



Awareness Among Students Regarding Skill Development & Employability Enhancement Program Aspects Of Nep - A Study Conducted in Autonomous Higher Educational Institutions at Suburban Mumbai

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) emphasizes skill development programs to enhance employability, aiming to bridge the gap between education and industry needs. These initiatives focus on equipping students with practical skills and knowledge essential for career success. The objectives of this study are to evaluate students' awareness of skill development opportunities and assess their understanding of employability enhancements promoted by the National Education Policy (NEP). The study findings examines student awareness of skill development programs, finding that internships and apprenticeships are the most recognized initiatives, supported primarily by college notifications. While awareness of free online courses is notable, many students lack familiarity with other options. The study highlights varying levels of familiarity with employability enhancement programs, with Skill Development Programs leading in recognition. Institutional communications are vital sources of information. Overall, there is a need to boost engagement in less popular programs to enhance student employability.

Key Words: National Education Policy, Skill Development Program, Employability Enhancement Program, Higher Education, Autonomous institutions

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places significant emphasis on **Skill Development** and **Employability Enhancement Programs** at higher educational institutions, particularly autonomous ones. The policy aims to bridge the gap between academic learning and industry needs, ensuring that students are not only academically proficient but also equipped with practical, job-ready skills. In autonomous institutions, where there is flexibility in curriculum design, this initiative is even more impactful.

Skill Development Programs focus on imparting both technical and soft skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and digital literacy, which are essential in today's dynamic job market. These programs encourage hands-on learning through internships, apprenticeships, and real-world projects.

Employability Enhancement Programs, on the other hand, target the holistic development of students by aligning their education with career opportunities. These include career counseling, resume-building workshops, interview preparation, and industry collaborations. The aim is to enhance students' readiness to enter the workforce by providing them with the skills and knowledge demanded by employers.

Through these initiatives, autonomous higher educational institutions in India are empowered to tailor their curricula to foster innovation and entrepreneurial mindsets, making graduates more adaptable and employable in various industries. NEP 2020's vision is to create a robust framework that ensures India's youth are future-ready, competitive, and equipped to meet global standards.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A paper titled “**Vocational Education and Skill Enhancement in the NEP 2020**” aims to study the current state of vocational education and skill development under NEP 2020. The study reveals that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to integrate vocational education into mainstream education, with a focus on industry linkages, skill gap analysis, and local opportunities. By 2025, 50% of learners are expected to have vocational exposure, contributing to the nation’s economic growth. The policy seeks to overcome societal hierarchies associated with vocational education and foster lifelong learning. Challenges include a lack of awareness, social biases, and limited industry engagement. Successful implementation requires partnerships with industry and innovative practices in vocational training to enhance employability and self-reliance in India. (Sanjay Kumar, 2022)

A study titled “**Skill Development Opportunities and Their Influence on Employability of Students**” aims to explore categories of skill development programs available to students and understand students’ perceptions and satisfaction levels with these programs. The study shows that a majority of students believe vocational training is essential for skill acquisition and employment. Many emphasize the importance of subject-related skills for job readiness, with most respondents identifying the ideal age for employment as 18-23 years. Factors like practical skills and awareness of vocational courses significantly influence educational choices. Government initiatives, particularly in entrepreneurship, are seen as crucial for enhancing skill development. The research underscores the important connection between skill development and employability, recommending curriculum reforms to better align education with industry needs. (Chaurasia & Veeriah, 2023)

The paper “**A Study on the Role of NEP 2020: Skill Development Among Commerce Students via Short-Term Course**” examines skill development in commerce students. It reports significant improvements in presentation skills after a 30-hour course, with self-confidence rising from 40% to 80% and leadership abilities increasing from 32% to 96%. A paired sample t-test confirmed these changes as statistically significant, supporting the hypothesis that short-term training enhances skills. The findings underscore the effectiveness of NEP 2020 in promoting skill-oriented education essential for improving employability and aligning education with industry needs. (Mehta, 2024)

The study “**NEP 2020’s Contribution to Generating Employment Opportunities Through Student Skill Development**” analyzes the significant skills gap in India, where only 4.7% of the workforce receives formal training. Despite initiatives like the Skill India Mission, Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) are underutilized. NEP 2020 aims to integrate vocational education from sixth grade to enhance employability. The research projects the creation of 23 lakh jobs and an economic boost of ₹47 lakh crores in seven years, highlighting the urgent need for timely skilling and upskilling to meet job market demands. (Gedar & Yadav, 2023)

The paper “**Perception of Teachers Towards Vocational Education for Secondary School Students in NEP 2020**” assesses teachers’ opinions on vocational courses in NEP 2020. It finds no significant differences between male and female teachers in their perceptions of vocational education’s impact on student development or skill enhancement. The study highlights a prevailing view of vocational education as inferior, along with challenges like inadequate teacher training and societal stigma. Recommendations include improving teacher training, redesigning curricula, and increasing community engagement to enhance the perception and effectiveness of vocational education in India. (Mahajan, 2024)

3. RESEARCH GAP

Existing studies on vocational education and skill development under NEP 2020 highlight various aspects but lack a comprehensive understanding of students’ awareness and perceptions of these programs. They focus on skill acquisition and employability outcomes without examining students’ specific awareness of skill development opportunities. Additionally, while the role of teachers and administrators is emphasized, students’ perspectives are often overlooked. There is also insufficient research targeting autonomous higher educational institutions in suburban Mumbai, which may face unique challenges. Thus, the current study aims to address these gaps and provide insights into students’ awareness regarding skill development and employability enhancement programs.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To evaluate students’ awareness of the skill development opportunities outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP).
- 2) To assess the level of understanding among students about the employability enhancements promoted by the National Education Policy (NEP).

5. HYPOTHESIS STATEMENTS

H_0 = There is no significant difference in the awareness about skill development programs across different levels of study among students in autonomous higher education institutions.

H_0 = There is no significant difference in the awareness about employability enhancement programs across different levels of study among students in autonomous higher education institutions.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Type of Research

The current study adopts a descriptive research design aimed at systematically gathering information about students' awareness of skill development and employability enhancement programs under NEP 2020.

6.2 Area of Study

The research is conducted in suburban Mumbai i.e. Borivali to Bandra, focusing on autonomous higher educational institutions in the region.

6.3 Sampling Method

The study employs a convenient sampling technique to select participants.

6.4 Target Population and Sample Size

The target population consists of students enrolled in autonomous higher educational institutions, with a sample size of 158 participants.

6.5 Type and Source of Data

This study is based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire features open-ended and closed-ended questions aimed at addressing the study's objectives.

6.6 Statistical Tools Used

Data is organized using graphs to present information in a clear and accessible manner. For hypothesis testing, the study utilizes the Chi-square test and the Kruskal-Wallis test.

7. Limitations of the Study

- 1) A sample size of 158 is a limitation; the findings may vary with a larger sample size.
- 2) The study is limited to the suburban area of Mumbai, specifically from Bandra to Borivali, and does not include other regions.

8. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Fig. 8.1 Demographic Details of the respondents

Demographic Variables		Count
Gender	Female	78
	Male	80
Studying in	Under Graduation	136
	Post Graduation	22

Source: Primary Data

Objective 1: To evaluate students' awareness of the skill development opportunities outlined in the National Education Policy (NEP)

Fig. 8.2 Awareness level about skill development opportunities provided by the National Education Policy (NEP)

Particulars	Fully Aware	Somewhat Aware	Not Aware
Internships and apprenticeships	73	69	16
Free online courses	65	68	25
Study abroad programs	45	67	46
Vocational training programs	44	71	43
Entrepreneurship support initiatives	48	70	40
Industry collaborations and partnerships	48	72	38
Digital literacy workshops	47	71	40
Research and innovation grants	52	67	39

Source: Primary Data

The data shows that students have different levels of awareness about various skill development programs. Internships and apprenticeships are the most well-known, with 73 students being fully aware. Free online courses are also popular, though many students are only somewhat or not aware of them. Awareness of study abroad and vocational training programs is mixed, with many students only somewhat aware or unaware. Research and innovation grants have a similar spread, indicating a need for more awareness. Overall, students know about these programs, but full awareness varies across the different categories.

Fig. 8.3 Main source of your information / awareness about the skill development opportunities provided by the National Education Policy (NEP)

Particulars	Count
University or college notifications	123
Faculty or academic advisors	9
NEP official website	11
Social media and online forums	9
Workshops and seminars	2
Peer recommendations	0
Government publications or brochures	2

Source: Primary Data

The data shows that university or college notifications are the primary source of information about skill development and employability programs, with 123 students relying on them. In contrast, other sources like faculty advisors, the NEP official website, and social media have much lower engagement, each with only 9 to 11 students. Workshops, seminars, and government publications are the least used, with minimal or no awareness coming from peer recommendations. This suggests that institutions play a central role in raising awareness, while other channels are underutilized.

Fig. 8.4 Skill development programs offered by your college/institute

Particulars	Count
Internships and apprenticeships	126
Free online courses	21
Study abroad programs	2
Vocational training programs	2
Entrepreneurship support initiatives	2
Industry collaborations and partnerships	1
Digital literacy workshops	1
Research and innovation grants	3

Source: Primary Data

The data shows that internships and apprenticeships are by far the most utilized skill development and employability program, with 126 students engaging in them. Free online courses follow distantly with 21 participants, while all other initiatives, such as study abroad programs, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support, have minimal engagement (1-3 students). Industry collaborations, digital literacy workshops, and research grants have the least participation. This highlights a strong preference for internships, while other valuable opportunities remain largely untapped by students.

Objective 2: To assess the level of understanding among students about the employability enhancements promoted by the National Education Policy (NEP)

Fig. 8.5 Familiar with the following employability enhancement programs promoted by the National Education Policy (NEP)

Particulars	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Neutral	Not very familiar	Not at all familiar
Skill Development Programs	73	51	18	9	7
Internships and Industry Exposure	52	63	23	9	11
Entrepreneurship Education	52	58	27	10	11
Career Counseling Services	48	61	27	13	9
Vocational Training	40	58	34	15	11
Digital Literacy Initiatives	36	65	36	12	9
Industry-Academia Partnerships	36	60	30	17	15
Competency-Based Learning	39	55	36	13	15

Source: Primary Data

The data reveals varying levels of familiarity among students with different educational and career-focused programs. Skill Development Programs are the most familiar, with 73 students being "Very Familiar." Internships and Entrepreneurship Education also show strong familiarity, though a notable portion of students fall into the "Somewhat Familiar" category. Digital literacy, industry-academia partnerships, and competency-based learning programs have more mixed responses, with a significant number of students being only "Somewhat Familiar" or neutral. Overall, there is a general awareness of these initiatives, but deeper familiarity is inconsistent across the categories.

Fig. 8.6 Main sources of information / awareness about the employability enhancement programs promoted by the National Education Policy (NEP)

Particulars	Count
College or university official communications	124
Faculty or academic advisors	8
NEP-related workshops or seminars	8
University website or online portals	7
Peer or student groups	4
Social media platforms	5
Government or educational policy documents	1
Career counselling sessions	1

Source: Primary Data

The data shows that college or university official communications are the primary source of information for students, with 124 relying on them. Other sources, such as faculty advisors, NEP-related workshops, and university websites, have significantly lower engagement, each with only 7-8 students. Peer groups, social media, and government documents are even less utilized, with only 1-5 students accessing information through these channels. Career counseling sessions have the lowest influence, suggesting that students heavily depend on institutional communications while other valuable resources remain underutilized.

Fig. 8.7 Employability enhancement programs offered by your college/institute

Particulars	Count
Skill Development Programs	78
Internships and Industry Exposure	60
Entrepreneurship Education	9
Career Counselling Services	5
Vocational Training	4
Digital Literacy Initiatives	2
Industry-Academia Partnerships	0
Competency-Based Learning	0

Source: Primary Data

The data indicates that Skill Development Programs are the most popular, with 78 students participating, showing a strong focus on this area. Internships and Industry Exposure follow with 60 participants, while other initiatives like Entrepreneurship Education, Career Counseling, and Vocational Training have far fewer students engaged. Digital Literacy, Industry-Academia Partnerships, and Competency-Based Learning have minimal or no participation. This suggests that while skill development and internships and industry exposure are the priority, other critical areas of student growth and employability are significantly underutilized.

9. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

H₀ = There is no significant difference in the awareness about skill development programs across different levels of study among students in autonomous higher education institutions

Fig. 8.8 Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics^a

	Internships and apprenticeships	Free online courses	Study abroad programs	Vocational training programs	Entrepreneurship support initiatives	Industry collaborations and partnerships	Digital literacy workshops	Research and innovation grants
Mann-Whitney U	1427.000	1335.500	1319.000	1373.500	1336.000	1291.000	1208.500	1156.500

Wilcoxon W	1680.000	10651.500	1572.000	10689.500	1589.000	1544.000	1461.500	1409.500
Z	-.383	-.876	-.950	-.661	-.862	-1.108	-1.551	-1.825
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.701	.381	.342	.509	.389	.268	.121	.068

a. Grouping Variable: Studying In

Source: Primary Data

To test above hypothesis Mann-Whitney U Test is applied. The p-value for awareness level of different skill development programs is more than 0.05. Therefore, **null hypothesis is accepted** i.e. There is no significant difference in the awareness about skill development programs across different levels of study among students in autonomous higher education institutions. **In conclusion, the final result indicates a lack of significant variation in awareness levels about skill development programs among students studying at different levels.**

H₀ = There is no significant difference in the awareness about employability enhancement programs across different levels of study among students in autonomous higher education institutions

Fig. 8.8 Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics^a

	Skill Development Programs	Internships and Industry Exposure	Entrepreneurship Education	Career Counselling Services	Vocational Training	Digital Literacy Initiatives	Industry-Academia Partnerships	Competency-Based Learning
Mann-Whitney U	1381.500	1334.500	1337.000	1200.000	1184.500	1262.500	1164.500	1305.000
Wilcoxon W	1634.500	1587.500	1590.000	1453.000	1437.500	1515.500	1417.500	1558.000
Z	-.618	-.856	-.837	-1.560	-1.628	-1.232	-1.732	-.995
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.537	.392	.402	.119	.103	.218	.083	.320

a. Grouping Variable: Studying In

Source: Primary Data

To test above hypothesis Mann-Whitney U Test is applied. The p-value for awareness level of different employability enhancement programs is more than 0.05. Therefore, **null hypothesis is accepted** i.e. There is no significant difference in the awareness about employability enhancement programs across different levels of study among students in autonomous higher education institutions. **In conclusion, the final result indicates a consistent level of awareness about employability enhancement programs among students studying at different levels.**

10. CONCLUSION

The analysis of student awareness regarding skill development programs reveals that internships and apprenticeships are the most recognized and utilized initiatives, with a majority of students fully aware of them. While awareness of free online courses is also significant, many students remain only somewhat or not aware of other options. University or college notifications serve as the primary source of information, highlighting the critical role of institutional communication. However, other channels for raising awareness are underutilized. Internships and apprenticeships are offered by most colleges and institutes for students' skill development. Overall, while there is a solid foundation of awareness, efforts should focus on increasing familiarity with less popular programs to enhance student engagement.

The analysis of employability enhancement programs shows that students exhibit varying levels of familiarity, with Skill Development Programs being the most recognized, followed by internships and industry exposure, and entrepreneurship education. College or university communications are the primary source of information, underscoring the importance of institutional outreach. However, other channels, such as faculty advisors and social media, remain underutilized. Skill development programs and internships are offered by most colleges and institutes as part of employability enhancement program. Participation in programs beyond skill development and internships, including entrepreneurship education, remains low. Overall, while there is awareness of key initiatives, increased engagement in diverse programs is needed to better support student employability.

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