

CBSE vocational courses may be a career launchpad

Industry must recognise skill certificates at school level to increase student enrolment as they enter the job market

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With CBSE introducing as many as 42 vocational courses at higher secondary level, and 17 such subjects at secondary levels, students now have greater flexibility to choose skill courses right at school level. "A large number of private schools affiliated to CBSE are evincing interest in including these vocational courses into their curriculum. In 2012, we had started the skill subjects in class IX in 19 schools across India with only four courses including IT, Retail, Automobile and Security. Presently, more than 6,500 CBSE schools (including government schools, private schools, KVs and JNVs) are offering skill-based courses to cater to the changing market dynamics and competencies required by industry, government and society," says director (Training and Skill Education), CBSE.

"In the past, be it the National Policy on Education or Kothari Commission, the need for



school boards to refashion their scheme of education to include skill-based courses even at secondary level was categorically emphasised. But it is only now that this mode of education is finally gaining momentum," the director adds.

Right from IT, hospitality, banking, tourism to agriculture, mass media, AI, marketing and sales, or even subjects like geospatial technology, the choices are aplenty. More recently, yoga and early childhood education were also included among the course offerings. But the eligibility criteria for different streams in higher educational institutions needs to be more flexible, for schools to include these skill-

based courses into their curricula. At the secondary level, the vocational courses have been introduced as additional/optional subjects. By the time students are in class XI, these vocational courses are offered as compulsory elective subjects with a view to raising their awareness and confidence levels towards specific careers.

The guidelines for such courses from the school to the university level have already been laid out by the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF), which ensures both vertical and horizontal student mobility, for skill-centric college education or jobs in the industry, respectively. The director informs that each

of the vocational courses have been designed through independent subject committees comprising academicians, educationists and industry experts, including inputs drawn from various Sector Skill Councils constituted by the National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). Thereafter, the recommendations of the subject committees are placed before CBSE's Skill Committee for the final approval.

Training for these courses is imparted to teachers through CBSE's Centres of Excellence at the state level. "We also invite industry experts so that the skill requirement can be explored and discussed. Such a platform links teachers directly with the industry and in effect also provides industry exposure to students," the director says.

He calls for the need to embed a skill component in the curriculum of college courses, keeping in mind future employability options. "ABA History (Hons) with Hospitality woven into the curriculum would make for a better career than just the course itself," he affirms.

"Students undergoing these skill courses at secondary and senior secondary level are awarded skill certificates to ramp up their portfolio. Industry needs to recognise these certificates to encourage more student enrolment. Only then can we leverage the country's large youth population for global skilling and employability," he adds.