

Chapter 9

Can New Education Policy 2020 Serve as a Paradigm Shift to the Employability Gap in India? A Viewpoint

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ABSTRACT

Employment and employability have lately surfaced as a significant concern for India that stands as the world's second central higher education system. The post-COVID-19 era further demanded a comprehensive policy at the national level. The Indian government approved the new education policy (NEP), bringing changes to higher education in the country on 29th July 2020. After an exhaustive reading of all education policies published in Indian literature, the authors present this viewpoint chapter, contributing to the extant literature on education policies in the following three ways. The first purpose is to evaluate and compare the current NEP 2020 to the last two educational policies of 1968 and 1986 to understand how far each policy could realize the goal of employability. The second purpose is to adumbrate the gaps between industry and academia in the proposed NEP 2020 to propose some transformative steps to fill the outlined gap. Thirdly, the main findings are depicted through a graphical representation to give some directions for future policy and research in employability.

INTRODUCTION

Employment and employability have recently surfaced as a significant dilemma for India that requires immediate attention (Tilak, 2020). Previous researchers have given various definitions of employability that include knowledge, attitude, and skills that increase the capability of gaining employment (Khare, 2014). Employability is primarily looked upon as an ‘attribute’ covering a spectrum of ‘getting a graduate job’ and a ‘product of skillful career planning and interview technique’ (Yorke & Knight, 2004, 2006). The employability concerns were identified even among the educated youth who lack the desired skills, thus exacting the need for plugging the existing gaps in the education system (Khare, 2014). In the words of Malcolm X, “Education is the visa to the future, for tomorrow has a place for the individuals who get ready for it today.” According to the India skills report, only 46.21% of the educated youth was found employable in 2019, highlighting a severe apprehension towards the existing policies. The ineffectiveness of direct job creation to tackle employment issues has been corroborated across the world (Mehta, 2020). As per the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economics (CMIE), the employment rate skyrocketed to 23.5 percent in April and May due to the hard lockdown in post COVID eras (Chaturvedi et. al, 2020).

Moreover, adapting skills to the fast-changing industry norms, complex environments, and stakeholder needs is posited as a significant challenge (Pillai et al., 2019). Previous researchers have highlighted the growing skill gap (Pillai et al., 2019) resulting in the lack of preparedness of the graduate students that results in the predicament of staying or leaving the job. Employers face challenges in identifying graduates with the proper skill set (Verma et al., 2018). In this context, a NEP with a practical vision and a comprehensive macro-economic and sectoral policy roadmap for achieving the country’s employment goal was urgently required. To bridge this gap, the Ministry of Human Resource development approved the new education policy (NEP), bringing changes to higher education in the country on 29th July 2020. The policy aims to increase the employment prospects for youth and replaced the 34-year-old National Policy on Education encircled in 1986 and is planned for making several changes in school and higher education frameworks in India (Hindustan Times, 2020). Researchers have emphasized the need for a multidisciplinary approach for curriculum design to fabricate innovative and flexible learning environments to address the concerns (Kays, Jones, & Sims, 2006). For instance, we can think of opening multidisciplinary schools on the same campus to promote interdisciplinary research. The education system is facing the coercion stakeholder requirements (Ball, 2017) that demand the knowledge (Chaturvedi & Singh, 2021) and expertise of students beyond the extant education system. Several skills, including decision making, problem-solving, communication, critical thinking ability, must be embedded into the course curriculum for the success of students (WEF, 2016). Researchers have attested the ability of students to accelerate their learning in the presence of opportunity (Joyace & Weil, 2017). Scholars can attain this by offering a highly integrated platform and a holistic education system (Pillai et al., 2019). Previous researchers have raised concerns over the extant education system of India and its capacity for creating a competitive workforce, e.g., Tilak (2020), Pillai et al. (2019). The question that arises here is about the potential of the NEP to provide that holistic education system to address the gap in employment. Therefore, we present a critical overview of the NEP 2020 in the present analysis. To explore how far the NEP 2020 could address this gap, the authors, through the following sections, have discussed the salient features of the three educational policies of 1968, 1986, and NEP 2020, respectively, to understand a better picture of our education system in detail. For this purpose, the present chapter is divided into three sections. The first section talks about the historic three education policies of 1968, 1986, and 2020 of the Indian Education systems. This section deals with salient features of all the three significant

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