

Employability in India and New Education Policy - 2020

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Abstract

Looking at the employment scenario in the country, it is felt by all that all supply side constraints and demand side constraints should be taken care of. Supply side constraints include raising the employability of students whose solution lies in bringing about a change in the educational landscape of the country by imparting right kind of knowledge, skill and attitude for employability. The Skill India Report 2020 corroborates the fact that students even at the higher education level do lack such knowledge and skill that are required for employability. The New Education policy 2020 has envisaged to impart such necessary knowledge, skill and attitude for enhancing the employability of students.

KEYWORDS: Employability, Skill India Report, New Education Policy 2020

Introduction:

The importance of information and knowledge in augmenting the process of development had already been highlighted in National Education policy 1986. It also had given emphasis on development of skills of students along with knowledge and value. Vocational education was also promised to be promoted in order to create a skilled manpower to cater to the needs of the production sector.¹ However, the Skill India Report 2020 gives a gloomy picture of the employment sector in India where it is found that even the highly educated is found to be not employable, or they are not found suitable for employment by the employers. This means they are lacking in skill, understanding and personal attributes – that makes them more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy. If this is the fate of the highly educated, we can very well imagine as to what happens to those who become drop outs after the secondary stage or those who never get the opportunity to get enrolled to the next stage of education. This paper tries to analyze the Skill India Report 2020 to study the employability scenario in India and discusses as to how the New Education Policy 2020 has tried to address the issue of employability.

Objectives:

The objectives of this paper are the following:

1. To make an analysis of the Skill Report to assess the employability scenario in the country.
2. To find out as to how the New Education policy 2020 addresses the issue of employability.

Methodology:

This is a purely exploratory study. The paper basically makes an effort to analyse two reports prepared by the Government of India, one is the Skill India report 2020 and the other one is the New Education policy 2020 which promises to address many issues relating to our education system, one of which is employability of our children.

The Skill India Report 2020 has made an in-depth study of employability amongst the fresh candidates joining the workforce. This is a joint initiative by People Strong, a Global Talent Assessment Company, in collaboration with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) along with partners like UNDP, AICTE, and AIU. It analyses the readiness of the fresh candidates for various job types available in the new job market and the skills that employers seek in prospective candidates for employment. Taking seven important domains such as undergraduate or equivalent, ITI, Polytechnic, PG or equivalent (MCAC/ M.A/ M.Com/C.A/ M.Tech, Management or equivalent (MBA,PGDM), Graduates (B.Sc./B.BA/B.Com/B.Tech), the report highlights the two sides and compares them to understand the prevalent gaps, discusses and puts forth possible solutions that could help in improving the employability scenario in India.

Analysis of Skill India 2020 report:

A detail analysis of the key findings shows that around 46% of India's youth are only job ready or employable and this figure has remained static since 2017-18. MBA-holders are the highest employable group among the various course graduates with an employability score of 54%. Engineers who were at the top in 2019 came down to the second position. Employability for pass-outs of B.Pharma, B.com, BA and Polytechnics has improved a lot and it has remained at about 15%. Further, a decline in employability was seen in B.Tech, Engineering. MCA graduates, Technical & Computer-related courses as per the skill report. On the basis of the educational qualifications in demand, engineers have been expected to be hired the most (30%), closely followed by general graduates (BA/B.com/BSc.) (26%). The state of employability in the group mentioned in the Skill report has not improved over the last few years, despite a rise of enrollment.

The employability figure for the male and female candidates has undergone a change as compared to the previous year. It was 48% and 46% respectively for male and female in the year 2018. It became 46% and 47% respectively for male and female in the year 2019. It shows that employability among women is on the rise and they are no less than male in terms of employability. But despite this, the intent for 2020 reflects a likely hiring ratio of 71:29 for Male to Female candidates. This will be more prominent in the Auto sector. These findings heightened the concern over gender parity in the forthcoming years. Creating equal employment opportunities for men and women, and supporting women workforce is a major focus of the skill report.

Talking about the regional disparity in employability of candidates, the skill report points out that states like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh were more employable than any other states. Similarly, cities like Mumbai, Hyderabad and Pune were the most

employable cities among all cities of India. Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have jumped up the ladder by more than seven positions, when compared with the past year's data. The city of Hyderabad, which previously was not faring so well, has been added to the list. The reasons of such differences in employability among states and among cities is perhaps, educational environment in these places are responsive enough to take care of the employability aspect of education.

The report further states that employers have a preference for employees having 1-5 years of experience over freshers. The skills which employers seek on while selecting candidates are domain knowledge, adaptability to the environment, learning agility and positive attitude. In terms of quality of the talent available, 42% employers say "most" job seekers satisfy their requirement, but majority of them (53%) say that they do not.

Internship and skill development is a very important aspect of employability. Apprenticeship, Internship not only helps in developing skill and competencies, it helps in developing the right attitude of candidates towards work. As per the skill report, 85% candidates were seeking internship opportunities with organizations, and more than 65% of students asked for support from educational institutions for the skill training and internship needs. However, only 60% students were aware of the Government of India's National Apprenticeship Scheme among students.

Some of the reasons of lack of employability are knowledge inadequacy amongst the candidates, lack of attitude etc. A major factor contributing to knowledge inadequacy is outdated curriculum and lack of practical knowledge owing to existing emphasis on theory-based learning. Further, attitude of the candidates is to chase paychecks, white-collared jobs and hop between jobs quite frequently, which are not quite conducive for growth of a firm. It emphasized on re-skilling the workforce to meet the requirement of changing jobs and collaborating with educational institutions and training centers to skill people. The skill report advised for updating curriculum as per the industry's requirements in collaboration with industry experts and the government. It has suggested for improving the education system, by enhancing the infrastructural facilities such as laboratories, research centers, faculties and imparting hands-on knowledge, keeping the students updated on industry trends through frequent industrial visits, internships and guest lectures. It has suggested for inculcating in students the attitude of continuous learning and unlearning, adapt to the changing work environment and pursue the course and /or career they are truly passionate about.

Employability and NEP2020:

Taking up all these challenges the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions imparting 21st century employability skills. The idea of a liberal or a multi-disciplinary education at the undergraduate (UG) level and also a type of four-year structuring of secondary education provides a lot of opportunities for picking up many types of skills, which can be even used as employment generating.

Early childhood Care and Education:

The New Education policy has suggested for improving quality of teaching since the early childhood, as 80% brain development of a child takes place at a very early age. NEP 2020 emphasizes the critical importance of Early Childhood Care Education(ECCE)demanding appropriate care and stimulation of the brain in early years.³ Studies all around the globe have recognized the significance of ECCE. Children who have participated in quality ECCE exhibit tremendous gain in their overall social, cognitive and intellectual development, contributed to breaking the cycle of poverty; it also offers an entry point and platform for improving social equity and inclusion.⁴ Presently, quality ECCE is not available to crores of young children, particularly children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This weak foundation ultimately results in a very weak educational outcome among children. To do away with this problem, NEP-2020 has highlighted on requisite pedagogical and curricular changes in the Foundational Stage. The focus is on five years of flexible, multilevel, play/activity-based learning in this stage. It has suggested for various aspects of more formal but interactive classroom learning, including reading, writing, speaking, physical education, art, languages, science, and mathematics.

NEP 2020 has envisaged to carry forward this approach even at the Middle Stage. This stage will comprise three years of education with greater emphasis on learning of subjects and discussion of the more abstract concepts in each subject. The Secondary Stage will comprise of four years of multidisciplinary study, building on the subject-oriented pedagogical and curricular style of the Middle Stage, but with greater depth, greater critical thinking, greater attention to life aspirations, and greater flexibility and student choice of subjects.⁵ Further, students would continue to have the option of exiting after Grade 10 and re-entering in the next phase to pursue vocational or any other courses available in Grades 11-12, including at a more specialized school, as per their choice. This sort of flexibility in choice of subjects and the curricular and pedagogical design, if properly implemented would lead to enhanced learning.

Holistic Development of Learners

The aim of education as per the NEP 2020 is to achieve not only cognitive development of learners, building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key 21st century skills is yet another goal of NEP 2020. For attaining this goal, all aspects of curriculum and pedagogy will be reoriented and revamped. Identification of specific sets of skills and values across domains would be made for integration and incorporation at each stage of learning. Curriculum frameworks and transaction mechanisms will be developed for ensuring that these skills and values are imbibed through engaging processes of teaching and learning. Through this, a paradigm shift in the objective of curriculum and pedagogy reform is envisaged in the new education policy across all stages. The focus here will be on learning how to learn not just learning through rote memorization.

Reduce curriculum content to enhance essential learning and critical thinking

A major policy that would ensure employability among children is enhancement of critical thinking skill. Thinking critically is the ability to analyze a concept objectively, considering the facts and differing perspectives to reach a sound, logical conclusion. Due to the quickly changing employment landscape and global ecosystem, it is to be ensured that children not only learn, but more importantly they should learn how to learn. Content will be reduced so that it will not be a burden, focus will be on key contents. But, learning as to how to think critically and solve problems, how to be creative and multidisciplinary, and how to innovate, adapt, and absorb in changing fields would be the focus of NEP 2020. Pedagogy must evolve to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centered, discussion-based, flexible, and, of course, enjoyable.⁶

Experiential learning

Adoption of experiential learning is expected to help in explorations of relations among different subjects, increasing the scope of greater exposure to subject domain. Experiential Learning is a holistic adaptive process on learning that merges experience, perception, cognition, and behavior.⁷ In the New Education policy, it is envisaged that at all stages, experiential learning will be adopted, including hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education, story-telling-based pedagogy. Classroom transactions will shift towards competency-based learning and education to close the gap in achievement of learning outcomes. The assessment tools will also be as per the learning outcomes.

Empower students through flexibility in course choices

Students as per the previous system were being forced to study subjects as it was being offered to them in schools irrespective of their lack of interest in the subjects. This was not only burdensome for them, it was resulting in poor learning outcome as well. The present policy has taken care of this aspect and has suggested for increased flexibility and choice of subjects to study, particularly in secondary schools - including subjects in physical education, the arts and crafts, and vocational skills. Vocational education shall start from class 6th and there will be provision for internship. 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.⁸ Subjects such as physical education, the arts and crafts, and vocational skills, in addition to science, humanities, and mathematics, will be incorporated throughout the school curriculum, with a consideration for what is interesting and safe at each age. This will leave students with ample opportunities to choose the subjects as per their choice and interest. This will enable students to design their own career paths as per their interest and goals. Further, along with general education, different vocations, art, craft, games and sports activities will flourish resulting in wider career choices for students.

The New Education Policy has further envisaged that the flexibility in choice of subjects would be in accordance with what may be possible in different regions. Consideration for inclusion of shorter modules, or courses that are taught on alternate days, in order to allow an exposure to more subjects and enable greater flexibility is yet another thought of this policy.

Multilingualism and the power of language

It is understood that young children learn and grasp nontrivial concepts more quickly in their home language/mother tongue. This New Education Policy, giving thrust on home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language has advocated for making it the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond. This will be followed by both public and private schools. All textbooks, including will be made available in home languages/mother tongue. All efforts will be made early on to ensure that any gaps that exist between the language spoken by the child and the medium of teaching are bridged. Teachers will be encouraged to use a bilingual approach, including bilingual teaching-learning materials, with those students whose home language may be different from the medium of instruction.

Along with the freedom to choose subjects effort would be made to impart many skills to them. Some of these are proficiency in languages, scientific temper and evidence-based thinking; creativity and innovativeness; sense of aesthetics and art; oral and written communication; health and nutrition; physical education, fitness, wellness, and sports; collaboration and teamwork; problem solving and logical reasoning; vocational exposure and skills; digital literacy, coding, and computational thinking; ethical and moral reasoning; knowledge and practice of human and Constitutional values; gender sensitivity; fundamental duties; citizenship skills and values; knowledge of India; environmental awareness including water and resource conservation, sanitation and hygiene; and current affairs and knowledge of critical issues facing local communities, states, the country, and the world.⁸ Concerted curricular and pedagogical initiatives, including the introduction of contemporary subjects such as Artificial Intelligence, Design Thinking, Holistic Health, Organic Living, Environmental Education, Global Citizenship Education (GCED), etc. at relevant stages will be undertaken to develop these various important skills in students at all levels.

These are some of the reforms which are envisaged in the New Education Policy 2020. These include appropriate pedagogical change across all stages, an exhaustive list of skills many of which are essential to cope with the dynamics of the twenty first century. With proper implementation, it has the potential of bringing about a radical change in the educational landscape of the country, giving hope and aspirations to millions of children to improve their life and livelihood by making them employable, socially desirable, productive human beings.

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