

Vocational Education as Re-imagined in NEP 2020

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Abstract

Education is the only weapon to achieve human potential fully. It is responsibility of the government to give its citizens access to quality education. Access to education will lead to constant growth in economy, science and technology, national integration etc. However, it is not possible without skilled workforce which is in great demand. A skilled person is prepared by vocational training. It may be imparted in schools by classroom instruction or hands on training or by both. Usually, one or two vocational subjects are included in secondary and higher secondary level in India. Though students still acquire real vocational training outside formal education in shape of a diploma or a certification. One can also get vocational education as an apprentice without any formal schooling. In this paper the development of vocational education through various phases has been highlighted. The investigator also highlights the recommendations of NEP 2020 regarding vocational education and finally analyses the way forward for vocational education.

Keywords: Vocational Education, General Education and NEP 2020.

Introduction

The education is the corner stone in the edifice of the development of any individual or nation (Ozturk, 2008). Education plays central role in developing a nation socially, morally, culturally, economically (Adams, 2003). We cannot think of any kind of development without education. “Education is a human right, a powerful driver of development, and one of the strongest instruments for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability. It delivers large, consistent returns in terms of income, and is the most important factor to ensure equity and inclusion” (World Bank, 2022). “Education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society, and promoting national development” (MHRD, 2020). Therefore, the education system of a nation guarantees the development of the nation and the progress of the nation is directly proportional to the education. The present Indian education system has gone through various phases of development, the various commissions and policies suggested different changes in the education system so that it can cater the needs of the country. The demands of the country keep changing so does the education system. Both the education and the country are constantly

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evolving. In the future of the country the higher education has enormous importance. One cannot survive in present world without proper knowledge and abilities and it is education which helps people to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills. The education helps in preparing skilled workforce. Which is possible only with the help of vocational education. That is why various committees, policies and commissions stressed on the vocational education.

Vocational Education

Any type of training that teaches students the specialized skills needed to carry out a particular job is referred to as vocational education (Ariyani et al., 2021). This training is typically provided in the form of courses and hands-on instructional lessons. “Vocational education prepares learners for jobs that are based in manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic and totally related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation, hence the term, in which the learner participates” (AICTE, 2022). When we flip the pages of history, we come to know that, concept of vocational education traces back to apprenticeships. Apprenticeship is a system where new generation is trained in particular craft or skill by employer (master) while on job. From the time immemorial trades like Blacksmiths, Carpenters, and Merchants have existed and these trades were passed to new generations through apprenticeship and this system was associated to the lower social classes and classical education was for gentlemen. But vocational education started to be incorporated into the formal educational system after the industrialization of the nineteenth century. The early 20th century saw the beginning of vocational education as we know it today. Western countries were the first to understand the importance of vocational education and started to allocate funds to institutions that gave such education (New World Encyclopedia, 2020). Proponents of vocational education emphasized that by introducing vocational education into the schools, “it would: create better educated and more skilled workers, with the ability to earn more and have an indirect and positive effect on the aims and methods of general education and result in better teaching and learning by employing learning by doing and not mere book learning” (Defalco, 2016).

Vocational Education in India

India has the rich history of education, Students from different countries of world used to come to India for education. In ancient India there was Gurukul system of education. The main focus of gurukul system of education was learning. It was individual focused and there was no exam system where students have to gain marks. Its main aim was to make individual fit for the society. The Guru (teacher) used to transmit knowledge and skills to Shishya (student) required for different occupations. And “*this process may be regarded as the forerunner of the present*

concept of vocational education and/or training” (Verma, n.d.). Government of India has made various reforms in the education system in general and vocational education in particular during pre-independence and post-independence period. The first attempt was in the shape of Wood’s Dispatch of 1854, which for the first time emphasized the importance of introducing vocational education. It recommended establishment of vocational colleges and schools of industry (Iyer, 2016). Then Hunter commission in 1882 suggested diversification of courses; (1) Literary and Science and (2) Vocational (Chuaungo, n.d.). The Hartog Committee (1929) highlighted the defects of education system in India and it found that secondary education is too much examination oriented and the percentage of failures at matriculation examination is very high. For reducing the domination of matriculation examination, the committee suggested that Pupils should be diverted to non-literacy pursuits. It further recommended that, more boys should be redirected to industrial and commercial careers. Provisions should be made for alternative courses at the end of middle school stage (Indian Statutory Commission, 1929, pp. 109-110). But still absence of proper vocational education was felt. Therefore, two experts of vocational education were invited from Britain in 1936-37, A. Abott and S.H. Wood. They proposed complete hierarchy of vocational education. They suggested two types of schools for vocational education; first the Junior Vocational School after class 8th and the second Senior vocational School after class 11th. They also recommended that part time classes should be organized for persons engaged in vocations. And recommended the establishment of ‘Polytechnic’ institutions. But this report was not successful and on the basis of this report Sargent Report was published in 1944. Which suggested introduction of academic and technical streams with the motive to provide general education combined with some vocations. It was the Secondary Education Commission in 1952, which suggested multipurpose schools and diversified courses after eight years of schooling in which training shall be provided in various vocations and crafts. In response of these recommendations some multipurpose higher secondary schools were established as an experiment. But a very low percentage of students joined the vocational education, *“they joined these institutions either they possessed ‘low intellectual ability’ or ‘low economic status, and were unable to bear college expenses. They were considered as inferior to the students received general education”* (Disha, 2014).

The biggest impetus for the vocational education began with the recommendation of the Kothari commission (1964-66). The commission suggested and stressed on the development of robust system of vocational education. It recommended that by 1986 20% students of lower secondary and 50% students beyond class 10th are enrolled in part time or full-time vocational

courses and these courses should be predominantly terminal in character. Initiatives were taken to implement some recommendation. Out of 15465 schools nationwide, 1760 offered vocational education by the year 1986 (Disha, 2014). More priority was given to vocational education by the National Policy on Education (1986), it recommended to cover 10% of higher secondary students by 1990 and 25% by 1995 (Verma, n.d). The revised policy formulation 1992 suggested establishment of Council Vocational Education at national, state and district level and implementation of National Vocational Education Curriculum. Even then, the intended outcome could not be obtained in the anticipated manner. The 12th Five-Year Plan (2012–2017) estimated that “In India, only 5 per cent of the population of 19–24 age group has acquired some sort of skills through vocational education while the corresponding figure for Korea is as high as 96 per cent” (Planning Commission, 2013). Gradually the government and people started to understand the role which vocational education can play in increasing the production and improving the quality of life. The recent major initiative taken by the government of India is National Education Policy 2020.

Vocational Education as Envisaged in NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a compendious policy document that thoroughly discusses the revamping of vocational education. Not only vocational education but NEP 2020 creates a new system of education in which educational structure, regulation and governance will also be revamped. Vocational education has attracted the necessary attention in NEP 2020. The important recommendation of policy about vocational education are:

- The policy proposes integration of vocational education programmes into mainstream education.
- There will be no hard separation between mainstream education and vocational education.
- Every child to learn at least one vocation.
- Vocation education to start from middle and secondary school level.
- At least 50% learners to be given vocational exposure by 2025 through schools and higher education system.
- Secondary schools to collaborate with ITIs, polytechnics, local industry, etc.
- Skill labs will be established in schools.
- All the students of Bachelor’s degree programme will be able to opt for vocational courses.

- A National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE) will be constituted by MHRD.
- The higher education institutions will set up incubation centers in partnership with industries.

NEP 2020 tries to improve the condition of vocational education in India. It aims to end the social stigma associated with the vocational education and make it at par with the general education or mainstream education. It wants that students should get familiarize with the vocational education in their secondary level and should excel in vocational education and can also go for higher education in it. This would increase dignity of labour and importance of various vocations involving Indian arts.

Future Prospect of Vocational Education

There has been always a gap between general education and vocational education. The students go for general education in large numbers. The reason behind this is the social status attached with it. The vocational education is considered inferior to mainstream education, not only this the students choose mainstream education because they see possibility of better future in this. The students who are good in academics excel in the general education and go for higher education but the problem is that, those who could not do well in academics, they dropout from schools. And in past vocational education was given in 11th and 12th grade, after passing class 12th with vocational subjects' students does not have well defined pathways (MHRD, 2020). Dropout rate was high at secondary level.

Table 1 Level-wise Average Annual Drop-Out Rate in School Education (2013-14)

Level	All			SC			ST		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary	4.53	4.14	4.34	4.42	3.85	4.14	7.98	7.98	7.98
Upper Primary	3.09	4.49	3.77	3.75	5.04	4.38	8.03	8.85	8.43
Secondary	17.93	17.79	17.86	18.96	18.32	18.66	27.42	26.96	27.20
Senior Secondary	1.48	1.61	1.54	2.20	1.38	1.81	3.09	2.77	2.94

Data Source: For School Education: National University of Educational Planning & Administration, New Delhi
(website: <http://dise.in/>)

From the above table we can see that the highest dropout rate is at secondary level. And vocational education in past focused on drop outs in grade 8. As general education and vocational education were operating separately without any interaction between the two, Students were also hesitant to go for the vocational education, because it was considered that

there is not much scope for higher education and qualifications in vocational education. To bridge this gap government of India in their National Education Policy 2020 suggested to revamp vocational education and bring it into the umbrella of mainstream education. It is not that government has just now realized the need to bring vocational education in the mainstream education but it has been recognized back in 2009 through National Policy on Skill Development. It suggested development of a national qualification framework that would transcend both vocational education and mainstream education (Ministry of Finance, 2013). Some individual ministries also started working for developing a framework. National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF) was developed by Ministry of Labor and Employment, National Vocational Educational Qualification Framework (NVEQF) was developed by Ministry of Human Resource Development. But still there was need for uniform framework and in 2013 National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) was established with the aim to facilitate the mobility from general education to vocational education and vice-versa and make qualification more transparent and understandable.

Now NEP 2020 transforms the regulatory system of education. For higher education there would be a single institution Higher Education Commission of India (HECI). Under this institution there would be four verticals that work independently under this. One vertical is General Education Council which will frame learning outcomes. A National Higher Education Qualification Framework (NHEQF) will be formulated by the GEC and it will work in sync with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) to ease the integration of vocational education into higher education (NEP, 2020). Now vocational education and general education will go hand in hand, students who are interested in general education can pursue their interests in vocational education and will get requisite support system from the same institution, the student does not have to leave the school. This will also solve the dropout crises. The Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) system will also help in the mobilization from vocational education to general education. But there would be need of specialized teachers in the schools who will train the students. The disjointed and fragmented curriculum of vocational courses at school level needs to be rectified so that it can create a spark of interest among students. The mismatch between vocations taught in schools and demands of labor market needs to be addressed. The private and industry participation needs to be increased so that students can get the real-life experience. New and adequate training modules needs to be incorporated, NEP 2020 also mentions that different models of vocational education and apprenticeship will be experimented.

Conclusion

Strengthening vocational education is key for national development. The NEP 2020 comes with concrete plan to integrate vocational education with mainstream or general education. The Policy has the potential to lead to growth of vocational education in India, but it requires all education institutes to offer vocational education and implement the recommendation of the policy by letter and spirit. This will transform a large number of schools, colleges, universities into vocational education and training providers in near future and millions of students will be vocationally educated and millions will be able to access the vocational education. The NEP 2020 is firm in overcoming the social status hierarchy associated with vocational educational education. As students' choice is affected by the perception that vocational education is inferior to general education and only those students who are not able to cope with general education opt for vocational education. But the Policy is firm to deal with this problem by re-imagining how vocational education is offered to students in future.

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