



# Vocational Education and NEP 2020

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## ABSTRACT

The Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Government of India has developed & organized a comprehensive National Education Policy for year 2020 (NEP 2020). Prior to the independence, “The British Empire” had total authority over the then Indian education. As one might expect, education programs such as Macaulay’s were designed to produce “*Babus*”, clerks and bureaucrats who would serve the masters, plain and simple. Following independence, the society underwent a series of transformations, policies were established, and all the reforms were implemented, but the desired impact was not achieved. The Government of India adopted the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SD)” in year 2015, and the momentum has been building & rising since then. NEP 2020 is the conclusion of a lengthy and all-inclusive efforts. NEP 2020 is the blueprint of comprehensive planning. This article has covered the issues, essential characteristics, difficulties, solutions, aims, visions and some of its most important components. The essential element of policy and problems in regard with implementation has received the most attention. Other concerns have also been given due consideration. Overall, the government has taken a respectable and extremely welcomed step forward. It’s only with time will we come to know that how much net effective output has been achieved.

**Keywords:** Human Resource Development, National Education Policy, NEP 2020, *Babus*

Due to the Covid-19 epidemic, humanity has experienced a near-total metamorphosis over the last 8 to 9 months. Life as we knew it has largely become obsolete, and we have already evolved into a new world order/system, one that is regulated by Covid-19 with all of its concerns. The mere act of leaving one’s home has become a huge source of concern. “Shall I really go out?” “Do I really need the things

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I want to go out and buy?” “Is it really safe to visit, that public space?” “Have I done thorough enough preparation before embarking on such a ‘perilous journey’?” and, most importantly, “have I put on my mask or not?” are some of the questions that come to mind.

But, alas, life must carry on. After experiencing all of the “lockdowns/ curfews” and other isolating occurrences, one realises that, despite all of the restrictions/limitations and taboos, life is a dynamic and continuously changing process in which only the fittest survive. The famous expression “survival of the fittest” was adopted by Charles Darwin from Herbert Spencer’s original text in his 1864 book “Principles of Biology”.<sup>1</sup> The emphasis here is on the word “fittest”, which is certainly accurate, whether emphasised by Darwin or not: “It is not the strongest of the species that lives, not the most clever that survives.”<sup>2</sup>

“We cannot solve our problems with the same mentality we used to create them,” Albert Einstein famously said.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the current problems, particularly those related to education and the implementation of policies related to it, cannot be solved using older/erroneous policies, as a corollary and by the same reasoning. With the changing India, or the emerging “new” India, education policy has to be redesigned and reimagined.

As a result,

“National Education Policy 2020, (NEP 2020)!”

## **Key Aspects of the Policy**

### *‘Flexible’ Curriculum*

The policy emphasises the need of providing all children with universal access to high-quality, holistic education. Because the goal is to promote holistic development, students will be given the chance to be flexible in their subject choices. There will be no clear distinction between ‘arts’, ‘academic’, ‘curricular’, ‘extra-curricular’, or ‘vocational’ streams. In order to boost creativity, adaptability, and production, the Policy also strives to introduce vocational skills into the school curriculum.

Students will have the opportunity to sample several occupational crafts (as selected by the states and local community and mapped by the needs of local skills) - a crucial step toward ensuring vocational exposure. Students in grades 6 through 8 will be encouraged to engage in a ‘10-days bagless period,’ during which they will be able to intern with local vocational specialists. Students in grades 6 through 12 will have access to similar internship opportunities to learn about vocational subjects (including during holiday periods). The policy also aims to encourage the delivery of online vocational training.

Similarly, quality higher education with a concentration on vocational courses has been recognised in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) as important to develop capable and competent persons for the twenty-first century. The goal of the policy is to raise the gross enrolment ratio in higher education, including VE, from 26.3 percent in 2018 to 50% by 2035. The National Testing Agency must also offer

a high-quality common aptitude test and specialised common subject exams in the sciences, humanities, languages, arts, and vocational courses at least twice a year, according to the Policy.

### *Teaching*

States and union territories have been advised to create innovative procedures to ensure: (a) enough resources, counsellors/teachers teaching all topics (including vocational subjects); and (b) community building, cooperation, and enhanced governance.

The Policy recognises the importance of recruiting an adequate number of teachers across disciplines and suggests that teachers be shared between schools in accordance with state/union territory school grouping rules. Schools/school complexes have also been motivated to hire local renowned persons as ‘master instructors’ in different topics, such as in traditional local arts, vocational crafts or entrepreneurship to support students and help protect and promote local knowledge and experts.

In cooperation with several agencies/authorities, including expert bodies on VE, the Policy also contemplates the development of National Professional Standards for Teachers by 2022. By 2021, it is also envisaged to build a new and comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE), which would take into account the requirements of VE teacher education curriculum. The NCFTE will be updated every 5-10 years to reflect changing teacher education needs.

The National Council of Vocational Education and Training will function as a standard for professionalism & setting body for VE.

### *Deeper future Impact of VE*

By 2025, the policy intends to ensure that at least half of all students in schools and higher education systems have had exposure to VE. In this regard, the Policy emphasises the importance of integrating VE into mainstream education in a phased manner across all educational institutions, using a variety of strategies such as facilitating collaboration with local industries, establishing incubation centres or skill labs, and offering shorter-term certificate courses.

The Policy also calls for the formation of a National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE), which will be made up of VE specialists and members from ministries, as well as representatives from business.

To further increase the reach of VE, information sharing among institutions (via procedures established up by the NCIVE) has also been promoted. To facilitate the integration of vocational education into higher education, a National Higher Education Qualification Framework will be developed, which will be in sync with the National Skills Qualifications Framework.

### **Organization and Implementation**

The NEP 2020 underlines the problem of teachers who are not completely qualified to teach vocational

courses, particularly at the secondary level. In India, vocational education is delivered on two levels: theoretical and practical (practical). Students are taught the theoretical element of vocational training alongside conventional secondary education through topics like SUPW, which has proven to be unsuccessful and an added strain<sup>4</sup>. The reason for this is because the curriculum for these courses is fragmented and disorganised at the school level. These courses are not well-defined or appropriately segmented; rather, they are taught in the same way as any other subject. SUPW, for example, was taught in government schools and included a wide range of practical courses, ranging from studying electricity in one class to going into textiles in another.

There was no proper detailed curriculum, simply a general introduction to all of the vocational courses, which failed to pique the interest of school children in vocational education. As a result, the current system fails to entice pupils to pursue vocational courses in the future. Even if students choose to continue vocational courses at a higher education level, there are no suitable admission criteria for vocational education qualifications (particularly in the general higher education system), which limits vertical mobility in this educational system.

## **Social Stigma**

Aside from the poorly managed framework, vocational schooling fosters a sense of social “second-class citizenship”<sup>5</sup>. A student studying a vocational course is regarded as inferior to students pursuing traditional higher education options. According to data from the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO 75<sup>th</sup>)’s round (2017-18), 24 percent of students from rural areas are enrolled in Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) or other vocational training institutes, while only 8.3 percent of urban students are enrolled in any vocational training institutes<sup>6</sup>.

In official vocational training institutes, just 15.3 percent of the population is enrolled. Despite the increased number of vocational training institutes, data show that vocational education is still not a popular choice among students and parents. The fact that the general and vocational education systems operate as different verticals with little mobility between them could be one of the causes for this. This causes adolescents, regardless of their socioeconomic situations, to be hesitant to pursue vocational education. In comparison to the vocational system, it is often believed that employment through mainstream education provides greater labour dignity<sup>7</sup>.

## **THE VOCATIONAL SCHOOL FALLACY**

The reasons cited above demonstrate that vocationalization has problems and obstacles on both the demand and supply sides. On the demand side, a fundamental challenge is that social mindsets do not attach status and value to vocational education. When compared to other forms of education, it receives minimal attention and is accorded a low priority. At the same time, the key challenges on the supply side are insufficient logistics and equipment, a shortage of competent vocational teachers, and a lack of weighting given to students from this stream in higher education admissions.

These issues combine to form a complex situation known as the Vocational School Fallacy<sup>8</sup> by researcher Philip Foster. The Vocational School Fallacy occurs when students with vocational training refuse to work in blue-collar positions, preferring instead to pursue higher education in order to gain access to white-collar jobs. As Foster correctly observes, there is a “mismatch between demand and availability of skilled workers.” It is commonly stated that academicians are far more aware of the vocational school fallacy than policymakers in ministries of education<sup>9</sup>. Policymakers continue to believe that vocational education is one of the most successful strategies to generate and manage skilled workforces in labor-intensive countries like India, and the NEP 2020 supports this notion.

## PROVISIONS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE NEP 2020

The framework will aid in the assessment of enrolled students’ past learning, which will aid in the re-integration of dropouts (from mainstream education) by aligning their practical experiences with the appropriate level of the framework<sup>10</sup>.

The National Education Policy also aims to match vocational jobs with the International Labour Organization’s international standards. Industry, NGOs, and civil society organisations should all be involved in implementing the NSQF, according to the report.

The NEP proposes the following measures to address the social stigma associated with vocational training:

1. The gradual integration of vocational education programmes into mainstream education in all educational institutions, with the goal of “emphasising the dignity of labour and the significance of numerous vocations incorporating Indian arts and artisanship”<sup>11</sup>.
2. Beginning in sixth grade, the teaching of vocational courses, primarily through internships and practical activities, to ensure that every student takes at least one vocational course.

## IMPLEMENTATIONAL CHALLENGES

Vocational education has long been a topic of discussion in India’s educational policy debates in order to generate a trained workforce. The NEP reassesses it by examining two major issues it faces, as well as methods to address them. The policy still fails to address the above-mentioned Vocational School Fallacy problem. On paper, it appears to be complete.

However, the biggest obstacles to adopting these proposals are budgetary constraints and the capability of vocational institutes and administrators. In the Union Budget for 2020-21, around 3000 crores have been allocated for skill development, a major increase over the previous five years from 1007 crore in 2015-16<sup>12</sup>. However, considering India’s demographic dividend, the allocation could be considered to be insufficient.

The key agencies responsible for the implementation of vocational education and training in the country are the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Skill Development

and Entrepreneurship, and National Skill Development Council. The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) and the Skill India Mission have not had the anticipated impact in the past.

The Skill India Mission sought to reach 300 million young people by 2022, but only 25 million had been reached and taught as of the end of 2018. Ineffective capacity building and low enrollment are the causes of this inefficiency in meeting the target<sup>13</sup>. In fact, only 15% of registered students were able to find work even under PMKVY<sup>14</sup>.

Implementing systemic change as advocated by NEP 2020 will necessitate capacity growth in these ministries, which will necessitate more effective budgeting. It is past time for the government to begin mapping out the connections between industry demands and the supply of vocational courses, so that skills can be aligned with available positions. Along with these difficulties, there is also the issue of digital literacy to consider. With the globe heading toward a digital order with NEP 2020 advocating for it, technology-based skills, particularly among the youth, have never been more important. The government must learn from existing inefficiencies in its skilling programmes in order to effectively execute the suggestions in the NEP 2020.

## CONCLUSION

Every country's economy, social standing, technology adoption, and healthy human behavior are all influenced by higher education. The education department of the country government is responsible for improving GER so that every citizen of the country has access to higher education opportunities. The National Education Policy of India 2020 is working towards achieving these goals by enacting innovative policies to improve the quality, attractiveness, affordability, and supply of higher education by opening it up to the private sector while maintaining strict quality controls in every higher education institution. NEP-2020 is expected to achieve its goals by 2030 by encouraging merit-based admissions with free scholarships, merit & research-based continuous performers as faculty members, merit-based proven leaders in regulating bodies, and strict quality monitoring through biennial accreditation based on self-declaration of progress through technology-based monitoring. All higher education institutions currently known as associated colleges will either expand as multidisciplinary independent colleges with degrees conferring power in their names or become constituent colleges of their affiliated universities.

An unbiased organization The National Research Foundation will fund creative initiatives in the basic sciences, applied sciences, and social sciences and humanities, all of which are priority research areas. The system will become more student-centered, allowing students to choose core and allied studies within and across disciplines. Within the policy framework, faculty members also have the freedom to choose curriculum, methodology, pedagogy, and evaluation approaches. These transformations will begin in the academic year 2021-22 and will last until 2030, when the first stage of transition will be noticeable.

As a result, the Indian higher education system is shifting from being teacher-centric to being student-centric, from being information-centric to being knowledge-centric, from being marks-centric to being

skills-centric, from being examination-centric to being experimental-centric, from being learning-centric to being research-centric, and from being choice-centric to being competency-centric.

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