



Vocational education under NEP-2020: A tool for socio-economic empowerment

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a turning point in the educational history of India as it focuses on vocational education as a major impetus for socioeconomic empowerment. NEP 2020 seeks to narrow the gap between theoretical education and industry requirements by incorporating skill-based training into the standard school and higher education curriculum. NEP 2020 visualizes early exposure to vocational education so that students develop employable skills through experiential learning, internships, and apprenticeships. This interdisciplinary strategy does away with the conventional distinction between vocational and general education, encouraging a more comprehensive system that rewards students, especially those from poorer backgrounds. Through the provision of job-ready competencies, the policy improves their employability and offers them an instant career window, leading to poverty reduction and social mobility. NEP 2020 further focuses on industry partnerships, digital education, and entrepreneurship, shaping a vibrant workforce for the economy of the 21st century. It also emphasizes rural development and gender mainstreaming to provide equal opportunities for vocational training to every section of society. Nevertheless, the effective implementation of these reforms is hindered by factors like budget limitations, social attitudes towards vocational training, and infrastructure deficiencies. The overcoming of these challenges through efficient policy implementation, collaboration with industries, and community support is imperative. In summary, vocational education under NEP 2020 is a transformative instrument for building a skilled, just, and prosperous society.

Keywords: Vocational education, NEP 2020, skill development, employability, socio-economic empowerment

Introduction

Overview of Vocational Education and NEP 2020

Enhancing skill development and vocational education in India is the goal of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The goal of the policy is to get pupils ready for the workforce by incorporating vocational education into regular schooling. Over the following ten years, vocational education will be gradually included into all secondary schools' curricula (Ministry of Education, 2020). The development of academic and other skills will coexist with the development of vocational skills. Secondary schools will need to work with local industry, polytechnics, Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), and other similar institutions to accomplish this goal (Ministry of Education, 2020). Additionally, utilizing a Hub and Spoke concept, skill laboratories will be set up in schools so that other schools can use the resources. Additionally, vocational education will be provided by universities either on their own or in collaboration with businesses and other organizations (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Objective of the study

1. To investigate how NEP-2020's vocational education program improves young people's employability.
2. To evaluate how vocational education helps underprivileged communities become more economically empowered.

Review and Relevant Works

Bhosale and Arjun (2025) By encouraging innovation, creativity, and business acumen, NEP 2020 promotes the development of entrepreneurial skills through VET. This

enables people to launch their businesses, create jobs, and support economic independence. Chattopadhyay & Bag (2024) [2] NEP 2020's viewpoints on vocational and technical education, the Sustainable Development Goals for VTE, Youth enrolled in vocational training and other courses, the impact of VTE on women's empowerment, and the Annual Status of Education Report 2023 The Empowerment of Women's Role in Social Development, Obstacles to Women's Participation in VTE. Given the policy's potential to empower women via education, it is imperative to critically assess its possible effects. Singh (2024) Although there is currently a lack of qualified trainers and resources, NEP 2020 also seeks to encourage the use of technology in education. The strategy also anticipates major changes toward vocational education. Maheshwari (2024) [8] The strategy highlights the potential of AI to integrate technology, encourage interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary learning, and create a student-centred approach, underscoring the need for new pedagogy and the advancement of the Indian knowledge system. The resuscitation of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is another aspect of the program that emphasizes the value of conserving and advancing India's rich intellectual and cultural legacy in a contemporary setting. Aggarwal (2024) [1] NEP 2020 has the potential to empower women via education, but it is crucial to critically assess the policy's possible effects.

Vocational Education & Skill Development

The Council for Vocational Education & Skill Development was founded as a statutory agency with the goal of

enhancing India's competitiveness by developing its vocational skills. The term "skill development" frequently refers to the productive abilities acquired at all educational and training levels, whether in formal, informal, non-formal, or on-the-job settings. It allows people to adapt their abilities to meet the needs of the economy and labour market and to fully and successfully participate in their livelihoods. The development of such competencies is influenced by a variety of factors, including a high-quality lifelong learning system and a supportive learning environment. (Source: CVESD)



(source- CVESD)

Socioeconomic Empowerment Through Vocational Education

Vocational education is crucial to socio-economic empowerment because it bridges the gap between academic education and industry demands, ensuring that people, especially those from marginalized groups, have access to sustainable livelihoods by providing employability, job-ready skills, and the ability to support their own financial independence.

Improving Employability and Income Generation

One of the main advantages of vocational education is the clear link it has with employment opportunities. Unlike traditional academic education, which usually lacks practical skills, vocational training prepares people for specific crafts and occupations. This leads to more stable finances, higher wages, and better job possibilities. Skilled workers including IT technicians, plumbers, electricians, and healthcare assistants have reliable sources of income due to their high demand. Additionally, by enabling people to launch their own companies, vocational education encourages entrepreneurship. Training in carpentry, digital marketing, beauty services, or tailoring, for instance, allows people to work for themselves and generate income on their own. This increases self-sufficiency and decreases reliance on official employment.

Reducing Unemployment and Closing the Skills Gap

Many businesses are experiencing a shortage of skilled workers despite rising unemployment rates. Vocational education addresses this problem by providing training specific to a given industry. To make it easier for graduates to find work, governments and private organizations collaborate to offer skill-development programs that meet market demands. This reduces unemployment rates and encourages economic growth.

Empowering Women and Marginalized Communities

Vocational education is a powerful tool for empowering women and underrepresented groups, including those from low-income backgrounds or those living in rural areas. By providing skill-based training, these individuals can enter the workforce, earn a living, and achieve financial independence; women particularly benefit from programs focused on teaching, nursing, and handicrafts. Additionally, individuals who cannot afford formal higher education may enrol in vocational training programs because they often offer flexible learning opportunities, ensuring equal opportunities for all and helping to close the socioeconomic divide.

Challenges in Implementing Vocational Education in NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the integration of vocational education into mainstream learning to equip students with practical skills and improve employability. However, the successful implementation of vocational education under NEP 2020 faces several challenges. Overcoming these obstacles is crucial for achieving the policy's vision of a skilled workforce and socio-economic empowerment.

1. Societal Perception and Awareness Issue: One of the primary challenges is the prevailing societal mindset that vocational education is inferior to conventional academic learning. Many parents and students still believe that vocational courses are meant for those who are academically weak, leading to low enrolment rates. Creating awareness about the value of skill-based education and changing this perception is essential for the success of NEP 2020's vocational education initiatives.

2. Insufficient Facilities and Qualified Instructors

Institutions require workshops, qualified teachers, and up-to-date training facilities for vocational education to be successful. But a lot of schools and universities lack the infrastructure they need, especially those in rural areas. Furthermore, there is a lack of qualified instructors who can offer practical instruction that is pertinent to the industry. Without proper resources, vocational courses may not deliver the desired learning outcomes.

3. Alignment with Industry Needs

A critical challenge in implementing vocational education under NEP 2020 is ensuring that the courses align with the evolving demands of industries. Many vocational schools still follow outmoded curricula that do not fit market requirements. If the skills provided are not relevant to current job trends, students may struggle to obtain suitable employment despite finishing vocational training.

4. Limited Cooperation Among Industries

NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on collaborations between academic institutions and business to offer internships, apprenticeships, and practical experience. Nonetheless, there is still little cooperation between industry and vocational training facilities. Many businesses are reluctant to spend money on student training because they are worried about commitment, productivity, and expense. To improve opportunities for hands-on learning and job placement, industry relationships must be strengthened.

5. Affordability and Financial Restraints

Financial obstacles prevent many students from obtaining vocational training, particularly those from low-income families. NEP 2020 intends to offer financial assistance, such as free vocational training and scholarships, but these programs are still not always implemented consistently. Furthermore, many people cannot afford the exorbitant tuition costs of private vocational schools, which prevents them from accessing skill-based education.

6. No standardized certification

To standardize vocational education and facilitate a smooth transition between academic and skill-based learning, NEP 2020 suggests the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF). The absence of an internationally accepted certification scheme is still a problem, though. Many firms do not recognize vocational qualifications from lesser-known institutes, decreasing career chances for vocational graduates.

7. Limited Career Progression Opportunities

A significant barrier to vocational education is the perception that it offers limited career growth compared to traditional academic paths. NEP 2020 suggests integrating vocational education with higher studies, but clear pathways for career progression are still lacking. Without proper upskilling opportunities, students may hesitate to pursue vocational training.

8. Geographic Disparities in Access

Vocational education facilities are often concentrated in urban areas, making them inaccessible to students in rural and remote regions. This geographical disparity creates an unequal distribution of opportunities, preventing many students from benefiting from vocational training programs. Expanding vocational centres to underserved areas is necessary for equitable access.

NEP 2020's Government Initiatives and Future Directions for Vocational Education

Vocational education is emphasized as a crucial part of the educational system to improve employability, lower unemployment, and encourage socioeconomic empowerment in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. To guarantee that students acquire real-world experience and skills that are applicable to the workplace, the government has started a number of programs to incorporate skill-based learning into regular education. However, to improve vocational education and increase its effectiveness, more reforms are needed.

1. Vocational Education Integration at the School Level

Vocational education must be introduced starting in Grade 6 per NEP 2020, giving children an early introduction to skill-based learning. This program combines project-based learning, internships, and practical training to build real-world skills in addition to academic knowledge.

2. Framework for National Skills Qualifications (NSQF)

In order to standardize vocational education and establish a smooth transition between academic and skill-based learning, the government has reinforced the National Skills

Qualification Framework (NSQF). By guaranteeing that vocational education is accepted by businesses and universities, this framework promotes professional advancement and chances for lifelong learning.

3. Multidisciplinary Institutions and Skill Centres

In order to provide vocational training in many industries, the government is forming Skill Hubs in partnership with educational institutions, private training providers, and schools. These centers give students access to mentorship programs, industry exposure, and state-of-the-art training facilities. Higher education establishments are also urged to provide occupational degrees in addition to conventional academic programs.

4. Development of Business Alliances

Under NEP 2020, the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) and the Skill India Mission have been reinforced to promote industry and educational cooperation. To give students practical training, apprenticeships, and job possibilities, the government has teamed up with private businesses, MSMEs, and sector-specific organizations.

5. Financial Support and Inclusivity Measures

To guarantee accessibility, the government offers financial aid, scholarships, and free training programs for economically disadvantaged groups. For example, the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) give rural youth free vocational training, which improves their employability and self-reliance.

6. Digital Initiatives and E-Learning Platforms

The government has introduced e-learning platforms like DIKSHA, SWAYAM, and e-Skill India to provide vocational training through online courses, virtual simulations, and skill-based assessments, making skill development more accessible, particularly for students in remote areas.

Moving Ahead: Enhancing Vocational Training for Socioeconomic Self-Empowerment

1. Shifting Social Attitudes

To alter the way that vocational education is seen, awareness campaigns and career counselling programs must be implemented. Students will be more inclined to choose vocational courses as a common career choice if success stories of talented professionals and entrepreneurs are promoted.

2. Improving Faculty Training and Infrastructure

Providing high-quality vocational education requires investment in cutting-edge training facilities, contemporary equipment, and certified instructors. Programs for faculty development should be implemented in order to provide educators with the most recent market knowledge.

3. Improving Industry Cooperation

Vocational training will continue to be relevant to market demands if industry relationships are expanded. Businesses ought to take an active role in creating curricula, apprenticeships, and employment placement initiatives. Industries that support programs for vocational education can receive incentives.

4. Establishing Adaptable Educational Routes

The transition between academic and practical education should be seamless for students. Expanding the NSQF's credit-based learning system would enable vocational graduates to enter higher education without any limitations.

5. Making Remote and Rural Areas More Accessible

To give all pupils equal chances, vocational training facilities and skill centers ought to be established in rural areas. Underprivileged populations can be reached with the use of digital learning platforms and mobile training units.

6. Encouraging self-employment and entrepreneurship

The goal of vocational education should be to prepare students for entrepreneurship so they can launch their own companies. To assist vocational graduates in becoming job creators rather than job seekers, government programs ought to offer financial aid, mentorship, and incubation support.

Conclusion

One effective tool for socioeconomic empowerment is vocational education. Giving people useful skills improves their employability, lowers poverty, and encourages entrepreneurship. Additionally, it fosters diversity and gender equality by giving marginalized groups opportunity. For the purpose of developing a skilled labour force, stimulating economic growth, and fostering social justice, governments and educational institutions must keep funding vocational training initiatives. NEP 2020 offers a robust framework for vocational education, but a number of obstacles prevent it from being successfully implemented. Increasing the effectiveness of vocational education requires overcoming societal biases, standardizing certifications, enhancing industry partnerships, improving infrastructure, and guaranteeing funding. By tackling these issues, we can increase employment, develop a skilled labour force, and propel India's economic expansion. Vocational education has a solid foundation as a tool for socioeconomic emancipation thanks to government initiatives under NEP 2020. Long-term success, however, depends on tackling issues including industry alignment, infrastructure deficiencies, and social stigma. India can develop a skilled labour force, lower unemployment, and foster inclusive economic growth by bolstering vocational education, which would eventually turn the country into an independent and globally competitive economy. With a strong emphasis on integration, industry collaboration, digital learning, entrepreneurship, and diversity, vocational education has a bright future under NEP 2020. Vocational training will equip people with the skills necessary for long-term employment and economic prosperity as it becomes more widely accepted. Vocational education would be a potent instrument for socioeconomic empowerment by closing the skill gap and encouraging self-reliance, supporting India's goal of becoming a worldwide knowledge and skill hub.

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