

The Evolving Landscape of Employability and the Promise of NEP 2020

Dr. Swati Santosh Jagtap

Assistant Professor,

Department of Commerce,

Sanskar Mandir Sanstha's Arts and Commerce College, Warje, Pune, INDIA

Email: swatisjagtap@gmail.com

Abstract :

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a comprehensive education policy that aims to transform the Indian education system. One of the key goals of the NEP is to enhance the employability of graduates. This paper explores the challenges posed by the current system, and the key elements of the National Education Policy (NEP) that affect employability, particularly in India's revised education system. The paper also examines the potential impact of NEP on new job creation. The aim is to provide insights that can help maximize the effectiveness of NEP in enhancing graduate employability.

Keywords: NEP, employability, graduates

Introduction :

In a rapidly evolving world, the quest for employability has become a critical concern for graduating students. The equation, however, is no longer as simple as acquiring academic qualifications. The skills and knowledge demanded by the workforce are constantly shifting, leaving educational systems scrambling to keep pace. This is where the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India emerges as a bold attempt to bridge the gap between education and employability.

NEP 2020 marks a significant departure from previous education policies in India. It envisions a holistic and flexible curriculum, emphasizing multidisciplinary learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. It promotes vocational education, encourages internships and apprenticeships, and advocates for continuous learning throughout life. This ambitious framework aims to equip graduates with the adaptability and resilience required to thrive in the dynamic world of work.

Despite its ambitious vision, NEP 2020 is facing many challenges in its implementation. One of the major obstacles is the shift from traditional rote-learning to a competency-based, skill-oriented approach. This change requires significant work to develop infrastructure and train teachers. It also raises concerns regarding the availability of qualified teachers, the integration of vocational education and the effectiveness of assessment methods. In addition, aligning NEP 2020's goals with industry expectations and the evolving job market remains a complex issue.

The Indian graduate landscape is undergoing a dramatic transformation. On one hand, the country has a growing young population that is eager to contribute to the workforce. On the other, the demands of the job market are constantly evolving, driven by technological advancements, globalization, and shifting economic structures. This creates a critical gap – graduates equipped with traditional educational frameworks may not possess the skills and knowledge sought by employers.

This New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a landmark initiative aimed at revolutionizing the Indian education system. This ambitious policy promises a paradigm shift, moving away from rote learning and rigid silos towards a more flexible, holistic, and skill-oriented approach. It champions interdisciplinarity, critical thinking, and problem-solving, all while emphasizing the importance of vocational training and real-world application of knowledge.

This paper examines the potential impact of NEP 2020 on the employability of Indian graduates, with a focus on its policy components that can equip them with requisite skills to succeed in the ever-evolving job market. The paper delves into the specifics of the policy's flexible curriculum choices, multidisciplinary learning, internships, and skill development programs, highlighting how they address the gap between academic knowledge and industry needs. The ultimate goal is to create a pipeline of graduates who possess both academic proficiency and practical industry experience, making them industry-ready and more competitive in the job market.

Review of Literature :

According to Sharma, S., & Trivedi, N., the analysis of NEP's key features shows that there are potential benefits for improving graduate employability, and specific areas where NEP can enhance employability have been identified. However, there are some suggestions for improvement, such as including a brief summary of the existing research on the relationship between education and employability in the Indian context, discussing potential limitations or drawbacks of NEP, and adding a concluding paragraph that summarizes the key findings of the review.

Rathod, F. D., and Shrivastava, P. have written an article that explores an overview of NEP-2020 and emphasizes its significance in addressing the issue of youth employability in India. However, the article lacks critical analysis, relies heavily on policy documents, and has a limited bibliography. To strengthen the article, it could be improved by comparing NEP-2020 with previous education policies in India, gathering perspectives from stakeholders, conducting research on its implementation, and expanding the bibliography.

Shobana, D., & Kumar, J. S.

Shifting from degrees to employability:

The National Education Policy (NEP) adopted in India emphasizes on the development of flexible curricula and practical learning methodologies, which deviates from the conventional degree-based approach. The educational institutions in India are facing a challenge to prepare graduates with the necessary skills and competencies that align with the current job market demands. The existing curricula and teaching methodologies are outdated and not equipped to cater to the evolving needs of the industry. NEP is designed to address this issue by bridging the gap between education and skill requirements, thus increasing the employability of graduates.

Challenges of the Current System:

Misaligned Education: Traditional science, humanities, and commerce streams limit career options and create competition in certain sectors.

Theoretical Curriculum: Bookish knowledge provides limited job skills compared to the demands of the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR).

Automation Threat: World Bank data estimates that 69% of jobs in India are at risk due to automation, requiring a shift towards higher-level skills.

Key Elements of NEP Affecting Employability:

Choice Based Credit System (CBCS): The NEP introduces CBCS, a multi-disciplinary approach that provides students with flexibility in choosing courses. This allows them to accumulate and retain credits, enabling them to continue their learning journey even if they discontinue for some reason. Industry experts believe that this approach will significantly improve employability.

Flexibility and Autonomy: The policy grants greater autonomy to colleges and universities, allowing them to decide their curriculum and pedagogy. This flexibility is expected to encourage the development of more relevant and in-demand skills among students, moving away from traditional career paths.

Focus on Essential Skills: NEP emphasizes the importance of essential skills such as flexibility, swiftness, innovation, adaptability, and digital literacy. The policy expands the scope of learning beyond traditional subject-matters, making these skills an integral part of education. This shift aligns with the current industry demand for employees with a broader skill set.

Competency-Based Learning: The NEP promotes a shift from summative assessment to regular and formative assessment, focusing on competency-based learning. This approach aims to test higher-order skills, including analysis, logical thinking, and clarity, fostering a more dynamic and skill-oriented education system.

Increased Teacher Quality and Professional Development:

The National Education Policy (NEP) lays significant emphasis on attracting and retaining top-notch teachers by providing them with enhanced training, competitive salaries, and improved working conditions. NEP also focuses on offering continuous professional development programs to ensure that teachers stay abreast of the latest pedagogical techniques and possess the skills to effectively implement NEP reforms. Additionally, NEP aims to foster a culture of collaboration and innovation among teachers to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

Industry Collaboration and Skill Gap Reduction:

The National Education Policy (NEP) emphasizes the establishment of partnerships with industries and employers to design curriculum, provide internships, and mentor students. It aims to promote skill development programs

that align with industry needs and bridge the gap between academic qualifications and job requirements. Furthermore, the NEP emphasizes the need to focus on creating a more responsive education system that adapts to the changing needs of the workforce. This will ensure that students receive education that is relevant to current job market demands and enable them to transition into their careers with ease.

Higher Education Reforms:

The current trend in higher education revolves around multidisciplinary and flexible degree structures that enable students to blend subjects from different disciplines, creating a more diverse and well-rounded set of skills. In addition, there has been a greater emphasis on research and innovation as a means of boosting economic growth and creating a knowledge economy. This has led to a heightened focus on the internationalization of higher education, which seeks to promote global exposure and collaboration, further enhancing the potential of research and innovation.

Key Elements of NEP Affecting Employability in India's Revised Education System:

1. Shift from Degree-Centric to Skill-Focused:

NEP 2020 moves away from the traditional emphasis on obtaining a degree to a focus on acquiring relevant skills and knowledge for employability.

This addresses the disconnect between existing curriculum and job market needs, preventing graduates from stagnating in entry-level roles.

2. Student-Centric Learning:

The policy emphasizes student-centric learning environments, encouraging critical thinking, analytical abilities, and lifelong learning skills.

This empowers students to take ownership of their education and develop their individual strengths and interests.

3. Dual Education and Experiential Learning:

Drawing inspiration from successful models like EHL in Switzerland, NEP 2020 promotes dual education approaches combining theoretical and practical learning through internships and apprenticeships.

This equips students with hands-on experience, making them more prepared for real-world job demands.

4. Flexibility and Choice:

The policy offers greater flexibility and choice in curriculum options, allowing students to tailor their education to their specific career aspirations and passions.

This fosters a more diverse and adaptable workforce with skills relevant to various industries.

5. Continuous Updating and Industry Collaboration:

NEP 2020 emphasizes the need for continuous curriculum updates to keep pace with the evolving job market and technological advancements.

Collaboration between educational institutions and industry stakeholders ensures that learning remains relevant and in demand.

Impact on New Job Creation

1. New Opportunities in Agriculture:

Shifting Focus: NEP emphasizes improving and encouraging agricultural education, currently underrepresented and lacking in skilled graduates.

Technology Integration: Incorporating technology and the internet into agriculture can open up new avenues for processing, marketing, and consuming food.

Rural Youth Empowerment: Increased agricultural productivity through skilled professionals and technology can revitalize rural areas and offer fresh income opportunities for youth.

Supply Chain Enhancement: Improved storage, logistics, and other supply chain challenges can create off-farm employment opportunities.

2. Enhanced Employability with Technical Skills:

Skill Gap Addressal: NEP's focus on equipping professionals with cutting-edge skills in areas like AI, big data, and biotechnology aims to bridge the skill gap hindering employability.

Entrepreneurship Ecosystem: Fostering technical education can create a pool of entrepreneurs catering to the needs of "Digital India" and beyond.

Addressing Unemployment: Equipping graduates with relevant skills can potentially reduce the unemployment rate currently impacting millions in India.

3. Reviving Heritage and Culture:

Conservation Needs: Hundreds of heritage sites and museums require qualified individuals for effective management, creating new job opportunities for arts graduates.

Liberal Arts and Culture Promotion: NEP's emphasis on appreciating India's diversity through programs like "Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat" can encourage students to pursue humanities and cultural studies, leading to increased job opportunities in these fields.

4. Translation and Interpretation as a New Job Market:

Bridging Language Barriers: The establishment of an Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI) will provide a crucial service for the country and create jobs for multilingual experts.

Technology Integration: IITI's use of technology in translation and interpretation will further enhance its impact and job creation potential.

Conclusion:

The new education policy, referred to as NEP 2020, has the potential to revolutionize the Indian job market by addressing the current challenges in the education system. The policy emphasizes on flexibility, autonomy, essential skills, and competency-based learning, which aligns with the changing job market requirements. It is not just content-based learning, but also focuses on experiential knowledge to prepare students for the dynamic job market.

The policy covers critical areas like agriculture, technical skills, heritage conservation, and language accessibility, which can significantly impact job creation in India. However, successful implementation and continuous monitoring are essential to ensure that the policy effectively bridges the job readiness gap and contributes to creating a more educated and employable Indian population. To realize its full potential, the NEP 2020 policy requires sustained innovation and successful implementation. It will enable education to empower individuals for a fulfilling and productive career, ultimately leading to a brighter future for the Indian economy.

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