

## National Education Policy 2020: Vocational training in schools

~ Sujata C



Vocational training empowers individuals to set up respectable lives for themselves without depending on others. In other words, it places their futures in their hands. Preparing students for a specific vocation at the right time gives them a clear direction in life. It provides them with a direct pathway to a lucrative career. Too many options and choices also confuse students who are already quite unclear about their life goals.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has now entered this learning scenario with its recommendations and ideas. When one reads the National Education Policy 2020, the first thing that strikes us as far as vocational training is considered is that it is a throwback to Gandhian principles of education. *Nai Talim*<sup>1</sup> was penned by Gandhi in 1937 to revamp education at a time when, during the days of the British rule, the system was trying to create a distinction between knowledge and work. Vocational training was seen as second-class

<sup>1</sup> An educational curriculum envisaged and promoted by Mahatma Gandhi based on the pedagogical principle of “basic education for all”. The principal idea in it is to impart the whole education of the body, mind and soul through the handicraft taught to children.

education, fit only for those who did not have the acumen to take up the training of mainstream education. The Gandhian approach was a clear departure from this – it was rooted for a holistic approach to education that enhanced the mind, body and spirit.

“Vocations are the best medium for all round development of a boy or girl; therefore, the syllabus should be woven around vocational training.”

M K Gandhi, 1937



Gandhi wanted everyone to undergo craft-centric and skill-oriented trainings like pottery, weaving, carpet making, gardening, basket weaving, etc. Dignity of labour and skill-based learning were the trademark Gandhian style of education, through which he wanted to rid community-based vocations of the caste tag and annihilate casteism. However, that was the time of the British Raj and Thomas Macauley’s ideas and notions shaped the Indian education. One wonders what would have happened had Gandhi’s ideas come to fruition. Would it have helped build a robust education system in India that could have quite possibly eradicated the problems we are facing today – high unemployability and joblessness.

There was a time when across the world children were taught skills of wood working, tailoring, cooking as part of the curriculum. But in India there were two distinct sections of people – one who sent their children to do one year

diploma courses in polytechnic institutes and ITIs (Industrial Training Institutes) and others who sent them to colleges for three year graduate courses. While the former was considered lowbrow and meant for the working class, these students were picking up applicable job-oriented skills. However, that too changed with time as higher education in colleges and universities became the norm.

**Skill training in the world:** According to World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report 2019, Switzerland tops the ranking in skilled workforce. Up to 70% of its secondary school students participate in vocational education training system (VET), according to a report drawn up by the Centre for International Education Benchmarking (CIEB) in 2015. From the age of sixteen, most young people stop full time education and rotate between school, inter-company courses and hands-on experience in a workplace setting for 3-4 years, receiving both a substantial wage and a crucial introduction to the world of work. In countries like Korea, Japan, Germany and UK, percentage of skilled workforce ranges between 68-96%. In contrast, India's skilled workforce figures are abysmally low.



The NEP seems to have taken this into cognisance and recast its priorities for the future of Indian education. Here are some of the highlights of NEP 2020:

- NEP 2020 will form the foundation for the new and comprehensive National Curricular Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2020-21 that will be developed by NCERT.
- For the past few years the government has spotlighted skill-based learning in its vision and mission. The NEP takes it forward by incorporating vocational training at middle school. It proposes a fluid

relation between the arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams. Schools will start offering vocational education from the 6th grade, and it will also include internships.

- The NEP proposes exposing at least 50 per cent learners to vocational education. According to the proposed policy, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) will frame a practice-based curriculum for Grades 6 to 8. With regard to vocational training, NEP 2020 states, "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, metalwork, gardening, pottery making, etc., as decided by states and local communities and as mapped by local skilling needs."
- All students of classes 6 to 8 will participate in a 10-day bag less period when students will intern with local vocational experts such as carpenters, gardeners, potters, artists, etc. Similar opportunities for grades 6 to 12 will be conducted during holidays.

The online availability of vocational courses will also be ensured keeping in line with the emphasis on online and digital education in the New Education Policy. According to the new policy, all types of enrichment activities involving arts, quizzes, sports, and vocational crafts would include 'bagless' days throughout the year. Schools will also set up meetings with local artists and craftsmen, and visits to higher educational institutes in their respective village, tehsil, district, or state. School students will also be exposed to outside activities periodically through visits to places of historical, cultural and tourist importance, including monuments, museums.

### **Why we need to bring back vocational training?**

- Academically oriented students also need a back-up plan and an opportunity to learn a trade.
- There is a shortage of skilled workers in the manufacturing sector. Vocational training will not only help in filling the gap but also create employment.



- There is a skill mismatch – people are not trained for the kind of jobs that are currently available. Therefore, most people end up doing the job they were not trained for.
- Not all students are cut out for college education. If forced down the college path, they tend to become drifters in life. Vocational training gives them the required skills to prove their mettle in areas they have a natural acumen for.



**Mind-set change:** We need a mind-set shift and stop job shaming. There is nothing to be ashamed about if someone wants to open a shop to repair smartphones or bicycles for that matter. The post-pandemic world has thrown up a new trend in western countries where students are starting jobs right after



school rather than going to college. Vocational education/training in Finland is open not only to students but also to adults who want to try their hand at something different at any point in their professional career. The idea is to leave the option open for people to pursue their passions at a later stage in life.

**Demographic dividend:** United Nations data puts youth population (15-29 years) at 1.8 billion globally in 2020, 20% of which is in India. This means every fifth youth in the world lives in India. To leverage this demographic dividend the employability quotient of youth has to be improved. The International Labour Organisation has observed that the quick pace of economic, social and technological change is throwing up new opportunities in a highly connected world economy. People's skills and capabilities, and investment in education and training, are the key to economic and social development. Skills and training enhance productivity and income, and enables everyone's participation in economic and social life.

It is high time vocation training is given a makeover and presented as a lucrative career option to students without any tags (downmarket/upmarket) attached to it. While the young are bearing the brunt of the disruption caused due to

COVID, they can counter this crisis by upskilling themselves. The pandemic has shown the importance of being a lifelong learner who can sail through the rough seas of life. It has brought about a lot of unexpected changes. Millions of people have lost their jobs and entire industries have been disrupted. Companies are folding up or massively downsizing their employee strength. These changes are forcing us to reorganize our priorities. What felt extremely important a few months ago, does not seem to matter as much any more. Viewed from this perspective, vocational training in schools might after all be the solution to many of the challenges we face today.

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## Lesson Plan: NEP 2020 and Vocational Training in Schools

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Teachers would do a great service to student community if they can guide students through various professional options to help them stand on their own feet.



➤ Ask students what they like and then show them how they can make a career out of it. Here are a few examples:

- An interest in carpentry can be pursued to make a career in furniture design.
- A career in ceramics – design and study – is a viable option for those interested in pottery.



- Jewellery design or bangle making is another career path. Intern with a goldsmith or silversmith to get exposure to the tricks of the trade. Spend time training with lac bangle makers. Once suitably trained with enough knowledge about the trade as well as the market, one can set up one's own business/enterprise.

- An interest in needlework can lead to a career in dress making and costume designing. Spend about four weeks as an intern with a seamstress or choose a vocational training course in fashion designing or technology.
  - Auto body technology can be a great option for those who have a thing for cars and bikes. Intern at the local auto workshop to pick the trade.
  - Many girls love flowers – they can make a career out of it by becoming a floriculturist, aroma therapist or flower designer/decorator/florist, etc.
  - Start-up one's own business or social enterprise in the field of one's choice.
- Conduct a workshop for parents on mindset shift with regard to career choices.
  - Curate and present stories from real-life about individuals who made a career shift to follow their passion as well as uphold the dignity of labour.
  - Engage students in a debate to argue the pros and cons of academic studies versus vocational training.
  - Invite a start-up founder for a lecture on the joys of starting up one's own venture.

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## Métier (noun)

# METIER

**Pronunciation:** /'mɛtʃeɪ/

**Meaning:** An occupation or activity that one is good at; an outstanding or advantageous characteristic

**Origin and additional information:** *Métier* is a French word that was borrowed by English speakers and incorporated into the language in the late eighteenth century. The earliest known use of the word was in 1792.

Use over time for: *métier*



**Word section:** The word has popularly come to be referred to a specific sustained activity that one is engaged in especially in earning one's living. *Métier* also implies a calling or a pursuit that one believes is suited for.

While borrowed from French, the etymological origin of *métier* goes back to Old French *mistier* or *mestier* (meaning divine service, function, duty, craft, profession, etc.). It is in fact considered the Latinization of Anglo-French for the word comes from late Latin *misterium*, a variant of *ministerium* (meaning *service*).

Detailed word origin and explanation of *métier*

DICTIONARY ENTRY	LANGUAGE	DEFINITION
ministerium	Latin ( <i>lat</i> )	Employment, ministration. Ministry (office of a minister).
mysterium	Latin ( <i>lat</i> )	Mystery (secret rite or worship). Secret.
*misterium	Vulgar Latin ( <i>la-vul</i> )	
mestier	Old French ( <i>fro</i> )	Job; occupation; employment.
métier	French ( <i>fra</i> )	Job; profession.

**Usage:**

1. *That the business of fashion was of great interest to Daves didn't preclude her enjoyment of the metier.*  
(Source: Laird Borrelli-persson, *Vogue*, "A New Book, 1950s in Vogue, Celebrates Jessica Daves, the Magazine's Editor from 1952-1962," 16 Dec. 2019)
2. *But having been sacked from field command and kicked upstairs to the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Army, he found his true métier as an administrator and reformer.*  
(Source: <https://www.lexico.com/definition/metier>)
3. *Born in a family that has been into weaving for the last 75 years, Govardhan's métier is telia rumaal, a textile craft that earlier involved vegetable dye.*  
(Source: <https://www.lexico.com/definition/metier>)