

New Education Policy And Employability Of Youth

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Abstract

The Indian government approved the new education policy (NEP), bringing changes to higher education in the country on 29th July 2020. The present paper is an attempt to study whether NEP will improve employment opportunities for youth. The traditional method of education is largely based on rote learning with no emphasis on practical learning. Freshers are not fully equipped for their working life due to a lack of proper training. The NEP 2020 provides an all-inclusive vision and comprehensive framework to reshape the future of the workforce and help emerging job seekers become job-ready. The NEP 2020 framework has encompassed components like skill enhancement, developing entrepreneurship and vocational education to help the youth be job ready. NEP will also develop the youth as entrepreneurs and thus become job-givers in place of job-seekers.

Keywords: New Education Policy, Employability, Vocational Education, Skill Development

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I. Introduction

The Government of India is introducing reforms in every sector of the economy to make India a strong and progressive nation of the world. Education, being one of the important sector, has witnessed noteworthy developments in the recent times. A real testimony to this is the National Education Policy 2020, released on July 29, 2020. The Indian education system has always been doubted for its lack of efficiency. The current system of education still follows the traditional method of teaching-learning and is largely based on rote learning with no emphasis on practical learning. The ability of a student is still evaluated by how many marks he/she can score in the final examination. This kind of evaluation system is putting pressure on the students to struggle for the maximum scores. But ironically, creativity, innovative thinking, critical analysis, and problem-solving skills are missing among the students. Educational institutions, students and parents alike are on a rat race to achieve the top ranks on the academic score board yet; producing skilled human workforce is overlooked. India has traditionally been visualized as a degree-hungry nation. Students completing higher secondary level education seek to obtain at least a graduate degree. However, the curriculum of most programs neither matches the aspirations of students nor the necessities of the job market. Various studies have found that most graduates do not feel comfortable in their first job and always remain in confusion whether to stay or leave the job. Freshers are not fully equipped for their working life due to a lack of proper training. The industry-academia gap is perhaps the most critical issue. The industry often faces a hard time finding job-ready talent and job-seekers hardly find a job according to their skill-set. The present paper is an attempt to study whether NEP will improve employment opportunities for youth. Very few studies have analysed the impact of NEP on employment opportunities for youth. Hence, the need for present study. Section II presents the relevant literature on the issue, Section III presents the features of NEP, Section IV evaluates the NEP and Section V concludes.

II. Review Of Literature:

Since New Education policy is yet to be implemented in many states and its impact is yet to be seen on the employability, a few papers are available in literature which have examined the potential impact of NEP on employability of educated youth.

Sharma and Trivedi (2023) examine the causes of poor employability of Indian graduates and also review the measures that need to be taken up so as to overcome this gravest concern of employability gap by implementing NEP in fruitful manner. They are of the view that NEP significantly addresses the gap existing in

the Indian education system. They argue that the policy's focus on multidisciplinary education and vocational training is likely to make graduates more job-ready and increase their employability.

Gedar and Yadav, 2023, are of the opinion that skill-based development will be essential to the nation's development and serve as a link between knowledge and its practical application so that every student will complete their education with a working knowledge of at least one skill thus unemployment will be decreased as a result of skill development.

Singh (2024) underlines the importance of national education policy into Indian education system has been described. Proposed framework has few challenges which needs to be address to make Bharat a developed nation. NEP objectives are vital in country growth and it has wide scope for future in different domains and industry. The author argues that the policy's focus on industry collaboration, vocational training and multidisciplinary education is likely to improve graduates' job prospects and increase their employability.

Rawat (2022) opines that NEP has its vision to empower the youth through the set of vocational, employable and entrepreneurial skills provided to them at different stages of training and education. The skill development will help the students in getting better employment opportunities and also help them in becoming self employed professionals.

The new policy proposes a holistic system of education with emphasis on hands-on skill development along with other key elements. Elements such as reduction of curriculum content and freedom of choosing personalized curriculum can enable the students to choose content according to their skills and interest. This freedom of choice can ultimately prepare the students for their future career as the focus in education will be solely directed towards their life's aspirations. Focus on creativity learning, collaborative learning, critical thinking, experiential and exploratory learning etc. as the teaching learning method will help shift students' learning style from rote memorization to a more activity based and conceptual learning. Focus on such methods would imbibe soft transferable skills that are essential for employability in the labour market. Innovative policies such as internship programs in middle stages, multilingualism, digital literacy, coding, introduction of subject like artificial intelligence, formative assessment etc. can be an answer to the vision of making the student's future ready through need and skill-based education (Aier and Joseph, 2022).

III. Features Of NEP 2020

The NEP 2020 aims to introduce reforms in curriculum and pedagogy at every level of education. The purpose is to shift education towards understanding by replacing it from rote memorization which has been the method of learning for decades. It aims to imbibe specific sets of skills across all domains. The emphasis is to shift the focus of education from mere cognitive to a holistic all-round development. This shift in focus will enable to create skilled and well-equipped youth. Some of the important features of NEP are discussed as below:

- **Holistic Education:** Holistic education means all-around personality development i.e. physical, emotional and cognitive capacities. Ideally speaking, it means what ought to be the conception of good life. Education has its intrinsic value as it is a means to realize the good life. In a democratic set-up, holistic education covers citizenship values like acceptance, secularism and inclusion. Hence, holistic does not necessarily mean multidisciplinary.
- **Liberal Education:** Liberal education is scientific pursuit of knowledge. It develops questioning and critical thinking. In the process of knowledge advancement, the existing knowledge is questioned and an alternative hypothesis is presented and tested. New knowledge is established with the questioning of old knowledge. Liberal education allows the students to follow the pursuit of knowledge through the choice of a particular discipline. However, students will be given the chance to explore before final choice. Liberal education can help in achieving holistic education. Liberal education may achieve holistic education in particular ways for everyone.
- **Multidisciplinary Education:** The combination of various disciplines is multidisciplinary education. It means that knowledge streams from various disciplines can sometimes give better insight to understand social, economic and natural phenomenon. The interaction of various disciplines can happen in various ways – simple and complex. The understanding of such interaction is essential to understand the different ways of knowledge construction. Earlier, the basic disciplines were limited to, say, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, Economics, Sociology, Political Science, Geography, Psychology, Language and Philosophy. Later, various applied branches of knowledge were introduced, such as Engineering, Law, Medicine, etc. Gradually, multidisciplinary was introduced in teaching of even basic disciplines. For example, the teaching of Economics to an undergraduate also required teaching of Mathematics and Statistics. With the conjointment of Economics with Mathematics and Statistics, Economics flourished as it allowed Economics to grow as empirical science and allowed modelling in estimation and forecasting with greater precision. Mathematics and Statistics were of instrumental purpose to develop Economics.

- **Multiple Entry-Exit:** The NEP-2020 proposes that if multiple entry and exit points are created at UG and PG level, then students may get credentials for the part of the course completed. On the other hand, the efficiency of higher education system will go up as the dropout rate will be reduced. The rationale of multiple entry-exit is extended if flexible and multidisciplinary curriculum is added to it widening the scope of the choice of course to the students. The policy notes that it will increase the employability as exposure of students to multiple disciplines is favoured in the job market. The policy explicitly mentions that multiple entry-exit option provides the opportunities for lifelong learning, if credits earned are recognised at every exit point, stored and accumulated over the life cycle of an individual.
- **Vocational Education:** Vocational education in India refers to education and training that focuses on developing job-specific skills and knowledge. Vocational education is designed to prepare students for employment in specific industries or trades, such as construction, healthcare, hospitality, and automotive. Vocational education includes courses such as ITI (Industrial Training Institute) courses, Polytechnic courses, and various skill development programs offered by the government and private organizations. National Education Policy 2020 has been crafted with the vision to make the youth *atmanirbhar* through skill-based education and thus make the country *Atmanirbhar Bharat*. The policy gives additional impetus to vocational education by introducing the vocational subjects and training at school level too. There is provision for hands-on training in vocational skills like carpentry, electrical repairing, horticulture, plumbing, pottery, embroidery, etc. in NEP 2020. The policy has set the target of providing vocational skills to at least 50% students by 2025. Vocational skills gained by students at school level may be further improved at higher education level depending upon their requirement. Skill development initiatives for youth in basic and emerging sectors may prove to be a breakthrough to achieve the goal of *Atmanirbhar Bharat*. This initiative of the government is linked with the theme of ‘vocal for local,’ which enables aspiring youth to find employment opportunities in local areas. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Kendras will be established in all the districts of the country to coordinate these activities. So, it is hoped that Indian youth will be a potential job-giver instead of job-seeker through diverse set of vocational, employable and entrepreneurial skill-sets acquired by them at different stages of education and training.
- **Industry-Academia Partnership:** NEP 2020 has recommended that “Incubation Centres” will be set up in higher education institutions in partnership with industries to encourage high research and development investments from government and private sectors, encourage innovation and innovative mindset and attitude.

IV. Evaluation Of NEP

Indian youth need employment opportunities and the New Education Policy may play an important role in employment generation, in many ways. It aims to focus on the all-around development of the potential workforce- students. The National Education Policy, 2020 is meant to provide an all-inclusive vision and comprehensive framework for both school and higher education across the country. It can help reshape the future of the workforce and help emerging job seekers become more job-ready. There is no doubt that with a better education system, the chances of employment become better.

With the new policy coming into the picture, the school and college education will not only be a degree provider but will also develop personality which will help the students in their complete professional growth. There will be a shift from summative assessment to regular and formative assessment, which is more competency-based. It will test higher-order skills of students like analysis, logical thinking and clarity. There will be provision of multi entry-exit for students during a course. Top-class global universities will be invited and single governing authority will manage the colleges. Skill development will be the main focus of NEP 2020. Making institutions go autonomous will give them the flexibility to design the curriculum and pedagogy. Contemporary needs of the industry will be given due weightage in designing the curriculum.

NEP will empower the future workforce with more flexibility to choose their courses. As the policy says, “There will be no hard separation among ‘curricular’, ‘extracurricular’, or ‘co-curricular’, among ‘arts’, ‘humanities’, and ‘sciences’, or between ‘vocational’ or ‘academic’ streams.” One of the key aspects that the policy has addressed is the implementation of the Choice Based Credit System- a multi-disciplinary approach that will provide flexibility to students to choose between programs of choice. It is a huge step towards improving the employability of students in the future. To bridge the gap in the achievement of learning outcomes, classroom transactions will shift towards competency-based learning and education. In addition to all of this, NEP will also allow students to accumulate and retain credits which will enable them to continue their learning process from where they had left, in case they discontinue for some reason.

The Government of India has not been emphasising only skill-based education but also skill-based employment opportunities. India has a demographic advantage because average age of population is expected to be below 29 years for the next few years. In 2022, India had the largest working-age population in the world. Future employees, if provided autonomy and flexibility now, can discover a variety of choices and build more relevant and in-demand skills rather than following conventional career paths. However, this emerging

workforce will need mentorship, coaching and guidance to ensure that the given flexibility does not lead them to get more lost than before. A flexible learning ecosystem is expected to create a more self-driven workforce.

In recent times the need for behavioural skills like resilience, agility, innovation and adaptability in the workforce has increased. From hiring to performance reviews, these skills are always prioritized. The conventional education system is lacking the focus on building such proficiencies whereas the new policy has inbuilt mechanism to learn beyond subject matters and made learning these skills compulsory. In addition to proficiency in languages, these skills include scientific and evidence-based thinking, creativity and novelty, a sense of aesthetics and art, communication skills, health and fitness, wellness, sports, collaboration and teamwork, and problem-solving and logical reasoning etc. The NEP 2020's stress on technical education by empowering professionals in leading-edge areas, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), 3-D machining, big data analysis, and machine learning, besides genomic studies, biotechnology, nanotechnology, neuroscience etc. into undergraduate education is expected to improve the employability of the youth. It will also create an ecosystem of entrepreneurs who can fulfil needs of digital India and beyond. The prospective workforce will be more digital-ready. They already had the advantage of being in the IT era, and now with skills like coding becoming essential to learn, they will further have the edge when it comes to being future-ready.

V. Conclusion

To sum up, it can be rightly said that skill development is pivotal for achieving the mission of Atmanirbhar Bharat. The NEP 2020 has fully encompassed components like skill enhancement, developing entrepreneurship and vocational education to help our graduates and post-graduates (be job ready) develop the ability to get jobs in the market. Further, NEP will also make the learners skilled and develop them as entrepreneurs and thus become job-givers in place of job-seekers. All these dynamics will become a reality because of the well-planned NEP. Overall, the New Education Policy of India has several provisions that are expected to improve the employability of students in India. However, the success of these initiatives will depend on their effective implementation and the collaboration of all stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, and employers.

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