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## **NEP 2020: Vision of Skill India**

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### **Abstract**

**National Education Policy 2020: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Till date, we've been focusing on 'What to Think' in our education policy. In the NEP, we're focusing on 'How to Think'."**

Education is a powerful weapon in building a nation. Education determines the future of the nation in terms of its growth and development. The Government of India is bringing a series of reforms within the majority sectors to start constructive changes and paving the way to build a strong nation. The National Education Policy 2020 is the new testimony favouring this. The new education policy envisioned the holistic development of youth with emphasis on skill development to realise the objectives of Atmanirbhar Bharat. The Indian youth will no more be a job-seeker but a possible job-provider through the set of vocational, employable and entrepreneurial skills imparted to them at different stages of education and training. This paper aims at highlighting various points of NEP 2020 relating specifically to skill development with some changes in the present education system. Some suggestions are proposed for achieving Skill India Vision.

***Key Words : Higher Education, NEP2020, Skill India, Implementation Strategies.***

### **1. INTRODUCTION :**

***The vision to make the youth self-reliant through skill-based education makes the National Education Policy 2020 a revolutionary document.***

Higher education is an important aspect in deciding the economy, social status, technology adoption, and healthy human behaviour in every country. India is at a stage where strong and well defined steps are needed to rejuvenate the nation and chalk out a solid strategy to make it better. The Government of India is aiming at bringing about wide range of bold reforms in major sectors to place India at the very top among the progressive nations of the world. Education has rightly been recognized by the government as the key sector that can push the country in this direction. A true testimony to this is the National Education Policy 2020 which was released by Hon'ble Education Minister Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' on July 29, 2020.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

The National Education policy 2020 has lot of scope to improve the quality of the education system in India. The objectives of this study on NEP 2020: Vision of Skill India are:

- (1) To understand the overview of the NEP 2020
- (2) To identify the need for Skill India
- (3) To integrate vocational and mainstream education
- (4) Suggestions for strengthening skill India.

## **3. METHODOLOGY:**

The methodology adopted is exploratory study. Conceptual discussion on highlighting the national educational policy framework, and examining the need for skill building is taken up. Issues are Identified and many suggestions are given.

## **4. NEP 2020- NEED FOR SKILL INDIA:**

Post-Independence, India has had three education policies. The first policy was framed in 1968, with major emphasis on compulsory education for children up to the age of 14. Next, the second NPE introduced in 1986, emphasising on the removal of disparity between various social groups. While the 1986 policy stressed on achieving uniformity of education across social groups, it in a way could not reach the expected global competition. NEP 2020 is an a bold step towards balancing local and global human resource needs of growing India economy. The policy envisioned the holistic development of youth with emphasis on not only an increase in

Gross Enrolment Ratio but also on skill development as the determining factor to realise the objectives of Atmanirbhar Bharat, an ambitious mission of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modiji, who always insists upon imparting of skills as a major element of the modern education system.

Emulating the skill-based model of education envisioned by Shri Narendra Modiji, vocational courses are under the focus now in an attempt to make the Indian youth skilful, employable and Atmanirbhar (self-reliant). Therefore, there is a renewed approach towards running vocational courses which are being offered by various institutes of higher learning in the country. The undergraduate vocational courses will significantly contribute in producing skilled graduates to suit the requirements of industrial revolution 4.0.

Indian society must shift its focus from memorization to creativity and critical thinking. This will enhance decision making through out-of-the-box thinking and use of innovative practices. Such revolutionary features will result in shifting from focusing merely learning for the sake of obtaining a degree. There will undoubtedly be a paradigm shift to Research and Development (R&D) and skill enhancement.

With a multi-disciplinary approach the students will have a choice to choose their need based requirements of courses. Educationists across the country have finally been heard by the policymakers. The futility of producing a band of unemployed youth through a traditional process of the examination system has been recognised. Emulating the skill-based model of education, vocational courses are under the spotlight now in a bid to make the Indian youth skillful, employable and self-reliant. The undergraduate vocational courses are pivotal in producing skilled graduates in tune with the constantly changing demands of the industry.

The vision to equip the youth to be self-reliant through skill-based education makes the National Education Policy 2020 a revolutionary document. Education Minister has emphasised on every platform that the policy gives additional impetus to vocational education by introducing vocational subjects and training at school level also. The NEP 2020 provides that even the students of middle level shall be exposed to hands-on training in vocational skills like carpentry, plumbing, electrical repairing, horticulture, pottery, embroidery, etc.

The policy has set a goal of providing vocational skills to at least 50% students by 2025 by imparting vocational, employable and entrepreneurial skills to them at different levels of

education and training. The vocational skills acquired at school level may be further continued up to higher education level, as per the requirement of individual students.

The NEP is emphasising not only on skill-based education but also on skill-based employment opportunities. In 2011, India had a workforce of 477.9 million which increased to 502.4 in 2017. However, as per the 12th Plan, 85% of the workforce has educational qualification up to secondary level, 55% has educational qualification up to primary level and merely 2% of the workforce has vocational training. As per 2014 data, on 4.9 lakh seats available for apprenticeship, about 2.8 lakh apprentices were trained. Skill India Report – 2018, states that India has a demographic advantage as the average age of its population is estimated to be below 29 years for the next 6 years. More than 12 million people between the ages of 15 and 29 years are expected to enter India's workforce every year leading to an about 600 million workforce by 2022. By 2022, India will have the most important working population in the world. The workforce is growing substantially. However, by 2022, a more skilled workforce of 109 million would be required in 24 key sectors of the economy.

These figures and trends show two clear challenges that India is facing. The workforce that is entering the market does not have the specified and relevant skills. Another key challenge as per the report, is that the workforce is distributed between the unorganised sector and organised sector at 92% and 8% respectively, it will change slightly to 90% and 10% respectively in 2022. This indicates that the unorganised sector will continue to dominate India's skilled workforce demand which will essentially require people with education up to secondary and senior secondary levels to be skilled and even non-technical graduates to be skilled in the relevant and focused areas.

There are 21 ministries working in the field of skill development in PPP mode. Some of the key milestones that the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has achieved in the area of skilling, up-skilling and re-skilling are that there are 538 NSDC training partners, with more than 10,373 training centres, more than 1,500 job roles, 37 Sector Skill Councils, with pan-India presence. As per data for the financial year 2019- 20, more than 20.45 lakh people have been trained and 1.86 lakh have been placed.

The New Education Policy is hailed as the highest grosser of the vocational education space, which has faced the wrath of neglect from policymakers for decades now. This has led to it being a dysfunctional education stream even as studies suggest a "good rate

of return” in the labour market for upper secondary vocational education and training (VET). India has one of the youngest populations in the world and an asset called the “demographic dividend,” which has been extensively studied by researchers and academics alike. In a free market economy like India, albeit with some socialist characteristics, education is largely seen as an investment for economic growth, especially vocational education.

The NEP 2020 has made vocational education problematic by stating that it is “perceived to be inferior to mainstream education.” It further states that the policy aims to “overcome the social status hierarchy associated with vocational education” by integrating it with mainstream education in a “phased manner.” This has been proposed to be accomplished by the creation of a National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF), which will be coordinated with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) for ease of mobility between streams. This integration has been planned from upper primary segment onwards, by offering short-term internships with indigenous artists, crafts-people and blue-collar professionals. The policy also perceives it as a way of “emphasising the dignity of labour.”

## **5. INTEGRATING VOCATIONAL AND MAINSTREAM EDUCATION**

### **5.1 Vocational Education**

Qualification frameworks are global policy tools, usually adopted by economies to reform vocational education systems. While the NSQF is an outcomes-based level descriptor, which specifies what skill, knowledge or aptitude one must possess at a particular level in the vocational education space, NHEQF will perform the same function in the higher education space. Although Section 18.8 of NEP 2020 aims to “empower institutions,” outcomes-based Qualification Frameworks (QFs) in vocational education are infamous for undermining educational institutions. This is because outcomes or competencies can be acquired irrespective of the input factors, such as particular educational institute, curriculum or pedagogy. This essentially means that any skill or vocation can be provided with a credit, whether it is acquired in a formal, informal or non-formal setting. Which is why NSQF has thus far failed to reform VET in India. However, this does not necessarily mean that another qualification framework, albeit in the higher education space, will fail too. NHEQF can thus be hailed as a constructive recommendation, if the process of design and implementation considers certain critical nuances.

Although QFs do not have a widely positive success rate in most countries, it has been successful only in cases where education institutions have led the way and all stakeholders have equally contributed to the building of the vocational education systems, such as in the case of the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF). In fact, the SCQF is an umbrella framework that has several sub frameworks that comprise general, vocational and higher education and training systems. Similarly, although the South African Qualification Framework encompassed all streams of education at the time of inception, it was recently modified to create sub frameworks in general education, higher education and vocational training — following wide criticism of the original framework that failed to reform its education system. This shows the way ahead for NHEQF and NSQF where educational institutes should play an active role in determining the design, curriculum and pedagogy, instead of other private stakeholders supplying the ready material for institutes to follow.

NHEQF can be hailed as a constructive recommendation, if the process of design and implementation considers certain critical nuances. The proposed “National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE)” will have to undertake this exercise of carefully detailing the NSQF further, as suggested in the NEP 2020. While doing so, it is also necessary for this committee to simultaneously correspond with NHEQF for viable horizontal credit transfers and equivalence.

## **5.2 Enhancing dignity of labour**

The creation of the NHEQF can be considered a step in the right direction, as long as it is followed by other structural changes in the labour market. The implementing body in various states will have to understand and operationalize these structural changes for the policies to be realised on the ground. VET is popularly embedded in the Human Capital Theory. This emphasises investment in human capital for economic growth, and often blames individuals and education institutions for the skill shortages in the economy. Hence, the social problems of unemployment and under-employment in a country are attributed to these shortages. This is also the prevailing discourse in the skills community — that companies cannot find enough skilled labour from Indian education institutions. However, there is an emerging area of political economy in skills that identifies “the low demand for skills and the lack of jobs requiring qualification” to be the primary culprit of these social problems.

Unless the government creates jobs that acknowledges and incentivises these qualifications, these reforms suggested by NEP 2020 will be rendered ineffective.

The “dignity of labour” is directly associated with the availability of jobs that require the labour, acquired qualification as well as acknowledgment in material senses of the skills they possess. Unless the government creates jobs that acknowledges and incentivises these qualifications, these reforms suggested by NEP 2020 will be rendered ineffective. Even if students learn basic vocational skills, they may not still choose them as a viable career opportunity if they don’t have enough opportunity in the employment market. The informal economy, which is the largest in the country, needs to be involved in the process of enhancement of the NSQF. With a growing gig economy, the government needs to revise its labour laws and give acknowledgement to labour unions, which will go a long way into restructuring the labour market. Same goes for the jobs available in the private sector. A superior quality of vocational education and training needs as much cooperation from the industries as it needs from the government.

### **5.3 Towards lifelong learning**

While vertical enhancement of the NSQF is pertinent, as mentioned earlier, it is also necessary to provide the provision of horizontal credit transfer at each corresponding level, so as to help a candidate hailing from outside the formal system integrate into the qualifications system. For instance, although Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) can theoretically help a person gain entry into the qualification system, it is necessary to teach that person the foundational and cognitive skills required for Lifelong Learning — which also corresponds to Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. Only then will we be able to produce sustainable human capital in the form of lifelong learners. In a growing knowledge economy, it is important to produce learners who can self-evolve and adapt to the changing needs of the domestic and the global markets, while also continuously enriching their own learnings. Qualification Frameworks, as Allais explains, also have a bad reputation of feeding low-level skills and translating it into an economy that will sustain these low levels even in the labour markets — which has been the case in South Africa and most countries trying to work with National Qualification Frameworks.

While vertical enhancement of the NSQF is pertinent, it is also necessary to provide the provision of horizontal credit transfer at each corresponding level, so as to help a candidate hailing from outside the formal system integrate into the qualifications system.

However, this need not be replicated in India. NSQF and NHEQF should aim at including higher level skills and the government should facilitate the same by introducing ways to acknowledge them. The ongoing pandemic, for instance, has exposed the limited availability of healthcare workers and hence the need to nurture vocations in the healthcare sector by also paying them appropriately in the market.

The NEP 2020 rightly acknowledges the need to meet the SDG goals of access and lifelong learning. However, it needs to be supported by robust structural changes to ensure holistic development of learners. This will consequently lead to greater possibility of global and domestic mobility of skilled human capital, as aspired by the NSQF initially.

## **6. SUGGESTIONS FOR SKILL BUILDING:**

To build India stronger and vibrant towards realising Atmanirbhar Bharat, the following suggestions may be considered.

### **1. Focus on skills-gap analysis**

Though all the 37 Sector Skill Councils have done skills-gap analysis but yet the reach of the training needs to get the desired momentum.

#### **SUGGESTIONS:**

a) Linking CSR to Skill India movement to attract investment from private sector for sector-specific skilling and creating an attractive policy so that educational institutions can tie up directly with industry partners for skilling in relevant sectors in association with respective Sector Skill Councils.

b) Funding support and incentives for such educational institutions which are desirous of starting such courses and training programmes and also recognition in the form of incentives for institutions which already have such programmes running successfully.

### **2. Identification of key emerging areas with skilled workforce requirement**

Despite the various types of reports published by different bodies on skill development and current scenario there is no connect between such researches and on- the-ground execution of launching such skill-based training programmes.



### **SUGGESTIONS:**

a) As stipulated in the new National Education Policy 2020 that school education, especially grade 6 onwards, must have a skill component, key emerging areas must be integrated with such skilling curriculum. Areas like robotics, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, data analytics, internet of everything, etc., which are projected to create a number of new jobs are areas which needs to be focussed on with well-defined planning, clear roadmap and defined job perspectives.

b) The training/practical component as per skilling requirements from the unorganised sector should be integrated in school curriculum so that students who are desirous of seeking jobs right after schooling are trained accordingly.

### **3. Innovation through inter and multi-disciplinary approach**

Though inter and multi-disciplinary approach has long been advocated and awaiting but it was not well-planned to be implemented with a road map to benefit a majority of the institutions. This has led to a class of academically qualified candidates who are not of much use to market.

### **SUGGESTIONS:**

a) Designing of such courses should involve experts from academics, research, industry and corporates so that the course adds value to people who pursue it.

b) Participation from the industry and corporates in designing of such courses will facilitate greater absorption of people taking such courses in the industry as jobs in academics and research are not adequate for the number of students pursuing these courses.

c) Research in such disciplines should focus on the latest and emerging trends for which a policy is already in place. The policy should periodically be reviewed so that it remains relevant and does not become outdated.

d) Candidates pursuing such disciplines should be eligible for associated discipline jobs also else having rigid eligibility barriers will only dissuade fresh talent from joining such courses.

e) Government funding should be provided to incentivise innovations in these disciplines to ensure that India is at par with global leaders in design and development of new technology and innovations in cutting-edge areas of research.

The new education policy speaks about all these provisions and opportunities, and bringing them to reality totally depends on the implementation plan.

#### **4. Value-added course curriculum**

Presently the traditional courses in 10+2 or higher education do not offer any additional skills, which may make the graduates and post-graduates employable. Thus a large number of students pursue such courses only for the purpose of having a degree and do additional courses privately to enhance their skill. Also there is a lack of discipline-centric training of students who want to pursue teaching and/or research in that discipline.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

a) Designing of the traditional undergraduate or post-graduate curricula should be divided into three parts.

i. Students interested in pursuing the discipline for teaching and research should be provided a curriculum, which offers them options to explore the various facets of that discipline and its application. There could be value added courses in teaching methodology, research methodology, etc. These courses could be called Honours courses.

ii. Students who would like to differ from the traditional disciplines should be encouraged to do some skill-based courses like entrepreneurship courses as part of their curriculum.

iii. Inter and multi-disciplinary courses should be part of the curriculum.

b) Involving industry and business houses partnerships in designing recognised course curricula for value-added skill-based courses for the purpose of getting more jobs.

c) Vocational courses with industry validation may also be considered as special graduate/post-graduate add-on courses.

d) UGC should take up the matter to start University Centres in areas of National/International Importance, which could impart training on a continuous basis to “conserve the skilled manpower and produce skilled manpower”.

Following NEP 2020, the education system could be made more practical and job-oriented; thus the employability is automatically taken care of as it enables to have more job-givers than just job-seekers.

i. Skill-based education should be part of higher education to all and should not be restricted to ITIs and polytechnics.

ii. Teaching should include more practical/research-based training i.e. 50% theory and 50% practical. Theory and practical should be integrated with each other.

iii. Analytical learning should be adopted irrespective of the subject.

iv. Project-based research training to be provided for the students especially in Masters Courses irrespective of the subjects.

## **7. CONCLUSION:**

Skill development is extremely crucial for achieving the mission of Atmanirbhar Bharat. The NEP 2020 has fully covered the components like skill enhancement, developing entrepreneurship and vocational education to make graduates and post-graduates develop ability to get jobs in the market. Further, NEP will also make the learners skilled and develop them as to initiate start-ups and thus become job-givers in place of job-seekers. All these dynamics will become a reality because of the well-articulated NEP. India's education sector is rapidly evolving as the world scrambles to come to grips with new social realities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. To become a true 'knowledge hub', India urgently needs to cultivate innovative and advanced skills. With this ambition in mind, the National Education (NEP) has been designed to envision new learnings in education and skill development as a continually evolving process. The NEP presents a progressive approach towards much-needed reforms in education

**The emphasis on Skill-based school education will help India realise Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's vision of 'ignited young minds' constantly striving towards perfection.**

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