

Will impart business training to women without a formal education

B-school with a difference

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BUSINESS schools in India have often been the breeding ground for the spirit of entrepreneurship and this one hopes to do the same. However, the students of this management school are not 20-somethings hoping to make a mark in the big world of business.

Set up to impart to its students vocational training besides business skills, the Mann Deshi Micro Business School for Rural Women will empower women to stand on their own feet.

On Saturday, 170 km away from Pune at Vaduj, Satara, the business school was inaugurated by country head and group general manager, Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) Naina Lal Kidwai.

The business school, started by the Mann Deshi Mahila Sahakari Bank, Mann Vikas Samajik Sanstha and HSBC, will teach women with no formal education and those who have dropped out from school the basic principles of becoming successful entrepreneurs.

"The school will provide vocational training depending on the market need. For example, this year we will provide training on tailoring. But next year, we won't, as the local market will be saturated with tailors," said Chetna Sinha, founder



Naina Lal Kidwai, country head and group general manager, HSBC, at the inauguration of the Mann Deshi Micro Business School in Satara

and chairperson of Mann Deshi Mahila Sahakari Bank.

And what sets the school apart from a vocational training centre is that every course will have components like technical skills, financial skills (how to manage finance), marketing skills, communication skills and confidence. "Technical skills alone are inadequate. Financial literacy and confidence is the most important thing to make a successful entrepreneur. Today, they might be small-time local businesswomen but tomorrow, these

women will attain the status of Small-Medium Enterprises and from there, they will take it even further," said Kidwai.

Learning apart, for Unmesh Brahme, Vanita Pise and Nokusa Koprade, getting jobs as trainers in the school is recognition of their hard labour.

Pise had started with a loan of Rs 6,000 to make paper cups. Today, she employs several women and her turnover is considerable. "These women will get what I had missed. I had no idea how to expand my business and reach out for customers when I started. These women will be tutored on the nitty-gritties of starting a successful entrepreneurial venture," she said.

The school will charge a nominal fee for the courses so that the would-be entrepreneurs take it seriously. "Till now, microfinance has been unable to reach the lowest sections of the society, who have no vocational training that they can use to build a business. Proper training, knowledge of tools of businesses and financing through microcredit will fill this gap and bring a revolution in rural India," said Sinha.

Students will be awarded diplomas after completion of the course, which will be recognised by the Government of Maharashtra. For future expansion, the school plans to tie up with education institutions to establish mobile classes to reach out to other areas of the state.