New Delhi: The Vice President of India, Shri M Venkaiah Naidu today called for mandatory inclusion of skill initiatives at school level saying “schoolling and schooling must go together”.

Addressing the gathering after inaugurating Residential Skill Center of Deshpande Foundation in Hubli today, he said that not enough attention was paid in the past to skill in the education system and called for revisiting the education policy to make it compulsory for imparting skills to school students.

There was a need to introduce vocational education in the curriculum to create an ecosystem that produces skilled manpower, he observed.

Shri Naidu said that the New Education Policy must address both skill and schooling and added that it was the duty of the Government of India and all the States to ensure that school children were imparted skills in all spheres.

The Vice President also wanted augmenting the skills relevant to the needs of rural India and agriculture as part of the initiatives to make agriculture viable and profitable. He also stressed the need for promoting rain water harvesting in a big way.

Observing that agriculture needed a multi-pronged approach from providing infrastructure to ensuring access to market for agricultural commodities, the Vice President asserted that freebies and loan waivers were not going solve the problems faced by farmers and permanent solutions were needed.

Expressing his confidence that the Indian economy would bounce back if the reforms were continued with the same pace, Shri Naidu appealed to the industry and the corporate sector to join hands with the universities and academic institutions for strengthening R&D and preparing young graduates to adapt to 21st century requirements.

Calling for creating an ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship to thrive, Shri Naidu also urged the youth to make good use of initiatives like Skilled India and acquire knowledge and skills relating to new technologies, including artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Describing India as a very diverse country in terms of geography, language, religion and income, the Vice President stressed the need for creating a sustainable and equitable growth. “It was imperative that all sections of the society are benefited by the skill development programmes”, he added.

Shri Naidu said that with 65% of our population below 35 years of age, India was a young nation and has the unique opportunity to serve as a global human resource hub. This vast human resource pool would drive the expansion of the knowledge-based economy, he added.

Stressing the need to create pull factors to attract workers for skill training, the Vice President said that presently the employer does not distinguish whether an employee has got skill or he has acquired skill from an external source. He urged the government and industry to change this by giving preference to workers with formal skill certification during the recruitment process.

To further incentivize skill training, Shri Naidu suggested to compulsorily include a minimum percentage of certified skilled workers in every manpower intensive project tendered by the government.

The Vice President also wanted the skill development institutions and their faculty to sensitize students on the importance of protecting environment. “Our path for development should be environmentally sustainable”, he said.

Programmes like Swadhin Bharat, Fit India, Skill India and Digital India should become people’s movements to transform the nation and accelerate the progress. He urged the people to voluntarily participate in such programmes.

The Vice President appreciated institutions such as the Deshpande Foundation for imparting skills for the rural youth and appealed to private sector and philanthropists to accord priority to skill training.

He also advised the youth to play an active and constructive role in nation-building and adopt a positive attitude. Observing that there was no place for violence in a democracy, the Vice President said that the bullet was more powerful than the bullet.