

## **Webinar: “Digital, The Way Forward – The New Normal”**

**Date: Wed. 29th April 2020**

**Panelists: Bimal Singh Bhasin, Kirti Seth and Pramod Pampatwar**

Today’s world, so drastically disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, has never before seen educational institutions closed worldwide. Online education clearly appears to be the way ahead, but, are we ready – the educators, teaching curriculum, examination methodology etc.? Rina Sinha, ex- Vice-President - VED, Chairperson, Education Forum - VED, and moderator, said with schools closing down technology has become the key-enabler and online education clearly appears to be the way ahead, but are we ready for this new normal?

Shivkumar Rao, President, VED, said education is one of VED’s major thrust areas, but every week the scenario today seems to be changing, and this shift from physical to digital, is overwhelming.

What exactly will pan out in education now? Will it be a shift from traditional education to digital? Is the infrastructure in place to go totally digital? What’s in the immediate future? What would be its long-term impact? Some of these crucial questions were answered by the best brains in the industry, comprising Bimal Singh Bhasin, Kirti Seth and Pramod Pampatwar.

Panelist, Bimaljeet Singh Bhasin (Bimal), an expert in the field, President NIIT’s India Skills and Career (SNC) Business, said though COVID will end at some time, the trends that it’ll leave behind won’t go away. Today there are platforms and technologies to make the learning very engaging where there can be serious discussion forums, break-outs, lab works, projects, employees connect, placement services, advanced assessments, and even learners can get analytics. As to future trends to bridge the academia-industry divide, Bhasin felt education needs to prepare people to match the requirements of industry. What may change is the whole validation of additional credentials and how one can exhibit them, as organisations will look for such individuals.

Kirti Seth, a business professional with rich experience in entrepreneurship, management and leadership, currently on a full time assignment with NASSCOM on the Futureskills projects, said, it would be necessary to train educators properly and teachers would have to become technologists, otherwise their effectiveness would not be adequate. Days of large class-rooms would change, but practical demonstration is crucial in education and it won’t go

away. One would need to invest in platforms, laboratories and well-rounded education.

Pramod Pampatwar, Director Technical, JIT (Jhulelal Institute of Technology) & JIA, Chairman, Vidarbha, Maharashtra Association of Engineering Colleges, Executive Member, Maharashtra Association of Management Colleges, Director, VNIT Alumni Association, arranged an online survey with 260 students regarding online education, and found 100% of the students saying that online sessions were very useful; 10% who had greater grey-matter said they were as good as normal classes; 80% said the difficulties were being solved online though it was not one-to-one. While there were problems of connectivity, 85% said they were quite comfortable. Pampatwar informed that on-campus hiring was already being done through digitised online tests etc and hiring could be through video interviews instead of face to face. However, practical skills would need to be tested. Now, technology will require teachers acquiring skills, hence a new set of teachers and skilling of teachers would be difficult.