

Vocational and Technical skills in NEP-2020

Paper Submission: 10/11/2021, Date of Acceptance: 23/11/2021, Date of Publication: 24/11/2021

Abstract

The NEP- 2020 focuses on strengthening the foundation of literacy, expertise, and skills development to catapult India into the 21st century as a global knowledge super-power. The key proposal of the policy is to integrate technical / vocational education and an overhaul of the entire education system. The active participation and trust of the stakeholders is critical to the success of the NEP-2020. It is proposed to be implemented in phases from 2021. The new education policy (NEP – 2020) aims to provide a much-needed importance to the integration of vocational / technical education within the system of basic education. The objective is to provide technical and employable skills to the youth of the country, which was absent in the previous education policies. The level of education, intellectual development, efficient use of resources through networking, technology research, information technology development, curriculum development, planning and management of the technical education system are areas that should be given priority for NEP-2020 to contribute comprehensively in human resource development for the betterment of the Nation. If successful, the NEP-2020 will transform India into a global leader in terms of technical prowess and knowledge resources.

Keywords: NEP-2020, Technical, Skill, Education, Networking, Technology, Planning, Management.

Aim of the study

The objective current study is to focus on major challenges and opportunities inherent to the NEP-2020. Previous education policies suffered from deficiencies in implementation and teacher training, which the new NEP aims to rectify.

Review of literature

At present, only a fraction of the young population of India receives technical / vocational education (Aggarwal and Aggarwal., 2017). This document discusses the challenges and opportunities with respect to the implementation of the new education policy.

As per the NEP 2020 document, India is lagging far behind other nations in terms of the technical literacy of the young population. The percentage of young population receiving vocational education in India is roughly 5 percent at present. The NEP aims to rectify this shortcoming by better training of teachers and by removing the deficiencies in the current education system and curriculum (Singh and Kaur., 2018). The NEP objective is to integrate vocational education with mainstream education in a systematic phased manner.

Highlights of the NEP 2020

Flexibility

The NEP emphasises flexibility in learning so that students can choose their own desired career objectives. This Policy aims to facilitate access to quality education to all children. In order to ensure full and all-round development of the students, they will be given the freedom to learn the subjects of their own choice (Aithal & Aithal., 2020). The Policy also aims to integrate vocational training within the existing curriculum to promote innovation, flexibility, and productivity. The NEP-2020 aims to provide opportunities to sample a variety of trades to students. Students from Grades 6 to 12 will be provided first-hand experience of various professions by very short-term programmes. The Policy also aims to promote the provision of online professional courses.

Similarly, in institutions of higher learning, it has been recognized that a higher level of education centered on vocational education is needed to build a skilled and competent workforce for the next millennium. The goal is to increase the total enrolment rate in higher education, including Vocational Education, from 26% in 2018 to 50% by 2035 by adding more capacity to Higher Education Institutions (Mahajan., 2021). The Policy also provides for the 'National Examinations Centre' to provide standardized examinations, as well as



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specialized examinations for science, humanities, languages, arts, and crafts, at least twice a year.

Teaching

The policy recognizes the need to employ a sufficient number of teachers in all subjects and recommends the sharing of educators in all schools. Schools are proposed to be encouraged to employ local eminent people or professionals as 'professional educators' in a variety of subjects, such as local arts, crafts or businesses for the benefit of students and to help preserve and promote local knowledge and expertise.

The Policy also aims to establish a National Qualifications Framework for 2022 in consultation with various stakeholders / authorities, including Vocational Education professional bodies. A new and comprehensive National Curriculum for Teacher Education (NCFTE) is also proposed to be launched in 2021, which will address the needs of the vocational education teacher curriculum. The NCFTE will be reviewed every 5-10 years based on emerging needs in teacher education (Kumar & Rao., 2021).

The Policy aims to ensure that by 2025, at least 50% of students in all schools and institutions of higher learning will undergo vocational training. In this regard, the Policy recognizes the need to effectively integrate vocational education with general education in all educational institutions through a variety of measures including, facilitating collaboration with local industries, the establishment of incubator centres or skills labs, and the administration of interim certificate lessons.

To facilitate such integration, the Policy also calls for the formation of a National Vocational Education and Training Committee (NCIVE), comprising vocational education experts and departmental representatives in collaboration with industry. Information sharing across institutions through the mechanisms established by NCIVE is also encouraged to further expand vocational education access.

The NEP 2020 recognises the importance of Vocational Education. It appropriately identifies the need to integrate vocational education into mainstream education and dispel the notion that vocational education is inferior to mainstream education. It also focuses on ensuring the dignity of labour. By introducing vocational education at an early age, the NEP 2020 aims to enable young students to gain in-depth knowledge of the subject and thus allows them to make professional decisions. Regular access to apprenticeships will also give impetus to building business skills (Kumar et al., 2021).

Challenges**Mindset**

A major challenge for the NEP is the current mindset among key stakeholders such as students and parents that perceives that vocational/ technical education is inferior to mainstream education. Schools have not been able to overcome this stigma over the past three decades for a number of reasons, including the perception that the path to higher education was not designed for students of technical education. Managers and teachers in schools and colleges will need to overcome their retrogressive attitudes about the provision of vocational education, and will have to show dedication and commitment while integrating vocational education with the existing curriculum.

Educating Women

Another challenge is the need to provide inclusive access to technical / vocational education, particularly for women. The policy acknowledges the need to overcome the large digital divide and the need to create adequate opportunities for upskilling, reskilling, and lifelong learning for women also in new and strategic areas. The NEP also proposes to focus on preserving and promoting our vast reserves of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, which has the potential to create job opportunities for large numbers of the population, and to instil a sense of pride and ownership among the youth.

Funding

Another challenge is funding. The NEP-2020 proposes to increase the budget for education to 6 percent from 4.5 percent of GDP. In order to mobilize funds for the successful implementation of the NEP, it would be worthwhile to explore the possibilities of private sector funding by adopting PPP (Public Private Partnership) models so that the private sector can also contribute effectively and comprehensively in the development of the education sector.

Infrastructure Development

The NEP-2020 proposes to set up multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs) at par with the existing IITs, IIMs. The NEP also proposes to do away with the system of affiliation for colleges thereby granting them autonomy. It also proposes to promote online education. There will also be the same rules and regulations applicable to both private and government educational institutions.

Building new infrastructure requires a huge investment and a very long time to implement. Therefore, in order to meet the challenge of poor provision of quality institutions in India, instead of building new infrastructure the existing institutions can be redesigned and rebuilt into modern higher education institutions. Such transformation can be accelerated by the implementation of Public-Private-Partnership (PPP), which will go a long way in achieving the desired objectives of the NEP. Collaboration between government, higher education service providers, Edu-tech companies, public and private services is an urgent need of the hour to build much-needed educational infrastructure in urban and rural areas.

Improving teaching standards:

Teachers are also needed to be skilled in modern teaching practices and systems. Hence, along with development of infrastructure of schools and colleges, it is also imperative that proper efforts should be made to improve the quality of teachers to meet the desired objectives of the NEP.

Enforcing a common implementation plan

As per the NEP 2020, it is within the preview of the States and Union territories to formulate and implement their own plans and deadlines for the implementation of the NEP. This approach is likely to be counterproductive.

A common implementation plan is needed to be devised by the central Government for the states to implement in a coordinated and synchronised way.

Opportunities

1. The NEP adopts a vision for a balanced approach to education in India by doing away with distinctions between various streams such as arts, science, extra-curricular, etc. This means that there is no hierarchy and no stream is inferior or superior.
2. The perception that vocational / technical education is inferior to the traditionally mainstream education is sought to be changed. Vocational education is to receive a greater thrust in this policy so that the vast human resources of India are endowed with employable skills.
3. Vocational education is to be integrated into mainstream higher education. For this purpose, a National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) will be formulated by the General Education Council (GEC). This framework will be in synchronisation with the National skills Qualification Framework for proper and smooth integration of vocational education into mainstream higher education.
4. The NEP proposes to offer students in early grades of 6 to 8 a taste of various technical trades through very short-term fun-filled programmes so that they get to experience a variety of trades to choose a career from.
5. The NEP proposes to set up a National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) in the near future. This is to ensure the development of a highly skilled and competent teaching pool in the country.
6. Various degree courses will be introduced with flexible entry and exit points. This means that a student will be awarded a certificate instead of a degree if he/she chooses to leave after 1 years, or a diploma if the exit is after 2 years.
7. The India educational qualifications are also proposed to be aligned with International norms as outlined by the International labour Organization. The National Skills Qualifications Framework will be responsible for this task.

Conclusion

It is imperative that technology and vocational education will play a crucial role in the future given the pace with which advancements and innovations are taking place in this space. We can not fully foresee the progress that India is going to make due to the phenomenal growth of the technical expertise of its population. As more and more young people undergo technical / vocational education, the benefits that India will reap in pursuit of its development will only keep on compounding due to the sheer expertise and knowledge of this workforce.

The Policy places India in a position to achieve the sustainable development goals set by the United Nations, “ensuring equal access to technical and vocational education for all”. It is now necessary to negotiate with all stakeholders namely industry, governments, teachers and students themselves to build a roadmap to harness India’s vast technological and educational potential. Young workers armed with practical industrial knowledge will enhance productivity and play an important role in building an independent India.

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