagining Vocational Education and Skill building” was organized on 17 September 2021.

Session Highlights

Dr. Nirmaljeet Singh Kalsi, Chairperson, NCVET welcomed all the panel members and participants of the webinar. He highlighted important dimensions of the vision for vocational education and training (VET) in India. Dr. Kalsi said that the PM’s vision is to make India “the skill capital of the world”. He stated that the mission of VE is to make VET an aspirational, dignified career option, and prepare youth for future skill as per actual needs and demands. He emphasized on qualitative improvement and development of a regulatory framework to re-invent

skilling. He said that the credit framework will ease the transmission between and vocational and general education. Dr. Kalsi advocated for leveraging existing infrastructure of schools, colleges, ITIs, Polytechnics and Training Colleges. He argued for the integration of vocational subject in academic stream. Every district must have ICT integrated training hubs in all schools. He commented that vocational education in schools should be serious training for which we need to develop trainers, labs and industry tie ups. He then invited the co-chair of the webinar Mr. Manish Sabharwal, Chairperson, Team Lease Services Ltd. to give opening remarks.

Mr. Sabharwal stated that the challenges facing VE are vast in the country. Industry is not ready to fund training. He mentioned that greater emphasis should be on soft skill. The focus should be on quality training as per market need and demand. He added that there is a need to promote apprenticeship training and self-healing. Regulations should be avoided and a more liberal approach should be promoted. Students should be given more choices to select the courses.

According to Mr. Sabharwal, there are three long term solutions to the present situation of VE. Firstly, Skill University should focus on research of future skills, try to predict future jobs in the country and more research should be focused on employability skill. Secondly, degree apprenticeship should be given a push. Thirdly, online learning should be promoted as a short-term solution during the Pandemic. He highlighted the important concept of learning principles like learning by doing, learning by learning, learning by mobility, learning with flexibility and learning with signaling values. He called for greater innovation in skill. He added that a tripartite agreement with school, industry and training partners is necessary for quality education. Dr. Kalsi thanked Mr. Sabharwal for his deliberations and invited the presenter of the webinar Dr. Biswajit Saha, Director (Training & Skill Education) to give his presentation.

Dr. Saha shared CBSE initiatives for Skill Education, as an important component of holistic education. Students can choose competency-based skill courses along with academic electives at both, secondary and senior secondary level. Most of the skill courses offered by CBSE are NSQF (National Skill Qualification Framework) compliant and mapped with a job role as per National Qualification Register of National Skill Development Agency. He explained that the vocational

courses offered by CBSE provide wide choices for schools and students to opt for relevant competency-based courses. At present, 5231 classes are offering skills courses at senior secondary level. There are 39 skill courses available at senior secondary level from 16 sectors such as Agriculture, Automotive, Electronics Healthcare, IT/ITES. Similarly, 16842 classes are offering skill courses at the secondary level from the available 19 courses from 13 sectors. He mentioned that along with other sectors, Multi Skill and Sports are available at the secondary level. He drew attention to the fact that more than 8 lakhs students are presently studying skill subjects at secondary and senior secondary level in 8543 CBSE schools.

Dr. Saha highlighted that CBSE has oriented principals, teachers and parents towards the implementation of vocational education. Students are given a choice to select subjects as per their interest. However, he lamented that admission in degree colleges is rigid. Thus, there is need to make teaching interesting. Due to the shortage of infrastructure in schools, there is need to integrate resources with local industries. To this end, he mentioned that CBSE has made an effort with local industries, ITI and Polytechnic as Spoke and Hub model. CBSE has identified a local coordinator to carry out this program. He also shared with the viewers the CBSE model. School students from class 6 to 8 are being offered foundation course of new generation skills in data management. A trial collaboration with AICTE, DGET for using of infrastructure with schools is underway. Lastly, he informed the viewers that CBSE has asked the National Institute of Applied Manpower to undertake search for need and demand of manpower requirement of Industry. CBSE will take necessary action according to the findings of the research study. Dr. Kalsi commended CBSE's efforts to promote vocational education and then invited the speaker, Mr. Raj Gilda, Lend-A-Hand, India, Delhi to share his presentation.

Through his presentation, Mr. Gilda highlighted the work being done by his organization Lend-A-Hand India in Delhi. He explained how students of class 11 and 12 are engaged in internships through his organization. Female students are exposed to various small industries like coffee shops, gardens, hospital etc. for training. He stated that this helps build confidence among students. His organization has innovated concept of 'Skills on Wheels', where a training van fitted with the required tools and machines visit various schools, especially in rural areas, for practical training. He emphasized that vocational education as applied learning has been

promoted among the students for application of various scientific principles in real work situations like drip irrigation, measurement, ram construction, vegetable plucking with machine etc.

During the Pandemic, Mr. Gilda said that the ‘Skills at Home’ concept was carried out by the students through online mode. Important life skills like communication, cooperation, team work, dignity of labour and resilience are inculcated through various activities. He also mentioned that multi-skill foundation courses are being offered to students of class 9 and 10 in various schools, which in turn leads to specialized courses in class 11-12. Dr. Kalsi appreciated the work being done independent organizations like Lend-A-Hand, in collaboration with schools to promote VE. He introduced the next speaker Ms. Sheetal Bapat of Shyamchi Aai Foundation (SAF), Maharashtra.

Ms. Bapat presented the work being done by her organization, SAF in the field of VE in view of NEP 2020. She elaborated that SAF is working on three projects: (i) supporting the Government of Maharashtra to develop a curriculum for the graded subject “Self-Development and Art Appreciation” for class 9 and 10 in eight languages, (ii) a 4-year continuous professional development program for creating teacher-mentors in all Government and Government aided schools in Maharashtra, and (iii) a holistic career guidance programme for all students in class 10 in five states.

Ms. Bapat also discussed *Avirata*, a 21st century in-service online teacher development programme. The programme covers 41607 secondary schools’ teachers and head teachers from 14786 government and private schools of the state of Maharashtra. She proudly remarked that the widespread impact of this programme, led to the SAF receiving the Lexus India 2019 award for Design of Social Impact. This project has high acceptability among the teachers. She also mentioned that SAF has developed Aptitude test (*Kal Chachani*). Interest, Hobby and Opportunity are the key factors of this test. She further stated that curriculum features have also been developed based on international experience covering self-awareness, career guidance, growing up, values, social leadership, conflict management, emotional intelligence and addiction and attraction for class 9 and 10 students. Dr. Kalsi lauded the innovative work being done by

the state government of Maharashtra and SAF to promote VE. He invited the final speaker, Dr. B. Shaji, Vocational Teacher from Kerala to give his presentation.

Dr. Shajishared the innovation being done in schools in the State of Kerala. He highlighted that the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) was introduced in 66 higher secondary schools, with 11 job roles during the academic year 2018-19. It has now been scaled up to 389 schools, having 1100 batches, with 48 job roles from 21 sectors. He also mentioned that Kerala has training partnership with industries. According to him, the success of vocational education depends on the degree of its meticulous interaction with industries. Learning by doing is the hallmark of this system and the success of the same lies in the bonding between industry and academia. Thus, the State has developed industry partnership through Triple Helix model.

He explained that within this partnership, there are many interactive areas such as trainers' training, experts' interactions, field visits, on-the-job training, community linked programmes, entrepreneurship development camps and panel discussion of industrialists. Initially discussions with related industries are conducted and then the financial requirements are finalised, if any. He also said that some of the Industry Training Partners are operating in various areas of partnership, while others operate in one or two areas. Furthermore, State VET officials are always interacting with real work environments, which is very essential in skill training. He emphasized that the learner encounters real problems and challenges and thereby acquires an innate ability to find the solution.

Dr. Shaji informed the viewers that during the Pandemic, Kerala has successfully implemented the programme by adopting innovative strategies like online experts' interactions, virtual field visits, online training to trainers, skilling with online support of industries and online panel discussions. He remarked that a complete surge of re-juvenescence is evident in Kerala NSQF courses with the initiation of this program "Training Partnership with Industries". This is clear from the various responses and confidence of learners, trainers and industry people. He ended his presentation by saying that the quality of vocational education has become the mutual responsibility of industries and the framework; and the students and teachers are quite content with this Kerala model approach. Dr. Kalsi thanked Dr. Shaji for his insightful presentation.

Question and Answer Session

Dr. Kalsi, chairperson of the webinar conducted a short question-answer session. He invited all the speakers to give suggestions for better implementation in skill education in the country. Mr. Raj Guilda stated that we need to customize school education and adopt more training. Greater funding to the government schools and widespread awareness about vocational education programmes should be promoted. He remarked that it is necessary to change the narrative of Vocational Education and more job opportunities should be created. Ms. Sheetal Bapat suggested that foremost, the mindset of the society has to be changed. Favorable environment should be provided for success of Vocational Education as well as teacher training. She added that to cover the large population of the country the VET program must be scaled up. Responding to the question, Dr. Shaji suggested that there should be parity of NSQF pass outs with ITI pass outs for better recognition and employability.

Mr. Sabharwal, co-chair of the session concluded by saying that impetus to skill universities and awareness programmes is required. He suggested that the time-frame of implementation should be reduced to five years from fifteen years. He ended by saying that we have to act with willingness, boldness and speed towards reimagining the vocational education programme.

Concluding Remarks

Dr. Nirmaljeet Singh Kalsi, chairperson concluded the session with the following suggestions:

- Integrate Vocation Education with school education, senior secondary schools, open education, skill centers and college system in rural and urban areas.
- Provision of equivalence of credit for better acceptability among higher education, Accumulation of credit should be done so that all stakeholders get the benefit. Credit bank should be promoted.
- Apprentice training program should be promoted.
- Support from NGOs should be taken for better implementation of Skill training programme in large scale.

Dr. Kalsi thanked all the participants, speakers and viewers for tuning in to the webinar.