

Skilling Youth for the Future and the National Education Policy-2020

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Abstract

The dynamic landscape of the 21st century demands a workforce equipped with adaptable skills to navigate an ever-evolving job market. This research paper delves into the imperative of skilling youth for the future and examines the pivotal role of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in shaping India's approach to education and skill development. In an era marked by rapid technological advancements, the ability of youth to acquire relevant skills becomes paramount. The NEP 2020, a comprehensive policy blueprint, introduces transformative reforms in the education sector, with a strong emphasis on holistic skill development. NEP-2020 also emphasizes the integration of Lok Vidya, valuable indigenous vocational knowledge in India, into vocational education programs. The goal is to make this knowledge accessible to students. Additionally, NEP-2020 envisions India as a global educational hub, offering premium education at an affordable cost, thereby restoring its historical role as a 'Vishwa Guru.' Ultimately, this research paper advocates for a collaborative and forward-looking approach, urging all stakeholders to invest in skilling India's youth for a brighter future.

Keywords: Vishwa Guru, NSQF, skilling youth, Green Jobs, Soft Skills, VET.

Introduction

The NEP 2020, approved by the Government of India in July 2020, is a visionary document that envisions a holistic transformation of the education sector in the country. Beyond its overarching goals of ensuring equitable and accessible education, the NEP-2020 introduces pioneering reforms in the realm of skill development and vocational education. It recognizes the vital role that education plays in preparing youth to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future job market. The National Education Policy-2020 places significant emphasis on strengthening the education system through five fundamental pillars: accessibility, affordability, quality, equity, and accountability. In pursuit of this, vocational education should be made readily available to all students, both in schools and higher education institutions, to enhance the relevance of general education in the context of the evolving job market. In an era characterized by rapid advancements in technology, a globally interconnected workforce, and the ever-evolving demands of the job market, the imperative of skilling youth for the future has never been more critical. The dynamics of employment are undergoing a profound transformation, rendering traditional skill sets obsolete and necessitating a paradigm shift in how we prepare the youth for the world beyond the classroom. The NEP has established an ambitious target by 2025, it aims to ensure that a minimum of 50% of students within

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the school and higher education systems will be exposed to vocational education.

The Changing Landscape of Skilling and Employment

The 21st century job market is undergoing rapid and transformative changes due to technological advancements, globalization, and shifting economic paradigms. Key trends in the evolving job market include:

- 1. Technological Disruption:** Automation, artificial intelligence (AI), and robotics are reshaping industries, leading to a growing demand for workers with digital literacy and tech-related skills.
- 2. Globalization:** Increasing interconnectedness has opened up opportunities for remote work and global collaborations, requiring cross-cultural communication and adaptability.
- 3. Gig Economy:** The rise of the gig economy has created a need for freelancers and independent workers who possess entrepreneurial skills, project management abilities, and self-discipline.
- 4. Green Jobs:** With a focus on sustainability, green jobs related to renewable energy, environmental conservation, and eco-friendly practices are emerging.
- 5. Soft Skills:** While technical skills are crucial, employers also seek soft skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and emotional intelligence.
- 6. Interdisciplinary Skills:** Many jobs now require interdisciplinary knowledge, where individuals must bridge gaps between fields, making versatility a valuable trait.

Education and skilling programs play a pivotal role in equipping youth for future employment in the evolving job market. Education provides the foundational knowledge and basic skills needed for further specialization. Skilling programs, including vocational education and training (VET), impart specialized skills and practical experience. Education fosters critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, which are transferable to a variety of job roles. Educational institutions can instill a culture of lifelong learning, encouraging students to embrace continuous skill development. Skilling programs can be tailored to align with industry demands, ensuring that graduates are job-ready. Education can emphasize soft skills and interdisciplinary learning to prepare students for diverse roles. Vocational courses are introduced at the secondary level (grades 6-8) to provide students with early exposure to practical skills and career choices. NEP 2020 allows students to choose vocational subjects alongside academic subjects, offering them flexibility to explore their interests and career aspirations.

According to NEP-2020, the Government of India will establish a National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE), comprising experts in vocational education and representatives from various Ministries, in collaboration with industry stakeholders. This committee will oversee skill development efforts in different States and Union Territories. NEP-2020 mandates the creation of a National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF), currently under national consultation. NHEQF will align with the National Skill Qualifications Framework (NSQF), which was notified in December 2013. It will define learning outcomes for degree, diploma, and

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certificate programs in higher education. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has proposed a draft NHEQF, aligning with NSQF, and providing guidelines for credit transfer and equivalence.

The policy encourages schools to collaborate with local industries and businesses to provide internships and hands-on learning experiences. This bridges the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. Vocational courses are designed to be recognized and certified, ensuring that students acquire skills that are valuable in the job market. Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions are expected to play a crucial role in delivering high-quality vocational education. NEP 2020 recognizes that one-size-fits-all education does not cater to the diverse needs and aspirations of students. The policy proposes the implementation of a choice-based credit system in higher education, allowing students to select courses according to their interests and career goals. Students can choose specialized courses early in their education journey, enabling them to develop expertise in their chosen fields. NEP 2020 encourages credit transfer across institutions, allowing students to pursue education and skill development in a flexible and modular manner. The policy promotes open and distance learning as a viable option for skill development, making education accessible to a broader audience. Students have the flexibility to enter and exit the education system at various stages, earning certificates and diplomas based on their accomplishments.

Challenges in Implementing Skill Development Initiatives

- 1. Infrastructure:** Inadequate infrastructure, especially in rural areas, poses a significant challenge for skill development initiatives. Lack of well-equipped training centers and facilities hinders effective training.
- 2. Funding Constraints:** Skill development programs often require substantial funding for equipment, trainers, and materials. Adequate financial resources may not always be available.
- 3. Quality Assurance:** Maintaining consistent quality in skill development programs can be challenging. Ensuring that training meets industry standards is essential but can be resource-intensive.
- 4. Trainer Competence:** Skilled trainers with industry expertise are crucial for effective skill development. Recruiting and retaining competent trainers can be difficult.
- 5. Industry Collaboration:** Collaboration with industries to design relevant curriculum and provide internships or apprenticeships can be a challenge, particularly in sectors where such partnerships are less established.
- 6. Limited Access to Technology:** Rural areas often lack access to digital infrastructure and technology. This limits the delivery of online courses and digital skill development programs.
- 7. Skill Gaps:** The digital divide exacerbates skill gaps, as individuals in rural areas may not have exposure to digital tools and technologies that are increasingly crucial in various industries.
- 8. Remote Learning Challenges:** In rural areas with limited internet connectivity, accessing online skill development resources can be challenging, hindering self-paced learning and remote training.

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9. Community Engagement: Engaging local communities and leaders is crucial to raising awareness about the benefits of digital skill development and encouraging participation.

In conclusion, implementing effective skill development initiatives faces several challenges related to infrastructure, funding, and industry collaboration. Government policies, private sector engagement, and public-private partnerships can help overcome these obstacles.

The Potential Impact of NEP 2020 on Youth Skilling

1. Enhanced Employability: NEP 2020's skill development initiatives are expected to significantly enhance the employability of India's youth. By focusing on practical, industry-relevant skills, graduates are more likely to meet the demands of the job market.

2. Entrepreneurship Opportunities: The policy's emphasis on vocational education and experiential learning can empower youth to explore entrepreneurship. Practical skills and business acumen acquired through these initiatives can spur entrepreneurial endeavors.

3. Reduced Unemployment: A more skilled workforce can potentially reduce youth unemployment rates. Graduates with practical skills are better equipped to secure jobs or create their own employment opportunities.

4. Diverse Career Paths: The policy's multidisciplinary approach and flexibility in choosing subjects enable students to explore a wide range of career paths, including those that require specialized skills.

5. Innovation Integration: NEP 2020's multidisciplinary approach encourages innovation by allowing students to explore various subjects and disciplines. It cultivates a mindset of innovation and problem-solving.

6. Entrepreneurship Education: The policy promotes entrepreneurship education, providing students with the knowledge and skills needed to start and manage businesses. This empowers youth to pursue entrepreneurial ventures.

7. Startup Incubation: NEP 2020 envisions the establishment of incubation centers in educational institutions to nurture startups. This fosters an entrepreneurial ecosystem where youth can turn innovative ideas into viable businesses.

8. Research and Development: The policy encourages research and development activities in educational institutions, fostering a culture of innovation. This can lead to groundbreaking discoveries and technological advancements.

9. Global Exposure: By promoting global collaborations and partnerships, NEP 2020 exposes Indian youth to international best practices and innovation ecosystems, broadening their horizons and fostering innovative thinking.

In conclusion, NEP 2020's skill development initiatives have the potential to significantly impact the employability and entrepreneurship of India's youth. By emphasizing practical skills, experiential

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learning, and innovation, the policy not only equips young individuals with the competencies needed for the job market but also encourages them to explore entrepreneurial opportunities, contributing to economic growth and innovation in the country.

Recommendations and Future Directions

Offer recommendations for policymakers, educational institutions, and industry stakeholders to enhance skill development efforts in alignment with NEP 2020:

For Policymakers:

Allocate sufficient resources and funding for skill development programs to improve infrastructure and training quality. Ensure that state-level policies are aligned with the objectives of NEP 2020, facilitating the integration of skill development into mainstream education. Develop and enforce clear regulations and quality standards for skill development programs to maintain consistency and relevance. Encourage and incentivize partnerships between government agencies, private sector organizations, and educational institutions to enhance program effectiveness. Offer tax incentives and benefits to industries that actively collaborate with educational institutions for skill development.

For Educational Institutions

Continuously update and adapt curricula to meet industry needs and ensure that skill development programs remain relevant. Train educators to deliver skill-based education effectively, focusing on practical training methodologies. Integrate experiential learning, internships, and apprenticeships into the curriculum to provide hands-on experience. Incorporate digital literacy training to prepare students for technology-driven industries. Emphasize the development of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving alongside technical skills.

For Industry Stakeholders

Collaborate with educational institutions to design skill development programs, offer internships, and provide on-the-job training. Support and invest in startups and entrepreneurship initiatives, creating opportunities for skilled youth to become entrepreneurs. Establish mechanisms for feedback on the relevance and effectiveness of skill development programs, enabling continuous improvement. Recognize and value prior learning and skills acquired informally, potentially offering credit or exemptions in employment.

In conclusion, enhancing skill development efforts in alignment with NEP 2020 requires a multi-stakeholder approach. Policymakers, educational institutions, and industry stakeholders must collaborate and invest in the youth, ensuring that skill development programs are effective, relevant, and accessible to all, ultimately empowering India's youth for the future.

Conclusion

Skilling youth for the future is an imperative task in a world marked by rapid technological advancements, changing employment landscapes, and increasing demands for adaptability and innovation. The National Education Policy -2020 serves as a visionary framework to align India's

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education system with the evolving needs of its youth and the job market. This comprehensive policy recognizes the importance of holistic development, employability, and entrepreneurship, making skill development a central pillar of its approach. India is actively progressing towards implementing pivotal reforms to seamlessly integrate and mainstream vocational education with general education. Concurrently, the involvement of all stakeholders at every level assumes paramount importance in guaranteeing that children are equipped with the vocational and life skills essential for thriving in the 21st century.

In conclusion, skilling youth for the future is not just a policy objective but a societal commitment to empowering the next generation. NEP 2020 provides a roadmap, but the journey ahead depends on the dedication, collaboration, and innovation of all stakeholders. By investing in the youth, India can harness its demographic dividend and secure a prosperous future marked by skilled, employable, and entrepreneurial citizens.

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