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Significance of Vocational Education in National Education Policy- 2020

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has laid emphasis on vocational education. Vocational education and training helps in enhancing the skills and knowledge of young men and women which goes a long way in helping them to perform well in their jobs. Vocational education makes employees ready for the workplace and this helps them to perform various tasks. Vocational education can help solve the problem of dropouts in educational institutions to a certain extent. It has been observed that learners who are at risk of leaving education and studies are very often retained by vocational education. There are various reasons for the failure of vocational education in India. The challenges relating to both demand and supply sides of vocational education have been addressed to by NEP 2020. There is an urgent need to identify the best practices in vocational education and training and these have to be shared at various levels for proper and efficient implementation of vocational education.

Key words: . Vocational Education, National Education Policy 2020

Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has laid emphasis on vocational education. Revamping of vocational education has been thoroughly discussed in the policy document of NEP 2020. Over the years, the different commissions on education

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viz. the Kothari Commission report of 1966, the National Education Policy, 1986 have been recommending about bringing vocational education into mainstream education and NEP 2020 has suggested and emphasized on the integration of vocational education into mainstream education in all educational institutions in a phased manner.

The growth of vocational education has been very slow. According to the estimates of the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017) less than 5% of the Indian workforce between the ages of 19-24 received formal vocational education. Through vocational education, students are taught traits which can prepare them for an occupation which requires skills. In case of vocational training, there is the necessity for class room training, hands-on training or a combination of both. In our country, India, although it is seen that one or two vocational subjects are included in the secondary and higher secondary education, vocational training in the true sense is imparted outside the formal education system and this vocational education often leads to a certification or a diploma. Vocational training may also be undertaken as an apprentice or a trainee with or without any formal qualification. In NEP 2020, much emphasis has been placed on vocational education. According to NEP 2020, at least 50% of the learners from the schools and the higher education system shall be exposed to vocational education and learning. NEP 2020 aims at imparting vocational education in middle and secondary schools and then integrating it smoothly into higher education. As per the policy every child should learn “at least one vocation” and he/she should be “exposed to several more”. In collaboration with polytechnics and local industries, the NEP expects the setting up of “skill labs” and the policy also proposes to set up the vocational courses in the online mode. Vocational education and training helps in preparing young men

and women with skills and knowledge which goes a long way in helping them to perform well in their jobs.

In accordance with NEP 2020, the learners will be provided with enhanced flexibility and choice of subjects to study especially in the secondary schools. There shall be subjects in arts and crafts, physical education and vocational skills so as to enable them to make their desired life plans and design their own paths of study. The students shall be exposed to vocational education in the middle and secondary schools. The higher education institutions shall make way for different models of vocational education and there shall be provisions to set up incubation centres in the higher education institutions in collaboration with industries. The credit-based Framework shall also help in the mobility across 'general' and vocational education.

Importance of vocational education

Vocational education helps learners to perform better in their jobs as they are equipped with a great learning experience. Vocational education makes employees ready for the workplace which helps them while performing various tasks. Vocational Education creates specialised students and as such their chances for absorption in the market is much more than the others. Certain vocational skills acquired from vocational education teach students the importance of manual work. Majority of vocational skills are applicable all over the world and these help in creating employment opportunities in foreign countries. Again hands-on training and other work activities imparted through vocational education helps in the direct application of acquired knowledge.

Vocational education can help to solve the problem of dropouts in education institutions to a certain extent. It has been observed that learners who are at risk of leaving education and their studies are very often retained by vocational education. It

has been observed that through vocational education it has been possible to bring back students who have already left education. It is the responsibility of the Government to reduce the dropout rates in education and as such there is the need to streamline their initiatives and also there should be a co-ordination between the policy makers, civil society, educators, employers and so on. NEP 2020 has emphasized the role of vocational education and it very clearly specifies that the education system should provide exposure to vocational education. Students finding difficulty to study out of a textbook can be easily reached out by vocational education. One important aspect of vocational education is that it teaches the learners things in which they are interested and as such this encourages them to continue their learning. As an alternative to traditional academic subjects, vocational education prepares the students for work in a specific trade or a craft. It also makes the student ready as a technician or for a vocational profession. Vocational education is often found to be a part of an apprenticeship programme. Different vocational courses like hospitality and tourism. Healthcare, jewelry designing, animation, graphic design, food processing technology, beauty therapy and aesthetics etc. goes a long way in preparing the learners for jobs which are based on manual or practical activities. Generally, in an education institution students opt for academic courses and when they find themselves not being able to cope with their studies and also when they feel that they do not see any relevance of these courses in the activities they want to pursue after the completion of their studies, they get frustrated which leads them to disengage themselves from their pursuance of education. In such circumstances vocational education can help re-engage the students because it prepares them to succeed in the labour market. Many students who may not be very much comfortable with

academic courses are found to be at ease with the vocational ones and this might be a reason as to why vocational education may help in reducing the dropout rates of the students. Again, because of the ability of vocational education to generate interest among the students it could, in fact, help in curtailing the dropping out ratios in the different educational institutions.

Challenges faced by vocational education

There are various reasons for the failure of vocational education in India. NEP 2020 highlights the fact that teachers need to enhance their skills and capacity to teach vocational courses. In India, vocational education is imparted at two levels: vocational education (theory) and training (practical). The theoretical part of vocational training are being taught to the students with mainstream secondary education and this has turned out to be ineffective and at the same time has been responsible for creating additional burden for the students. This is because of the fact that the curriculum of these courses at school levels is fragmented and disjointed. Further, these courses are not well-defined and are not properly segregated. As there was no proper detailed curriculum, except for basic introduction to all the vocational courses, it was not effective in generating interest for vocational courses among the school students. Thus, the present system was not very conducive in generating interest for these courses.

Further, a student who opts for vocational courses is considered to be inferior to those students who opt for mainstream higher education avenues. Although there has been an increase in vocational training institutes, statistics shows that vocational education is not very much preferred by both the students and their parents. This may be because of the fact that both general and vocational education systems operate as separate verticals and there is very less mobility between the two. This is the main reason as to why the youth from diverse socio-economic backgrounds do not opt

for vocational education. Again, there is a common belief that employment through mainstream education has more dignity of labour in comparison to the vocational system.

Provision for vocational education in NEP 2020

At the college and university level there is low enrolment for vocational education. Social stigma attached to vocational education, rigid separation of disciplines, limited access to vocational pass-outs in Higher Education Institutions, dearth of vocational courses in local languages, lack of awareness of the importance of skill development etc. are the various reasons for this low enrolment.

The challenges on both the demand and supply sides of vocational education are being addressed to by NEP 2020. The policy lays emphasis on teaching the practical aspects of vocational education. The policy suggests a thorough skill gap analysis and mapping of local opportunities to determine the relevant vocational courses for a particular area. Besides, NEP 2020 also gives importance to the credit-based National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), which had been introduced in the year 2013. The prior learning of the enrolled students will be assessed by the framework which will help in re-integrating the dropouts (from mainstream education) by aligning their practical experiences and appropriate level of the framework.

The policy also aims to align vocational occupations with the international standards as set by the International Labour Organisation. In implementing the NSQF the policy recommends inclusion of industry, NGOs and civil society organisations.

In order to enhance the employability and vocational skills of the students the policy lays stress on the capacity development of the teachers. In order to increase the quality of vocational education and training, proper vocational courses needs to be identified and developed. A strong system of capacity development of the stakeholders at the National, State, District and Institutional levels

is the need of the hour for efficient administration and management of vocational education and training and the provision of the student support services. There is the requirement for the integration of mentorship programme with the internships, on-the-job training and apprenticeship training to provide support to vocational learning. Strategic action plans need to be developed by the education institutions in consultation with all the stakeholders of vocational education and training for proper and efficient implementation of vocational education.

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