

# **National Education Policy 2020: Paradigm Shift in Vocational Education for Aatmanirbhar Bharat**

## **Abstract**

Vocational education is inevitable to inculcate and cultivate relevant skills in learners for individual and societal benefits. This is a sincere attempt to help an individual enhance self-confidence to contribute to the sustainable development of the nation. Education aims to develop skills among learners. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the need for skill development among learners is perspicuous but change has taken place in types of skills. At present, the emphasis is on the knowledge economy. Therefore, the type of vocational education and skill development has also changed. Vocational education paves the way to develop skills and produce skilled learners who can contribute significantly to a nation being self-reliant. The NEP 2020 has advocated for vocational education to be introduced from class sixth after keeping the requirements of the current century in view and with a vision to make Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India). The NEP 2020 has also emphasised experiential learning for all-rounded development of learners. Vocational education can create a positive environment for the learners to boost skills required for individual growth leading to a self-reliant India. In this paper, the researchers have made a solemn effort to enumerate the relevance of vocational education and skill development in NEP 2020 for producing a skilled workforce to build a knowledge-based economy in India and laying the foundation for Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India).

**Keywords: NEP 2020, Vocational Education, Skill Development, Aatmanirbhar Bharat.**

## **Introduction**

Vocational education and skill development pave the path for self-sufficiency. Skills enable an individual to contribute based on the nature of skills in a sector where development and progress of a nation takes place. In this way, an individual becomes stable and live a successful life while contributing for a nation to be self-reliant. Bajpae and Sharma (2023) asserted that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is the first policy that imbibes diversified and vast areas of human experience and discussion covering gram panchayats, blocks, urban local authorities, districts and states and territories of the Union at the grassroots level. The NEP 2020 emphasises vocational education to develop numerous skills among learners to meet industry needs and integrate it with general education (Boski & Burns, 2023). Vocational education is the backbone of producing a skilled workforce to

create a knowledge-based economy. Therefore, NEP 2020 has proposed the initiation of vocational education in class sixth. Mistri (2023) stated that the NEP 2020 has caused competition in research and development fields due to fast promotion and incentives for high-impact research.

Digitalisation has revolutionised all sectors and programmes of vocational education. Singh and Malik (2022) highlighted the importance of digitalisation and ICT in line with NEP 2020 for creating an educational digital infrastructure and capacity in India for entrepreneurship. Jain (2023) elucidated that the conception of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' is to enable young people self-sufficient and empower Bharat (India) through campaigns like Make in India, Digital India and Startup India. The NEP 2020 has covered vocational education and skill development at school and higher education levels. Kumar (2022) also stated that the NEP 2020 envisions growing industry linkages for the developing market-oriented vocational courses and increasing incubation centres after cooperating with industrial experts.

The NEP 2020 nets the well-knit web for vocational education along with general education for cultivating skills among the learners to fulfil the demands of the market for Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India). The NEP 2020 ensures to enhance the dignity of manual work. Ruskin (1862) demarcated the term 'skill' that comprises the combined energy of passion, experience, and intellect for manual work. Choure and Singh (2023) highlighted the importance of vocational education and skill development to link between general education and technical education. There should be a linkage between academia and industry to meet the challenges of the job market.

Vocational education is the blueprint for developing skills among young learners to make them self-reliant as they complete their formal education so that they can contribute to the development of a nation. They can become an asset to the family and nation. In this context, Arora and Chhadwani (2019) emphasised that the Skill India campaign is an effective tool to boost the Indian economy. Skilled people can produce quality products required in the global market contribute and make Skill India campaign successful.

### **Aatmanirbhar Bharat (Self-reliant India)**

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has laid down the five pillars of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'— Economy, Infrastructure, Technology-Driven Systems, Vibrant

Demography, and Demand. In addition, he assured that India has always believed in ‘*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*’, at the core of Aatmanirbhar Bharat is the creation of wealth and values, not only for us, but for the larger humanity (The Economic Times, 2021 as cited in Taneja, 2021). The concept of Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) is to prepare India to fulfil the requirements and demands of Indians and others by producing products using Indian technology by Indians. Behera and Gaur (2022) explicated that the success of recent National Missions such as Make in India, Digital India and Smart Cities is dependent on a skilled workforce. Realising this vision, India must create a skilled and productive workforce as per international standards of quality and productivity by integrating skills and training alongside education.

The Five phases of Aatmanirbhar Bharat are:

- **Phase-I:** Businesses including Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
- **Phase-II:** Poor, including migrants and farmers.
- **Phase-III:** Agriculture.
- **Phase-IV:** New Horizons of Growth.
- **Phase-V:** Government Reforms and Enablers.

The campaign comprises five phases to make Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India). This movement brings major reforms across sectors to push the nation toward self-reliance. It is the urgent call to vocalise Indian products and prosper across the world stage. Jaishankar (2023) clarified that the concept of a self-reliant India “should not be mistaken for economic protectionism. He emphasized that India is open to collaborations but on its terms and strategic pathways. Jaishankar explained that India actively invites foreign investment and technology but wants collaboration to be done in a way that aligns with India's interests and goals”.

### **NEP 2020: Knowledge-Based Economy for the Globalised World**

NEP 2020 aims to revolutionise and transform the Indian education system into 21<sup>st</sup> century education. It is the blueprint for Viksit Bharat after focusing on a knowledge-based economy. Ramanathan (2020) elucidated the idea of the knowledge-based economy of India for the globalised world that education in India is undoubtedly going to boost the economy, contribute to the demographic dividend, and be a catalyst for achieving sustainable development goals. The potential to rebuild the education system for shaping global citizens with intellect and integrity for a knowledge-based economy if genuine efforts are made in the implementation of the NEP.

The NEP 2020 has a vivid blueprint to revolutionise the Indian education system to enable learners to be self-reliant. They can develop skills, vision, confidence, communication, teamwork, leadership and risk management to build start-ups. In India, education has never been a source of earning money while it is a matter of social welfare. That is why, the NEP 2020 focuses on skill development along with content mastery based on the interest and aptitude of learners with a focus on producing job creators rather than jobseekers.

Tippa and Mane (2023) stated that the NEP 2020 focuses on excellence in skill development to prepare the students to face new challenges and enhance skills for all-rounded professional development to make India a developed, digital, and self-reliant nation. Tripathy and Mishra (2022) elucidated that the NEP 2020 is an urgent call to meet the needs of a knowledge-based economy which is becoming increasingly relevant under an evolving world scenario to provide universal access to education and promote innovation, research and learning quality. Chauhan (2022) stated that in every sector, such as primary industry, secondary industries and tertiary sectors, the knowledge economy is based on education and human capital. To raise living standards in a country for a long period, it is to invest heavily in education and the creation of knowledge leading to research centres for innovations, start-ups, and hubs of ideas. Education is one of the most important pillars of a knowledge economy to increase the level of society in information, latest and advanced technology, and other areas of human experience.

### **Vocational Education and Skill Development in NEP 2020**

The NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on vocational education and skill development to link between theoretical knowledge and practical skills. By integrating vocational education with general education at all levels, the NEP 2020 proposes a paradigm shift to break down the separation and enable students to explore career options in different study areas. The students will choose vocational courses as per their interests and skills. The aim of this personalised approach is to develop specific skills in various fields such as health care, information and communication technology or engineering. Parvanda (2022) stated that the NEP 2020 aims that at least half of all pupils in schools and higher education systems are exposed to vocational education by 2025. In this respect, the NEP 2020 stresses that with several strategies such as facilitating cooperation with regional industries and setting up incubation centres or skills labs providing short and long-term certificate courses, it is

essential to gradually integrate vocational education in mainstream training for all learning institutions.

The NEP 2020 encourages cooperation between educational institutions and industry to align curriculum development and internships to be provided to students. The NEP 2020 aims at creating a skilled workforce in line with the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India). The challenging issues such as curriculum development, teacher training and industry partnerships should be resolved for the implementation of NEP 2020. The successful implementation, therefore, has the potential to produce a generation of qualified and employed young people who will contribute significantly to Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India).

“Every student will take a fun course, during Grades 6-8, that gives a survey and hands-on experience of a sampling of important vocational crafts, such as carpentry, electric work, metal work, gardening, pottery making, etc., as decided by States and local communities and as mapped by local skilling needs” (NEP 2020, para 4.26). “The 12th Five-Year Plan (2012–2017) estimated that only a very small percentage of the Indian workforce in the age group of 19–24 (less than 5%) received formal vocational education whereas in countries such as the USA, the number is 52%, in Germany 75%, and South Korea it is as high as 96%. These numbers only underline the urgency of the need to hasten the spread of vocational education in India” (NEP 2020, para 16.1). The NEP 2020 stressed that at least 50% of students get exposure to vocational education at school and higher education.

### **Vocational Education: Skilled Workforce for Aatmanirbhar Bharat**

Vocational education is the medium to produce a skilled workforce who can earn their livelihood and contribute to the sustainable development of a nation. A skilled workforce is essential to transform the Indian economy into a knowledge-based economy leading toward innovation to enable India Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India). Choudhury and Ghosh (2023) explained that the development of a nation depends on its skilled workforce. In the management of manufacturing and service operations, a qualified workforce provides additional advantages to meet competition priorities. Ganeshan and Vethirajan (2020) stated that the key drivers of macroeconomic growth and social stability are skills and information. It is essential for the development of the economy if appropriate policies are put in place to

develop skills. Therefore, vocational education and skill development are essential to pave the path for Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

Suman et al. (2021) stated that countries with higher levels of skills are better able to adapt to the challenges and possibilities of working life. India's potential to be a global source of skilled labour is immense. With more than 62 per cent of its population in the working age range (15-59 years) and more than 54 per cent of its overall population under the age of 25, India is now one of the world's youngest countries. In fact, over the next 20 years, the labour force in the industrialised world is projected to shrink by 4%, while in India it is estimated to grow by 32%. It is an enormous challenge and a great opportunity to India. India must produce a skilled workforce with relevant skills and knowledge for the country's economic development.

Vocational education and skill development advance the economy of a nation. Therefore, a skilled workforce can enable India Aatmanirbhar Bharat. The NEP 2020 has drawn a vivid picture of vocational education and set the target to include at least 50% of students in vocational courses along with general education. Now it is time to transform the Indian economy into a knowledge-based economy through a skilled workforce after introducing relevant vocational courses so that India can suffice the demands of the world.

### **Major Challenges in Vocational Education**

There are several challenges in implementing vocational education at the mass level at once.

The major challenges are as follows:

- There is a severe challenge of curriculum mismatch. This challenge shows that the skills taught in classrooms have little worth in industry.
- Another challenge is the limited linkages between the institute and industry. This causes a gap in skills learnt and the requirements of industry.
- In Indian society, the social perception is not favourable toward vocational education. That is why, most students prefer general education to vocational education.
- There is a dearth of coordination between different government agencies with educational institutes and regulatory bodies involved in vocational education.
- The limited and traditional vocational courses exhibit a major constraint for students to get enrolled in vocational courses.
- In rural areas, there are limited resources in educational institutes where teachers face difficulty in fulfilling the requirements of practical and experimentation.

- The lack of trained teachers in each vocational course is also a major challenge to implementing vocational education at all levels.
- Students ask for financial assistance during vocational education. The lack of financial assistance is also a major challenge to running vocational courses smoothly.

### **Ways for Enriching Vocational Education**

The NEP 2020 has targeted to integrate vocational education with mainstream education in a set manner and provide learners the opportunity for vocational exposure. The NEP 2020 has aimed to enhance the Gross Enrolment Ratio and integrate vocational at all middle and secondary schools. Higher Education Institutes will also offer vocational education. There are provisions of collaboration with different institutes to offer vocational education with ease and quality. Incubation centres and skill labs will be established to bring quality to vocational education. There are certain ways to enrich vocational education such as follows:

- The curriculum should be based on the demands of the industry so that skills learnt in the classroom can bring employment and confidence.
- There should be linkages between institutes and industry to curtail the gap in skills learnt and the needs of industry.
- In Indian society, awareness programmes should be organised to change the social perception toward vocational education. Short movies can be made to spread awareness about the relevance of vocational education and skill development covering examples from Japan, the USA, and South Korea.
- There should be coordination of different government agencies with educational institutes and regulatory bodies involved in vocational education.
- There should be the latest and required vocational courses so students can understand the relevance of those vocational courses.
- In rural areas, there should be appropriate resources in educational institutes where teachers can conduct practical experimentation.
- There should be continuous training programmes for teachers involved in vocational education at all levels.
- There should be some provisions for financial assistance to the enrolled students at least when they become proficient in those skills to produce the products.

### **Conclusion**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 signifies an important step towards transforming vocational education in India. By emphasizing flexibility, industry integration, and holistic skill development, the NEP 2020 paves the way for the education system that fosters Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India). Vocational education is conducive to inculcating important skills in learners for individual and societal benefits. The production of competent learners capable of making a significant contribution towards national independence is of immense importance. This can happen through vocational education and skill development. The NEP 2020 has advocated for vocational education to be introduced from class sixth after keeping the requirements of the current century in view and with a vision to make an Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) through a skilled workforce.

### Statements and Declarations

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