

# Impacts of NEP 2020 on Vocational Education and Emerging role of counsellors

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## Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India has brought about significant reforms aimed at transforming the educational landscape, particularly in the realm of vocational education. This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the impact of NEP 2020 on vocational education and the emerging roles of counsellors within this context. NEP 2020 emphasizes the integration of vocational education into mainstream curriculum from the secondary level onwards, aiming to equip students with practical skills and job-oriented training. This shift necessitates a reevaluation of the role of counsellors, who are now tasked with guiding students towards diverse career paths and facilitating their transition into the workforce. Additionally, NEP 2020 underscores the importance of providing holistic support to students, including psychometric assessments, career guidance, and skill development. The paper examines the challenges and opportunities presented by NEP 2020 in implementing vocational education initiatives and highlights the crucial role of counsellors in supporting students' career aspirations and personal development. Furthermore, it discusses the need for counsellor training programs to adapt to the changing educational landscape and equip counsellors with the skills and knowledge required to effectively fulfil their emerging roles. Overall, this paper provides valuable insights into the transformative potential of NEP 2020 in shaping vocational education and the evolving responsibilities of counsellors in guiding students towards success in the dynamic job market of the 21st century.

**Keywords:** National Education Policy, Vocational Education, Role of Counsellors, Challenges in Implementation

## Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a significant milestone in the evolution of India's educational framework, with far-reaching implications for various facets of the system. Among its many provisions, NEP 2020 places a renewed emphasis on vocational education as a crucial component of the country's educational landscape. This shift not only reflects a broader recognition of the importance of practical skills in preparing students for the workforce but also underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to career guidance and counselling. In this context, the role of counsellors has emerged as increasingly pivotal, tasked with navigating students through the myriad opportunities presented by vocational education and facilitating their transition into the professional realm. This paper explores the multifaceted impacts of NEP 2020 on vocational education and the evolving responsibilities of counsellors within this domain. It delves into the key provisions of NEP 2020 related to vocational education, examining their implications for curriculum development, skill training initiatives, and industry

collaboration. Furthermore, it investigates the challenges and opportunities inherent in the implementation of these provisions, particularly in the context of counsellor support and student engagement. As vocational education takes centre stage in the educational discourse, counsellors find themselves at the forefront of guiding students towards meaningful career pathways and holistic development. The emerging roles of counsellors extend beyond traditional academic guidance to encompass comprehensive career counselling, skill assessment, and industry liaison. This paper sheds light on the evolving nature of counsellor responsibilities in light of NEP 2020, emphasizing the need for tailored training programs and supportive frameworks to enable counsellors to effectively fulfil their roles. Through a comprehensive analysis of the impacts of NEP 2020 on vocational education and the emerging roles of counsellors, this paper aims to provide insights into the transformative potential of these reforms in shaping the future trajectory of India's education system and empowering students to thrive in the dynamic landscape of the 21st century.

### ➤ **NEP 2020 and Vocational Education**

**Emphasis on Vocational Education:** NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on integrating vocational education into the mainstream curriculum from the secondary level onwards. This means that students will have more exposure to practical skills and job-oriented training, preparing them better for the workforce. Vocational education will likely see increased funding, infrastructure development, and collaborations with industries to offer relevant skill sets.

**Diversification of Career Options:** With vocational education becoming an integral part of the educational landscape, students will have a wider range of career options to explore beyond traditional academic streams. This can lead to a more diversified workforce with skills tailored to specific industries and sectors.

**Demand for Career Counsellors:** As the educational landscape evolves and diversifies, the need for career guidance and counselling will increase. Career counsellors will play a crucial role in helping students navigate the plethora of options available to them, identify their interests and strengths, and make informed decisions about their educational and career pathways.

**Role of Career Counsellors:** Career counsellors will need to adapt to the changing educational landscape brought about by NEP 2020. They will be required to have a comprehensive understanding of vocational education options, emerging industries, and skill requirements in the job market. Moreover, they will need to possess strong communication and interpersonal skills to effectively guide and support students in their career exploration and decision-making process.

**Integration of Technology:** Career counsellors may also leverage technology to enhance their services. This could include using online assessment tools to evaluate students' interests and aptitudes, virtual career fairs to connect students with employers, and online resources for exploring educational and career opportunities.

Overall, NEP 2020 is likely to have a transformative impact on vocational education and the role of career counsellors, creating opportunities for students to pursue diverse career paths and for counsellors to play a vital role in guiding them along their journey. So, it is necessary to focus on the emerging role of professional career counsellors in upcoming days. The field of professional counselling is evolving to meet the changing needs of individuals and society.

➤ **Some Emerging roles of professional counsellors include:**

**Teletherapy and Online Counselling:** With advancements in technology and the increased acceptance of teletherapy, professional counsellors are providing counselling services remotely through online platforms. This allows for greater accessibility to mental health support, particularly for individuals in remote areas or those with mobility issues.

**Specialized Counselling Services:** There is a growing recognition of the need for specialized counselling services to address specific populations or issues. This includes counselling for LGBTQ+ individuals, veterans, refugees, survivors of trauma, and individuals with unique needs such as autism spectrum disorder or eating disorders. Counsellors may receive specialized training to better serve these populations.

**Crisis Intervention and Trauma Counselling:** As natural disasters, conflicts, and other traumatic events continue to occur globally, there is a heightened demand for counsellors who are trained in crisis intervention and trauma counselling. These counsellors provide support to individuals and communities affected by traumatic events, helping them cope with their experiences and rebuild their lives. Professional counsellors are often called upon to provide crisis intervention and disaster response services in the aftermath of natural disasters, mass shootings, terrorist attacks, and other traumatic events. They can provide psychological first aid, grief counselling, and trauma-informed care to individuals and communities affected by crises.

**Counselling in Non-Traditional Settings:** Counsellors are increasingly working in non-traditional settings such as workplaces, schools, community centres, and correctional facilities. By bringing counselling services to these settings, counsellors can reach individuals who may not otherwise seek help and address mental health issues in their early stages.

**Integrated Healthcare:** There is a growing trend towards integrating mental health services into primary healthcare settings. Counsellors are collaborating with physicians, nurses, and other healthcare providers to offer comprehensive care that addresses both physical and mental health needs. This integrated approach improves access to mental health services and reduces the stigma associated with seeking help for mental health issues.

**Wellness and Prevention Programs:** Counsellors are increasingly involved in developing and implementing wellness and prevention programs aimed at promoting mental health and preventing the onset of mental health disorders. These programs may focus on stress management, resilience-building, mindfulness, positive affirmations and other strategies for maintaining psychological well-being.

**Advocacy and Policy Development:** Professional counsellors are advocating for policies and initiatives that promote mental health awareness, improve access to mental health services, and reduce barriers to care. Counsellors may be involved in lobbying efforts, public education campaigns, and policy development at the local, national, and international levels.

**Career Counselling and Life Coaching:** With the changing nature of work and career paths, counsellors are taking on roles as career counsellors and life coaches. They help individuals navigate career transitions, explore new opportunities, develop professional skills, and achieve work-life balance.

**Research and Evaluation:** Counsellors are increasingly involved in research and program evaluation to advance the field and improve the effectiveness of counselling interventions. They contribute to the development of evidence-based practices and interventions through research studies and evaluation of counselling programs.

**Providing information about upcoming occupations:** Career counsellors must inform students about emerging job opportunities in various fields. Career counsellors will be responsible for staying updated on emerging job trends, industry developments, and technological advancements. They will provide students with information about new and evolving occupations, helping them understand the skills and qualifications needed for these roles.

**Guiding students in subject selection and psychometric assessment:** Career counsellors should assist students in choosing subjects and undergoing assessments to align their interests and abilities with future career paths. This includes guiding them through psychometric assessments to identify their interests, aptitudes, and personality traits, and then using this information to recommend suitable subjects, courses, and career options.

**Developing clear strategies and transparent roadmaps:** Career counsellors need to create straightforward plans and transparent pathways for students to follow in pursuing their career goals. This involves creating personalized roadmaps that outline the steps students need to take, such as acquiring specific skills, gaining relevant experience, and networking within their chosen field.

**Keeping updated with global, regional, and local knowledge:** Career counsellors must stay informed about the latest information and trends in careers, not only globally but also within their specific regions and communities. Career counsellors will continuously update their knowledge and information to stay abreast of global, regional, and local developments in education and the job market. This includes staying informed about industry trends, labour market demands, educational policies, and advancements in career development practices.

**Understanding 21st-century skills and guiding holistic development:** Career counsellors should possess knowledge of modern skills required in the 21st century job market and offer guidance to students for their overall personal and professional growth. Career counsellors will equip students with 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and adaptability, which are essential for success in the modern workforce. They will provide guidance on holistic development, including personal growth, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence.

**Providing guidance for building students' admission profiles:** Career counsellors should advise students on how to develop strong profiles for admission to secondary education institutions. Career counsellors will help students build strong profiles that meet the admission criteria of colleges, universities, and vocational training programs. This includes advising students on extracurricular activities, volunteer work, internships, and academic achievements that enhance their applications.

**Emphasizing quality over quantity in profile-building activities:** Career counsellors should prioritize the quality of activities undertaken by students to enhance their profiles rather than focusing solely on the quantity of activities. Career counsellors will emphasize the quality rather than the quantity of extracurricular activities and experiences when building students' profiles. They will encourage students to engage in activities that align with their interests and passions, demonstrate leadership and initiative, and showcase their unique talents and abilities.

**Preparing counsellors to address rising psychological disorders:** Career counsellors should be equipped to handle various psychological disorders that are becoming more prevalent among students. Career counsellors will receive training in recognizing and addressing psychological disorders that may affect students' academic and career development. They will be equipped to provide support and referrals for students experiencing mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, stress, and career-related concerns.

These emerging roles highlight the diverse ways in which professional counsellors are contributing to the promotion of mental health and well-being in individuals and communities.

➤ **Evolving responsibilities of counsellors**

**To fulfil these evolving responsibilities, counsellors must adapt in the following ways:**

**Sharing expertise on GCC websites for accessibility to students:** Career counsellors should publish their knowledge and expertise on websites affiliated with Guidance and Counselling Centres (GCC) to make it easily accessible to students seeking guidance.

**Incorporating emerging skill programs into counsellor training:** The government of India should integrate various emerging skill programs into the training curriculum for counsellors to ensure they stay updated with the latest developments in the field.

**Introducing a profile-building course and training counsellors:** There is a need to establish a course focused on profile building, providing training for counsellors to effectively assist students in developing strong academic and extracurricular profiles.

**Launching career counsellor courses in universities:** Universities should introduce specialized courses for aspiring career counsellors to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to excel in their profession.

**Cultivating professional counsellors through certification, knowledge, and networks:** Career counsellors should strive to become professional practitioners by obtaining certifications, expanding their knowledge base, and building networks within the counselling community.

**Ensuring the ongoing update of career counsellor courses:** It is essential to regularly update the content of career counsellor courses to reflect the evolving needs of students and changes in the job market.

**Approaching career counselling with passion, not just as a job:** Career counsellors should approach their profession with a genuine passion for helping others navigate their career paths, viewing it as more than just a job but as a fulfilling vocation.

➤ **Challenges in Implementation:**

Implementing these changes poses several obstacles, including:

**Qualification of Counsellor teacher:** A study found that most counsellor teachers held diverse qualifications. Around 60% possessed a master's degree along with professional training in teacher education, while only 10% had a background in psychology coupled with a diploma in guidance and counselling. Interestingly, a mere 10% had both specialized qualifications and professional training for providing guidance and counselling services. However, the majority of teacher counsellors, despite lacking specialized qualifications, were still actively engaged in offering guidance counselling services.

**Insufficient Resources:** Despite having dedicated offices and counselling manuals, guidance and counselling units lack essential resources such as psychological tests, reference books, charts, internet access, and facilities for group counselling. According to teacher counsellors, the majority (60%) face challenges due to the scarcity of these resources, hindering their ability to effectively carry out counselling duties.

**Inadequate Funding:** Insufficient financial resources pose a significant barrier to the effective implementation of guidance and counselling services. Schools often lack allocated funds specifically designated for guidance and counselling in their budgets. When guidance and counselling teachers request

funds for purchasing necessary resources or conducting activities, they are consistently informed that there are no available funds allocated for these purposes.

**Excessive Workload:** Guidance and counselling teachers express dissatisfaction with their workload, noting that they often fulfil duties as regular curriculum teachers before assuming their counselling roles. They argue that the workload assigned to guidance and counselling teachers is not adequately managed, as they are required to serve as both class and subject teachers prior to their counselling responsibilities. Despite being given teaching periods equivalent to those of general teachers, they are still expected to devise and deliver guidance and counselling activities and services.

**Guidance and Counselling Seen as Additional Responsibilities:** According to participants, guidance and counselling pose additional tasks for teachers, who already fulfil teaching duties. They highlighted the challenge of establishing counselling relationships with students while also overseeing their academic progress. Furthermore, the dual role of teacher and counsellor can lead to students not taking the academic subject taught by the counsellor seriously, impacting their perception of the teacher's role.

**School Administration Support:** Insufficient backing from school administration was identified as one of the key challenges in implementing guidance and counselling within schools. According to Mushaandja et al. (2013), school counsellors often lack adequate support from both administrators and teachers. Nyamwange et al. (2013) also found minimal support provided to teacher counsellors by school principals. This lack of support is concerning as it hampers the ability of teacher counsellors to effectively deliver services without the backing of the school administration.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has heralded a paradigm shift in India's educational landscape, particularly in its approach to vocational education, and has brought to the forefront the evolving roles of counsellors. NEP 2020's emphasis on integrating vocational education into the mainstream curriculum underscores the recognition of practical skills as essential components of holistic education, aligning with the needs of the rapidly evolving job market. This shift not only presents opportunities for students to explore diverse career pathways but also places new responsibilities on counsellors to guide them through these choices. The emerging roles of counsellors extend beyond traditional academic guidance to encompass comprehensive career counselling, skill assessment, and fostering industry connections. NEP 2020 underscores the importance of providing holistic support to students, including psychometric assessments, career guidance, and skill development, highlighting the pivotal role of counsellors in facilitating students' transition into the professional realm. However, challenges remain in the effective implementation of NEP 2020 provisions, including inadequate resources, insufficient funding, and the need for comprehensive counsellor training programs. Addressing these challenges will be crucial in realizing the transformative potential of NEP 2020 and ensuring that students receive the support they need to thrive in the dynamic landscape of the 21st century. In light of these considerations, it is imperative for policymakers, educational institutions, and stakeholders to collaborate in creating supportive frameworks, allocating resources, and providing training opportunities to empower counsellors to effectively fulfil their evolving roles. By leveraging the opportunities presented by NEP 2020 and addressing its challenges, India can build a robust vocational education system and equip counsellors with the tools they need to guide students towards meaningful career pathways and holistic development in the years to come.

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