



Cover Page



NEP 2020 AND EMPLOYABILITY AND THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS

Mrs. Noni Rajkhowa

Associate Professor, Department of Education, Jhanji Hemnath Sarma College

Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a transformative step in reshaping India's education system to meet the needs of the twenty-first century. Replacing the 1986 policy, it emphasizes holistic, flexible, and multidisciplinary learning aligned with the knowledge-based economy. A significant focus of NEP 2020 is the integration of vocational education and skill development at all stages of learning to enhance employability and workforce readiness. The policy promotes experiential learning, critical thinking, and practical competencies to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and real-world application. This research paper critically examines the initiatives introduced under NEP 2020 to promote vocationalisation of education and evaluates their potential to strengthen India's human resource base. Relying on secondary sources such as policy documents, government reports, and academic studies, the paper highlights how NEP 2020 aims to create a more skill-oriented and employment-ready education system for sustainable national development.

Key words: Vocational education, Employability, Skill enhancement

Introduction

Vocational education refers to organized training programs that provide learners with the knowledge and skills needed for specific jobs, professions, or trades. Unlike traditional academic education, which mainly focuses on theories and concepts, vocational education gives more importance to practical learning and hands-on experience. It helps students develop job-oriented skills that match the needs of the labor market, making them ready for employment. Often known as technical education, career education, or Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), this form of learning plays a key role in preparing individuals for direct entry into the workforce and supporting their professional growth. In India, the introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a major step toward reforming the education system to meet the demands of the 21st-century economy. Replacing the previous 1986 policy, NEP 2020 emphasizes skill development, flexibility, and relevance in education. It aims to make learning more practical, inclusive, and responsive to changing economic and technological conditions. The policy introduces vocational education at all levels—from school to higher education—so that students can develop essential life skills, technical abilities, and an entrepreneurial mindset. NEP 2020 is built on five main pillars: access, equity, quality, affordability, and accountability. Together, these principles aim to create an education system that ensures equal opportunities for all learners, regardless of background, while maintaining high standards of learning outcomes. The policy envisions a holistic and multidisciplinary approach that encourages creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities among students. By connecting education with real-world applications, NEP 2020 seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and employable skills. It aligns its vision with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, promoting lifelong learning and inclusive growth. Through these reforms, India aims to build a future-ready generation equipped with both academic understanding and practical skills. Ultimately, NEP 2020 envisions transforming India into a global knowledge hub and a dynamic, innovation-driven society that values skills, creativity, and continuous learning.

Sharma (2022) stated that, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places strong emphasis on vocational education and teacher capacity development to enhance the employability and skill levels of learners across all stages of education. It aims to improve the quality of vocational education by identifying, designing, and developing courses that align with nationally recognized norms and skill standards, ensuring relevance and consistency in training and learning outcomes.



Cover Page



Saharia & Mazumdar(2024) stated that India, with the world's largest child population, views its children as the true wealth of the nation. Quality education is essential for their holistic development and for the country's progress through enhanced employment and self-reliance. Vocational education plays a vital role in ensuring students' employability and productivity. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a new era by integrating vocational and academic education to empower learners. While the policy introduces several positive and innovative measures, practical challenges in implementation remain. However, with sincere efforts and effective execution, NEP 2020 holds the potential to transform India's entire education system.

Jeena *et al* (2025).stated that The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a transformative step in India's education system by integrating vocational and academic learning to enhance employability, reduce poverty, and promote social mobility. It emphasizes skill-based training, industry collaboration, and inclusivity, though effective implementation remains crucial to achieving its visionary goals.

Objectives of the study

To analyze the key initiatives outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aimed at integrating vocational education into the overall education system.

Methodology

This study employs a descriptive research approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the provisions and influence of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 on vocational education and employability enhancement in India. The research relies entirely on secondary sources of information, as it emphasizes the examination of already available materials instead of generating new primary data. Data and insights have been collected from a wide range of credible sources, including academic journals, scholarly books, government publications, policy papers, and authentic online databases. Each source was thoroughly reviewed and interpreted to understand the policy directions, objectives, and their broader implications for integrating vocational elements into the education system. This descriptive framework facilitates a clear and structured analysis of the educational reforms proposed under NEP 2020 and assesses their effectiveness in promoting skill-based learning and job readiness. The gathered information was critically analyzed to trace emerging patterns, identify existing gaps, and explore future possibilities concerning skill development and vocational training within the policy's framework. By synthesizing insights from multiple perspectives, the study seeks to present a holistic view of how NEP 2020 contributes to shaping an education system aligned with employability and national development goals.

Vocational education in NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was formulated to minimize the persistent skill gap within India's education framework by placing vocational learning at the core of educational transformation. Serving as a detailed roadmap for reform, the policy outlines strategic measures to modernize and strengthen vocational training so that it becomes more inclusive, practical, and closely connected to the evolving needs of the workforce. One of its major goals is to integrate skill-based education into the mainstream curriculum beginning from the school stage—a concept previously highlighted by several national education committees and experts (Sharma et al.). The policy underscores the value of experiential and application-oriented learning, emphasizing the development of uniform and recognized vocational programs to maintain consistent standards across institutions and industries. In addition, NEP 2020 calls for the creation of national and regional frameworks for various professions to improve the reliability and acceptance of vocational credentials. It encourages strong partnerships between academic institutions and industries, facilitating apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training to provide learners with direct exposure to workplace environments. By promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment, the policy envisions vocational education as a pathway to innovation, economic empowerment, and social mobility. Ultimately, NEP 2020 aims to nurture a generation of learners who possess both academic understanding and market-ready skills. Early introduction to vocational exposure helps students recognize their strengths, explore diverse career options, and make informed occupational choices. This approach not only enhances personal employability but also plays a vital role in



Cover Page



addressing unemployment and building a skilled workforce for national progress. In summary, NEP 2020 represents a significant shift toward a more skill-integrated education system, where intellectual knowledge and practical expertise coexist to prepare learners for success in a dynamic and competitive global economy.

The NEP (2020) plan for enhancing vocational education

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 outlines a comprehensive action plan to integrate vocational education within mainstream learning. By 2025, at least half of all students are expected to gain vocational exposure through schools and higher education institutions. The policy aims to include vocational learners in Gross Enrolment Ratio calculations and introduce skill-based programs in all secondary schools within a decade. It emphasizes collaboration with polytechnics and industries, establishment of skill labs, and promotion of vocational courses in distance learning mode. Additionally, Higher Education Institutions will host incubation centers and experiment with apprenticeship models under the supervision of a National Committee.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes vocational education as an essential pillar of the education system, aimed at equipping students with the skills necessary for both direct employment and higher learning opportunities. By embedding vocational training within school and college curricula, the policy seeks to close the gap between academic knowledge and practical ability, ensuring that learners are prepared for the real-world workforce.

One of the key initiatives of NEP 2020 is the integration of vocational education from the school level, beginning with Class 6, and extending through higher education. This inclusion provides students with flexibility to choose vocational courses alongside academic subjects, encouraging career-oriented and skill-focused learning. To achieve this, NEP 2020 emphasizes curriculum reform, promoting the fusion of vocational components with general education. The policy encourages the design of competency-based programs aligned with industry standards that prioritize technical knowledge, hands-on skills, and employability. Collaboration among educational institutions, industry experts, and vocational training providers is promoted to ensure that course content remains relevant and updated with technological and industrial advancements. Modules related to entrepreneurship, innovation, and business management are also introduced to nurture an entrepreneurial mindset among learners.

Furthermore, NEP 2020 highlights the need for skill enhancement programs that focus on experiential learning and industry-linked training rather than rote memorization. It supports Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET), which evaluates learners through performance tasks, projects, and real-world assessments, helping them master measurable, job-specific skills.

Another significant initiative is the promotion of awareness about the value of vocational education among students, parents, and educators. The policy recommends career counseling, orientation programs, and awareness campaigns to remove social stigma associated with skill-based learning. By doing so, NEP 2020 aims to position vocational education as an equally respected and integral part of India's education system, fostering a generation of skilled, confident, and employable youth.

Conclusion

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a transformative milestone in India's journey toward creating an education system that is both inclusive and employment-oriented. By placing vocational education at the heart of its reform agenda, the policy seeks to bridge the long-standing divide between theoretical learning and practical skills. It envisions an education structure that not only imparts academic knowledge but also equips students with technical expertise, creativity, and problem-solving abilities essential for the 21st-century workforce. Through its emphasis on experiential learning, skill development, and entrepreneurship, NEP 2020 aims to make education more relevant to real-world needs and ensure that learners are better prepared for evolving job markets. The policy's strategic initiatives—such as integrating vocational



Cover Page



courses from Class 6 onwards, establishing skill labs, promoting industry-academia partnerships, and encouraging Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET)—reflect a strong commitment to developing a skilled, confident, and adaptable workforce. Moreover, NEP 2020's focus on creating incubation centers, supporting apprenticeships, and encouraging innovation-driven learning highlights its vision of linking education with economic growth and self-reliance. By aligning its objectives with the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the policy underscores the importance of lifelong learning, equality, and inclusive access to quality education. Raising awareness among students, parents, and educators about the value of vocational learning is another vital step toward eliminating social bias and recognizing the dignity of skilled work. In conclusion, NEP 2020 represents a forward-looking approach to education reform, one that combines knowledge with practical application. If effectively implemented, it has the potential to transform India's educational landscape, enhance employability, and build a globally competitive, innovation-oriented workforce that contributes to sustainable national development and prosperity.

References

- Jena, S., Raj, B., Giri, S., Pradhan, S. (2025). Vocational education under NEP-2020: A tool for socio-economic empowerment, *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 12, 7, , 68-71
- Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf
- Namita, N. (2022). Vocational Education And Nep 2020, *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, 10(5), 110-113
- Saharia, G. & Mazumdar, S. (2024). Vocational Education in the Light of NEP 2020. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(4), 1030-1036. DOI:10.25215/1204.095