



Inclusion in Vocational Education at Secondary Level: The Foundation-Stone for Building A Creative and Diverse Workforce

Picka Nigam

Assistant Professor

Department of Education, ASE College of Education, Bhopal

Abstract

Inclusive vocational education is an important investment for the future of the learners. It can help to remove barriers between education and employment, prepare students for the demands of the twenty first century and promote social inclusion and equity. Main focus of Inclusion is to ensure that every student get the opportunity to actively engage in meaningful learning experiences, develop vocational skills, and prepare for successful transition into the diverse workforce. This paper talks about the importance of diversity and inclusion in vocational education to create diverse human resources. This paper also focuses on the key measures taken up by the school to promote the inclusion for creating future ready workforce. Secondary stage is the foundational stage to encourage and equip the students with different skills and knowledge necessary for the divergent and contrasting manpower to achieve success in the rapidly changing global economy.

Keywords: Vocational Education, Inclusion, Diversity, Workforce

I. INTRODUCTION

Vocational education is a type of education that prepares students for occupations of their choices. It can be given in a variety of environments, including traditional schools, community colleges, universities and various online programs. Previously it was a valuable option only for the students who want to learn a skill, but do not want to go after a traditional college degree. Generally, students don't know what they want to do or will do in their future after the high school. Vocational education can help students to explore different career options and help them to choose a career that they are passionate about. Inclusion in Vocational education encourages the students to develop the appropriate industry skills, they need to get a job, to find their passion, develop their soft skills, and become entrepreneurs irrespective of their disabilities, caste and background by valuing every kind of work and respecting diversity in the true sense.

II. IMPORTANCE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

Skill development can solve two most important hurdles of countries' development i.e. poverty and unemployment (King and Mcgrath 2002). It is necessary to invest in quality education and in TVET. (Almeida, R., Behrman, J., 2018). Vocational education at the secondary level plays a crucial role in India's education system and has significant importance for several reasons:



- **Development of Skills:** Vocational education focuses on providing practical skills and experiential training in specific professions. It equips students with the necessary technical skills, knowledge, and competencies required for employment in various trades and industries. By offering vocational education at the secondary level, India can reduce skill gaps and ensure a well-trained and futuristic workforce.
- **Increases the rate of Employability:** By giving Vocational education for specific occupations or professions the employability of students enhances. It provides them with the skills appropriate for industries as well as relevant qualifications so as to increase their chances of getting gainful employment. It also provides learners with conditions of work ethics, practical knowledge and skills to solve the problems, to become more competitive and to face different challenges. and relevant qualifications, increasing their chances of getting gainful employment.
- **Provision of Different Career Options:** Vocational education furnishes a wide range of career options to the students as compared to the traditional education by offering specific trainings in various sectors like automobile, engineering, health care, hospitality, information technology and many more. Students can explore carrier aligned with their aptitudes and interests.
- **Self-employment and Entrepreneurship:** it nurtures an entrepreneurial mindset in the students, to start their own start-ups. It encourages self-employment and advocates to become job creator rather than job seekers. Vocational Education promotes financial independency and thus promotes contribution to the economic growth of the country by every citizen.
- **Fulfilling Industry Demands:** Vocational education at secondary level helps to lessen the gap between industry demand and future workers having appropriate skills there is continuous demand for proficient workers because industry requirements are continuously changing with the high-speed advancement in technology. By keeping alignment between vocational education programs with industry needs, students can learn relevant skills and will catch up the evolving demands of the business world
- **Promotes Inclusive Education:** Inclusive education provides opportunities to the students with diverse abilities and interests by recognizing their different learning styles and aptitudes. Blending of inclusion with vocational education offers alternative pathways to success beyond traditional academic routes by valuing and nurturing the unique talents and abilities of all students.
- **Contributes to Economic Growth:** A well-developed inclusive vocational education system contributes to country's economic development. It provides expert workers, enhances innovation, promotes self-employment, and fosters the growth of industries. For a developing nation like India skill development is regarded as a solution for undertaking a continuous and quick development of its human capital. (Cabral, C. &Dhar, L.,2019). We can get full benefit of integrating vocational education at schools especially at secondary level and if it is implemented with full inclusion.

III. INCLUSION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

Inclusion in vocational education at the secondary level refers to the practices of giving equitable access, equal opportunities for participation and success in vocational programs for all students, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or circumstances. It creates a supportive and inclusive learning environment for deprived students and students with disabilities alongside their peers in vocational education programs, which recognizes and accommodates the diverse needs, interests, and learning styles of learners. Inclusion is based on the belief that all students, regardless of their abilities, have the right to get Quality Education that prepares them for their future life. Inclusion can help to reduce the barriers between education and employment, prepare students for future demands and promote social cohesion. Inclusion in vocational education at secondary level act as most fundamental and foundational stone for developing future ready diverse work force.

What is a Diverse Workforce?

Diverse workforce means group of people with similarities and differences in terms of age, culture, background, physical-abilities, race, gender, religion, psychological and social characteristics etc.

Creating manifold work force is an essential part of completing and survival in today's high-speed moving technology world. Diversity provides adaptability as well as strategic and tangible benefits to the employer.

Characteristics of a Diverse Workforce

Diverse workforce must have or should be equipped with the following characteristics

- 1) It is a hybrid workforce constituted by humans (who value diversity and inclusion) and machines.
- 2) This requires diversified skills and capabilities because the work has been changing now from previous times.
- 3) This should be sustainable to meet today's challenges and become ready to adopt for tomorrows.
- 4) It should be flexible, resilient and adaptable.
- 5) This workforce should be ready to learn while working means it should be ready for up-grading skills and knowledge for constant changes.
- 6) It should always focus on building and enduring human capabilities first and secondly on necessary skills.

Why Inclusion and Diversity for Future Workforce?

Creating manifold workforce is an essential part of completing and survival in today's high-speed moving technology world. Diversity provides adaptability as well as strategic and tangible benefits to the employer.

- 1) Diversity helps us to become more accepted instead of expecting always. It helps us to learn from each other with the consideration that everyone is unique and special in their own way.
- 2) Diverse group people have wider range of perspectives, experiences, ideas and approaches which can lead to understanding the problems better.



- 3) They will work together to give more creative and innovative solutions to the problems with better decision making capacities.
- 4) People come from different backgrounds and cultures with different habits, values and experiences. They share their knowledge to widen their perspectives.
- 5) Each member in diverse group has different capabilities and different skills, this promotes social cohesions and sense of belongingness and also prepares them to respond to adverse challenges and new opportunities.
- 6) Inclusive society gives everyone equal opportunities to succeed with their own interests, hobbies and talents without any discrimination or prejudice.
- 7) Inclusion teaches us to treat everyone with kindness and respect irrespective of their background so that the world becomes a better place to live where everyone feels safe, happy and valued.
- 8) Diverse team generate more ideas leads to increase in innovations and assumptions. It is more creative with greater problem-solving abilities. This team is more productive and less likely to quit.
- 9) Inclusion reduces discrimination and racism because everyone is included, no one is excluded deliberately so it will become normal for all to work together.
- 10) Inclusion teaches to keep balance in the group suppose two of group members have extremely different views about something but when they are allowed to keep their point of views in the group then group will try to balance the opinions of both and reduce the fear of rejection.
- 11) Inclusion helps to overcome stereotypes, biases and prejudices that may hinder learning and development.
- 11) Inclusion in vocational education offer flexible, relevant and responsive need base programs for the learners who face challenges an barriers such as low income, Immigrants, refugees indigenious, disabled or gender diverse.
- 12) By fostering diversity and inclusion in vocational education educators can prepare students to work efficiently with diverse team members and to communicate with confidence with the people of different abilities, believes and culture. This increases overall productivity and lead to sustainable growth.
- 13) Inclusion increases collaboration, trust, respect for others to develop better mutual understanding and strong partnerships.
- 14) Inclusion teaches learners to make optimum use of diverse resources and how to avail support from different experts and stakeholders.
- 15) Inclusion helps to pool the skills and talents to empower learners and promotes Social Justice.

From the above discussion it is clear that learning should be embedded with diversity and inclusion at every level of school so that we can prepare an inclusive society.



IV. MEASURES TAKEN BY THE SCHOOLS TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Education produces students who will be the future citizens of the country and who will bear all the social and economic development, changes and face challenges and will convert into manpower of the country so they should learn to respect diversity and inclusion from the school time. They should accept the differences as if they are normal to them. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India recognizes the importance of inclusive vocational education and aims to bridge the gap between education and employability by promoting vocational education as an integral part of secondary education. Indian Government has taken various initiative like Samagra Sikhsha Abhiyan, National Vocational Educational Qualification Framework (NVEQF), National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and many other schemes to encourage inclusive culture in the country but schools must also contribute to build this culture at their level. Some measures are suggested below which must be taken by the schools to implement inclusion in school practices:

- 1) Easy and Equal Access:** Education should be easy to access and no one is denied to enroll in the school. Schools must ensure that vocational education programs are affordable and physically accessible with appropriate infrastructure to accommodate all the learners. By providing scholarships and subsidized vocational education courses, schools can give financial assistance to the learners.
- 1) Personalized Support:** Schools can provide individualized support to learners by making personal learning plans, using various teaching strategies to transact curriculum and innovations in assessment techniques. Supports can be in the form of arranging various services for students such as additional learning resources, assistive technologies and various adaptive equipments to address different needs of students.
- 2) Public Partnerships:** Schools must seek collaboration with community members including various professionals, vocational trainers, parents, and support personnel. Collaboration is necessary to share the expertise, resources and strategies to support the diverse needs of students. Partnerships with community organizations, various employers and industry professionals can also contribute to explore real-world situations and learning experiences.
- 3) Diverse Course Offerings:** Schools must provide wide range of courses with community collaboration to cater diverse interests, abilities and career aspirations of students. It should provide opportunities to explore different vocational pathways aligned with their individual strengths and goals.
- 4) Developing an Inclusive and Positive Environment:** School practices must be such that to create a positive learning environment that respects diversity and values each student as unique and different identity. School should be the place where students feel safe, accepted, and supported without any prejudice or discrimination.
- 5) Providing support for Transition and Career Guidance:** Schools must organize Orientation Programmes which provide the information about various career choices to enhance students' vocational readiness and facilitate a smooth and successful transition.



Career guidance fare can be organized by schools in which experts, employers give suggestions to the students about how to start their career after school, about available resources and preparation techniques for higher education or career building. Communication should be culturally and linguistically responsive so that students and parents can better understand the information regarding carrier and can plan accordingly.

- 6) **Delivering Inclusive Instruction** Teachers must deliver inclusive instruction. They design and implement curriculum by adopting different teaching methods to cater diverse student needs, teachers collaborate with each other to ensure the effective execution of inclusive practices. Special education teachers can contribute their expertise in explaining necessary modifications for CWSN to normal students.
- 7) **Active Participation** Schools must ensure active participation, engagement, and feedback from students so that they feel empowered, valued, and supported in their vocational education journey, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds.
- 8) **Two Way Communication with Parents:** Parents and guardians should be encouraged to participate in school decision making processes and communicate about their child's strengths and needs to support their child's transition from school to work or further education.
- 9) **Partnership with Industries:** In collaboration with industry partners is schools should provide opportunities for work-based learning, internships, apprenticeships, and employment to ensure that their vocational education courses aligns with industry standards and prepare students for future workforce.
- 10) **Community Organizations:** Schools can take support from community organizations, such as local authorities, vocational training centers, advocacy groups, and NGOs to arrange resources, expertise, and other support services in providing inclusive education.
- 11) **Student Friendly Infrastructure:** School must have inclusion friendly infrastructure where children feel safe for example: Wide entrance, no slippery floors, contrast signage ramps, clean washrooms, drinking water availability, well leveled playground, appropriate infrastructure for learning activities.
- 12) **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** School should implement UDL principles to design vocational education programs to cater the various learning needs and choices of all learners. It should provide different means of representation, engagement, multiple instructional materials, various evaluation techniques and arranging activities which are accessible to students with different abilities and learning styles.
- 13) **Continuous Improvement by taking Regular Feedback:** Effectiveness of inclusive practices implementation must be done by taking regular feedbacks from all stakeholders. Identification of areas which need improvement is very important for the implementing school practices with full inclusion.

Although inclusion is multi-causal and conditional process which requires involvement of resources and time in spite of all these, schools must address diverse needs and take initiatives to strengthen inclusive culture and implement more and more inclusive policies and practices effectively in school premises.



V. CONCLUSION

Inclusion in vocational education at the secondary level is essential to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to develop vocational skills, explore career options and successfully transform into the future ready workforce. It emphasizes creating an inclusive and supportive environment that celebrates diversity, fosters individual growth, and prepares students for meaningful employment and lifelong learning. By implementing inclusive practices in vocational education programs, all learners get opportunities to develop vocational skills, gain independence, and contribute to development of society. Diversity can enhance workforce's productivity, improve industry competitiveness, and foster economic progress. Promotion of diversity and inclusion in students as soon as they go for vocational education empowers youth with the required skills and knowledge necessary for success in the fast-moving global economy. In conclusion successful and complete implementation of inclusion in vocational education at the secondary level is the game changing factor which can act as foundation stones for successful, prosperous and self-reliant India.

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