

NEP 2020: A road map to Vocational Development

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Abstract: *The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 announced by the Central government recently brings hope for some positivity in this direction by holding at its core the holistic development of students who will enter the workforce of the future. While The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has proposed significant changes in school and higher education, it has also given seminal importance to life-skills and vocational development.*

Various studies indicate that the vocational development program has not responded very well in the India. This paper makes an attempt to provide a review on challenges, outcomes and present situation in vocational development programs with respect to The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Thus, by taking into account the importance of such educations, this paper is conducted in order to detect the vocational development courses required.

Key Words: education, vocational education, National Education Policy.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Education is not merely provision of information from trainer to learner, but the point is that this person requires practical educations for some of its tasks. By considering this theory The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India has finally seen the light of day, providing India with an education policy after 34 years.

Vocational development program focuses on specific trades and imparts the practical skills which allow individuals to engage in a specific occupational activity. Vocational development is not only important in providing employment opportunities to individuals but also helps in enhancing the productivity of firms. Vocational development program comprises all skill transfers, formal and informal, which are required in the improvement of productive activities of a society.

Vocational education will be integrated into all school and higher education institutions in a phased manner over the next decade. Focus areas for vocational education will be chosen based on skills gap analysis and mapping of local opportunities. MHRD will constitute a National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE), consisting of experts in vocational education and representatives from across Ministries, in collaboration with industry, to oversee this effort.

Individual institutions that are early adopters must innovate to find models and practices that work and then share these with other institutions through mechanisms set up by NCIVE, so as to help extend the reach of vocational education. Different models of vocational education, and apprenticeships, will also be experimented by higher education institutions. Incubation centres will be set up in higher education institutions in partnership with industries.

2. Need for the Study:

In 1976, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) document "Higher Secondary Education and its Vocationalisation" was presented to the country setting out a model conceptual framework for implementation. The programme for vocationalisation of higher secondary education was initiated in 1976. Since then it has been implemented in 10 States and 5 Union Territories. A number of other States are likely to introduce vocationalisation in the academic year 1986-87.2

In spite of all these efforts, the scheme of vocationalisation of education has not yet picked up. There have been many factors responsible for the slow progress, such as, absence of a well coordinated management system, unemployability of vocational pass outs, mismatch between demand and supply, reluctance in accepting the concept by the society, absence of proper provisions for professional growth and career advancement for the vocational pass outs etc. Renewed efforts are being made in many States to accelerate progress. Urgent steps to strengthen the vocational education system are therefore imperative.

This paper discusses the current scenario, challenges, outcomes and policy measures taken in vocational development program in India with respect to NEP 2020. The paper relies on the existing literature and does not attempt to provide comparison among these policies.

3. Objectives:

- To find out the level of vocational development program with respect to NEP 2020.
- To find out whether there is any significant difference between the previous education policy and NEP 2020 with respect to vocational development program.

4. The NEP 2020 and Vocational Development:

Vocational education is perceived to be inferior to mainstream education and meant largely for students who are unable to cope with the latter. This is a perception that affects the choices students make. It is a serious concern that can only be dealt with by a complete re-imagination of how vocational education is offered to students in the future.

The NEP states that “at least 50% of learners” going through the school and higher education system “shall have exposure to vocational education”. At one point it also states that: “Beginning with vocational exposure at early ages in middle and secondary school, quality vocational education will be integrated smoothly into higher education.” NEP states that important vocational crafts, such as carpentry, electric work, metal work, gardening, pottery making, etc., will be “sampled” as decided by States and local communities during Classes 6 to 8.

The policy proposes that every child should learn “at least one vocation” and be “exposed to several more”. The Policy also encourages a 10-day bagless with “local vocational experts” to help the students gain a better understanding of the vocation. NEP also proposes similar internship opportunities to students between Classes 6 to 12.

The policy also talks about introducing vocational courses in secondary schools “in a phased manner over the next decade”. NEP also talks about setting up “skill labs” in collaboration with polytechnics and local industries. There is also a proposal to set up vocational courses through online mode. NEP states: “A concerted national effort will be made to ensure universal access and affordable opportunity to all children of the country to obtain quality holistic education—including vocational education - from preschool to Class 12.” The policy also proposes ‘local teacher education programs’ in which local resource persons can be hired by schools for shorter courses on vocational crafts.

The proposed “National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE)” will have to undertake this exercise of carefully detailing the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) further, as suggested in the NEP 2020. While doing so, it is also necessary for this committee to simultaneously correspond with National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF) for viable horizontal credit transfers and equivalence.

This policy aims to overcome the social status hierarchy associated with vocational education and requires integration of vocational education programmes into mainstream education in all education institutions in a phased manner. Beginning with vocational exposure at early ages in middle and secondary school, quality vocational education will be integrated smoothly into higher education. It will ensure that every child learns at least one vocation and is exposed to several more. This would lead to emphasizing the dignity of labour and importance of various vocations involving /Indian arts and artisanship.

Individual institutions that are early adopters must innovate to find models and practices that work and then share these with other institutions through mechanisms set up by NCIVE, so as to help extend the reach of vocational education. Different models of vocational education, and apprenticeships, will also be experimented by higher education institutions. Incubation centres will be set up in higher education institutions in partnership with industries.

The National Skills Qualifications Framework will be detailed further for each discipline vocation and profession. Further, Indian standards will be aligned with the International Standard Classification of Occupations maintained by the International Labour Organization. This Framework will provide the basis for Recognition of Prior Learning. Through this, dropouts from the formal system will be reintegrated by aligning their practical experience with the relevant level of the Framework. The credit-based Framework will also facilitate mobility across ‘general’ and vocational education.

5. Findings:

The National Education Policy of 2020 has left many wondering about the success of its implementation. Like any other policy, it has categorically reflected on the objectives that our nation seeks to achieve on the basis of the challenges that we have been facing until now. The task hereafter is to identify the pre-requisites and establish the path that would realize what has been drafted in black and white.

The 12th Five-Year Plan (2012–2017) estimated that only a very small percentage of the Indian workforce in the age group of 19–24 (less than 5%) received formal vocational education. These numbers only underline the urgency of the need to hasten the spread of vocational education in India.

One of the primary reasons for the small numbers of students receiving vocational education is the fact that vocational education has in the past focused largely on Grades 11–12 and on dropouts in Grade 8 and upwards. Moreover, students passing out from Grades 11–12 with vocational subjects often did not have well-defined pathways

to continue with their chosen vocations in higher education. The admission criteria for general higher education were also not designed to provide openings to students who had vocational education qualifications, leaving them at a disadvantage relative to their compatriots from 'mainstream' or 'academic' education. This led to a complete lack of vertical mobility for students from the vocational education stream, an issue that has only been addressed recently through the announcement of the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) in 2013.

By 2025, at least 50% of learners through the school and higher education system shall have exposure to vocational education, for which a clear action plan with targets and timelines will be developed. This is in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal and will help to realize the full potential of India's demographic dividend. The number of students in vocational education will be considered while arriving at the GER targets. The development of vocational capacities will go hand-in-hand with the development of 'academic' or other capacities. Vocational education will be integrated in the educational offerings of all secondary schools in a phased manner over the next decade. Towards this, secondary schools will also collaborate with ITIs, polytechnics, local industry, etc. Skill labs will also be set up and created in the schools in a hub and spoke model which will allow other schools to use the facility. Higher education institutions will offer vocational education either on their own or in partnership with industry and NGOs. The B.Voc. degrees introduced in 2013 will continue to exist, but vocational courses will also be available to students enrolled in all other Bachelor's degree programmes, including the 4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's programmes. HEIs will also be allowed to conduct short-term certificate courses in various skills including soft skills. 'Lok Vidya', i.e., important vocational knowledge developed in India, will be made accessible to students through integration into vocational education courses. The possibility of offering vocational courses through ODL mode will also be explored.

India tops the chart of countries with the highest levels of educated unemployment, which is a matter of concern, as it has serious consequences. If we wish to witness a present that ensures empowerment for the masses and a future that promises sustenance for the nation, we are good to go. Among all recommendations suggested in the NEP 2020, Vocational Training seems to be one that has immense potential. I believe we must wholeheartedly welcome the suggestion of including vocational training right at the school level. Integration of vocational training at the school level is certainly a step forward towards plugging a void in the educational landscape of the country. Education, healthcare & skill development are three pillars on which the success of a country greatly depends.

Providing vocational training in schools will not only make a person more employable in the long run but would provide a window for students to identify and pursue their passion. Once a person identifies his/her passion, it becomes simpler and meaningful to engage in economic activity to be able to earn a livelihood and support the family and thereby, the country. Schools must design their activity program keeping this factor in mind. Activities are not and should not be mere pass time. They can be strategically crafted to provide the best of both the worlds to our prodigy i.e. development of vocational skills and purposeful pass time.

6. Recommendations:

The proposed "National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE)" will have to undertake this exercise of carefully detailing the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) further, as suggested in the NEP 2020. While doing so, it is also necessary for this committee to simultaneously correspond with NHEQF for viable horizontal credit transfers and equivalence.

The NEP 2020 has made vocational education problematic by stating that it is "perceived to be inferior to mainstream education." It further states that the policy aims to "overcome the social status hierarchy associated with vocational education" by integrating it with mainstream education in a "phased manner." This has been proposed to be accomplished by the creation of a National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF), which will be coordinated with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) for ease of mobility between streams. This integration has been planned from upper primary segment onwards, by offering short-term internships with indigenous artists, crafts-people and blue-collar professionals. The policy also perceives it as a way of "emphasizing the dignity of labour."

Further, the NEP also talks about incentivizing and creating more apprenticeships and other opportunities for work-integrated training for students. While this is a credible proposal, it is necessary to examine its feasibility in light of the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) which was launched in 2016. Till 2018, the NAP had trained only 2.9 lakh apprentices against a cumulative target of 20 lakh that was set. With just 15% of the target met, the overall target of training 50 lakh apprentices by 2020 seems unlikely. Data analyzed by Salaam Bombay Foundation from the NAPS portal of Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in June 2019 reveals that out of 64,390 establishments registered, only 10,8195 (16.8%) had one or more apprentices undertaking training with them. These figures need thorough review before setting more aggressive pathways for apprenticeships under NEP.

7. CONCLUSION:

The discussion above indicates that vocational development program has played a major role in their economic development, in developing countries like India, the vocational development program has not been very successful. Though governments have paid much more attention to this sector in the past few years, outcomes are still poor. The vocational development program is facing several challenges; quality of institutions and lack of linkages between vocational development providers and industries are two major problems. Vocational development program programs could serve this purpose by providing the marketable skills to individuals.

However, this need not be replicated in India. NSQF and NHEQF should aim at including higher level skills and the government should facilitate the same by introducing ways to acknowledge them. The ongoing pandemic, for instance, has exposed the limited availability of healthcare workers and hence the need to nurture vocations in the healthcare sector by also paying them appropriately in the market.

All in all, while the policy can be lauded on several angles, there is still a need to revisit a few aspects. As operational plans for the next five years are rolled out, it is necessary to take into account the learning's from the achievements and failures of the last ten years of all programmes that have dealt with vocational education and its integration with school education. For now, the policy certainly attempts to address some fundamental issues that have plagued the sector for a very long time and therefore score full marks for it.

The NEP 2020 rightly acknowledges the need to meet the goals of access and lifelong learning. However, it needs to be supported by robust structural changes to ensure holistic development of learners. This will consequently lead to greater possibility of global and domestic mobility of skilled human capital, as aspired by the NSQF initially.

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