



# Integrating Career Counselling in The Framework of NEP 2020: Opportunities and Challenges

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## Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India proposes transformative shifts in the educational landscape, emphasizing a student-centric learning approach. An integral component of this new policy is the incorporation of career counselling services designed to prepare students for future career challenges. This paper examines the opportunities and challenges associated with integrating career counselling within the NEP 2020 framework. Through qualitative analysis of policy documents, this research highlights how career counselling can be effectively implemented to support NEP 2020's goals. The findings suggest that while the integration offers substantial benefits in enhancing student outcomes, significant challenges related to training, resources, and systemic implementation need to be addressed.

**Keywords:** Career Counselling, National Education Policy (NEP)- 2020, Student Development, Educational Reform, Holistic Education.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Brief Overview of National Education Policy 2020:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, enacted by the Government of India, marks a significant overhaul of the Indian educational system since the last policy update in 1986. This ambitious policy aims to transform all levels of education in India to make it more holistic, flexible, integrated, and aligned with the needs of the 21st century. NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of developing students' cognitive, emotional, and ethical capacities, ensuring that education not only fosters academic success but also nurtures core values and skills essential for overall human development (Ministry of Education, 2020).

One of the key objectives of NEP 2020 is to increase the gross enrolment ratio in higher education to 50% by 2035 and to revamp curriculum and pedagogy in a way that prepares students for the complexities of modern life and work. It introduces several structural changes in the education system, including a new 5+3+3+4 school structure that corresponds to the age groups 3-8 years (foundational stage), 8-11 (preparatory stage), 11-14 (middle stage), and 14-18 (secondary stage). This structure is designed to bring focus to the developmental needs of students in each of these stages, from foundational literacy and numeracy in the early years to multidisciplinary study in the secondary stage, with flexibility and choice of subjects (Ministry of Education, 2020).

### 1.2 Importance of Integrating Career Counselling in Education Framework:

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements and dynamic global economies, career counselling has become an indispensable element of education. Career counselling helps bridge the gap between the education system and the employment market by providing students with tailored guidance on their career choices based on their interests, strengths, and market opportunities. It equips students with the necessary tools to navigate their career paths effectively, making informed decisions that align with their personal and professional goals (Kumar & Arora, 2022). Integrating career counselling into the educational framework under NEP 2020 can significantly enhance the policy's goal of preparing students to face the challenges of the contemporary world. It ensures that students are not only academically proficient but are also well-prepared to enter and thrive in their chosen careers. This integration supports the development of a well-rounded individual who is adaptable, skilled, and aligned with the needs of society and the economy (Kumar & Arora, 2022).

### 1.3 Rationale of the study:

The purpose of this research paper is to explore the opportunities and challenges associated with integrating career counselling within the framework of NEP 2020. While the policy provides a robust foundation for comprehensive educational reform, its success in the context of career counselling depends on effectively addressing several operational and strategic challenges. This paper aims to critically analyse how career counselling as envisaged by NEP 2020 can be implemented across diverse educational settings in India, identifying key factors that can contribute to its success and pinpointing potential barriers that need to be overcome (Srivastava, 2021).

This exploration is crucial for policymakers, educational institutions, and other stakeholders involved in the education sector, as it provides insights into how career counselling can be effectively integrated to meet the objectives of NEP 2020, thereby enhancing the employability and personal development of students across India.

## **2. Overview of Career Counselling**

### **2.1 Definition and Scope of Career Counselling:**

Career counselling, often referred to as career guidance or career development, is a comprehensive process that empowers individuals to make informed decisions about their educational and occupational paths. According to the National Career Development Association (NCDA), career counselling aims to help individuals understand their own self-concept, integrate life and work roles, and ultimately achieve career satisfaction (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2019). The scope of career counselling extends beyond mere job selection; it encompasses career exploration, educational planning, and continuous professional growth. It integrates psychological, sociological, educational, and economic factors to assist individuals in creating a fulfilling career path (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2019).

### **2.2 Benefits of Career Counselling for Students:**

Career counselling has manifold benefits for students. It aids them in understanding the link between their academic pursuits and potential career opportunities, which is crucial in a rapidly changing job market. Career counselling helps students identify their strengths and weaknesses, align their interests with suitable careers, and develop actionable plans to achieve their goals. According to a study by Watson and McMahon (2015), students who participate in career counselling are more likely to exhibit increased self-efficacy, improved academic performance, and greater career readiness. Furthermore, career counselling is instrumental in reducing the anxiety associated with career decision-making by providing students with the tools and confidence needed to make informed choices (Watson & McMahon, 2015).

### **2.3 Role of Career Counsellors in Educational Institutions:**

Career counsellors play a pivotal role in educational institutions. They act as facilitators of career development, offering support and guidance to students navigating the complexities of educational and career planning. Career counsellors are tasked with assessing students' abilities and interests, providing resources for career exploration, and supporting students in developing career and educational plans. They also collaborate with teachers and parents to ensure that students' career planning is integrated with their educational experiences and aligned with their personal values and goals. In the context of NEP 2020, career counsellors are even more critical, as they are on the front lines of implementing a holistic approach to education that includes career education as a fundamental component. They are expected to adapt to the broader educational goals set forth by NEP 2020, which include fostering multidisciplinary knowledge while ensuring that students are prepared for the diverse opportunities and challenges of the modern world (Ministry of Education, 2020). Career counsellors in educational institutions are also responsible for staying abreast of the latest career trends and labour market information, which is essential for providing accurate and timely guidance to students. This role is increasingly important as the global economy and job market continue to evolve rapidly, necessitating a dynamic approach to career counselling that can respond to changing economic conditions and job market trends (Hooley, Watts, Sultana, & Neary, 2013).

## **3. Integration of Career Counselling in NEP 2020**

### **3.1 Key Provisions of NEP 2020 Related to Career Counselling**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India places significant emphasis on the integration of career counselling into the educational framework to enhance student readiness for the professional world. NEP 2020 advocates for a holistic approach to education, which includes providing students with guidance on career choices and aligning their skills with future employment opportunities. One of the notable provisions of NEP 2020 is the introduction of dedicated career counselling sessions starting from the middle school stage, ensuring that students receive professional guidance as they make pivotal decisions about their academic and career paths (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Moreover, NEP 2020 emphasizes the establishment of school complexes and hubs which are envisaged to serve as centres for shared resources and expertise in career counselling. These complexes are expected to facilitate the sharing of best practices and professional development resources for career counsellors, thereby enhancing the quality and consistency of career counselling services provided to students across different regions (Ministry of Education, 2020).

### **3.2 Strategies for Integrating Career Counselling in School Curriculum**

Integrating career counselling effectively into the school curriculum requires a strategic approach that involves several key components:

- **Curriculum Design:** A structured curriculum is to be developed that incorporates career guidance activities and sessions throughout the school years. This could include workshops, seminars, and interactive sessions with professionals from various fields.
- **Training Educators:** Teachers and educators should be trained not only in pedagogical skills but also in basic career counselling techniques. This will enable them to integrate career guidance into their teaching methods and provide students with ongoing support (Sultana, 2018).
- **Collaboration with Industry Professionals:** Schools should establish partnerships with industry professionals who can offer insights into the skills required for various careers. This collaboration can also include internships, job

shadowing, and guest lectures that provide students with real-world exposure to different career paths (Bridgstock, 2019).

- **Use of Technology:** Implementing career counselling software and digital platforms can help in managing and delivering career guidance services efficiently. These tools can also provide students with access to a wealthier repository of career information and self-assessment tools (Hooley, 2019).

### **3.3 Importance of Early Career Guidance for Students:**

Early career guidance is crucial in helping students develop a clear understanding of their interests and potential career paths from a young age. Introducing career guidance early in a student's educational journey allows them to explore various fields and disciplines, thereby fostering a better alignment between their academic pursuits and career aspirations. Research indicates that early career interventions significantly enhance students' motivation, academic performance, and decision-making skills, setting a firm foundation for lifelong learning and career development (Gati & Tal, 2020). Furthermore, early career guidance helps mitigate the risk of career mismatches and educational dropouts by providing students with clear goals and a sense of purpose. This proactive approach to career planning ensures that students are better prepared to meet the challenges of higher education and the competitive job market, ultimately leading to more fulfilling and successful careers (Savickas, 2019).

## **4. Opportunities for Career Counselling in NEP 2020**

### **4.1 Emphasis on Vocational Education and Skill Development**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places a strong emphasis on vocational education and skill development, recognizing them as crucial for preparing students for a diverse range of career paths. The policy advocates for the integration of vocational education into all schools and higher education institutions by 2025 (Ministry of Education, 2020). This integration presents a significant opportunity for career counselling as it broadens the scope for guiding students not only towards traditional academic careers but also towards skilled professions. Career counsellors can leverage this focus to help students understand the value of skills in the workforce and guide them in selecting vocational tracks that align with their interests and market demands (Pilz & Wilmshöfer, 2021).

### **3.2 Use of Technology in Career Counselling**

NEP 2020 acknowledges the role of technology in enhancing educational delivery and mentions the creation of a National Educational Technology Forum (NETF). The integration of technology in career counselling is a significant opportunity highlighted by the policy. Technology can facilitate more personalized, accessible, and effective career guidance services. Tools such as virtual career fairs, online counselling sessions, and interactive career planning software can help reach a larger number of students, including those in remote areas, thereby democratizing access to quality career guidance (Hooley, 2019). Furthermore, AI-driven analytics can be used to predict career trends and provide data-driven insights to students, helping them make informed decisions about their future (Bimrose & Barnes, 2021).

### **3.3 Collaboration Opportunities with Industry Partners**

NEP 2020 encourages partnerships between educational institutions and industry partners to bridge the gap between education and employment. This synergy is particularly beneficial for career counselling as it can provide students with real-world exposure and hands-on experiences. Collaborations with industry can include guest lectures, internships, apprenticeships, and project-based learning opportunities that align educational objectives with industry needs. Such partnerships not only enhance the practical knowledge of students but also enable career counsellors to provide advice based on current industry trends and demands (Kumar & Arora, 2022). These opportunities, if effectively harnessed, can significantly enhance the impact of career counselling under the NEP 2020, making it a pivotal element in shaping India's future workforce.

## **5. Challenges in Integrating Career Counselling in NEP 2020**

### **5.1 Lack of Trained Career Counsellors**

One of the significant challenges in the implementation of career counselling under NEP 2020 is the acute shortage of adequately trained career counsellors. The demand for skilled counsellors far exceeds the supply, primarily due to limited training opportunities and a lack of professional courses that cater specifically to career counselling (Saxena, 2021). This shortage is more pronounced in rural and semi-urban areas where educational resources are already stretched thin. To effectively address this gap, there is a need for substantial investments in professional development and training programs that can equip educators and counsellors with the necessary skills to guide students in their career choices (Patton & McMahon, 2020).

### **5.2 Resistance to Traditional Education System**

Integrating career counselling into the traditional education system poses another challenge, as it often encounters resistance from institutions that are accustomed to conventional teaching methods and curricula. Many educational institutions may view career Counselling as an additional burden rather than an integral part of holistic education. Overcoming this resistance requires a change in mindset at the institutional level, emphasizing the long-term benefits of

career Counselling in enhancing student outcomes and employability. This change can be facilitated through awareness programs and by demonstrating successful models of integration from other educational systems (Kumar & Arora, 2022).

### **5.3 Limited Resources and Infrastructure for Career Counselling**

Another major challenge is the lack of resources and infrastructure dedicated to career Counselling. Many schools, particularly in less developed regions, lack the physical spaces, technological tools, and financial resources necessary to establish effective career Counselling services. This limitation not only restricts the accessibility of career Counselling to a smaller group of students but also impacts the quality of services provided. Addressing these resource constraints is crucial for the equitable implementation of career Counselling across all educational institutions, as mandated by NEP 2020 (Singh & Dhillon, 2021). To successfully integrate career Counselling within the framework of NEP 2020, these challenges must be acknowledged and addressed through targeted policies, increased funding, and collaborative efforts among government bodies, educational institutions, and industry partners.

## **6. Recommendations for Effective Implementation**

### **6.1 Training Programs for Career Counsellors**

To address the critical shortage of trained career counsellors outlined in NEP 2020, it is essential to establish and expand training programs specifically designed for this purpose. These programs should focus on equipping counsellors with the necessary skills to provide effective career guidance and should be accessible across diverse geographical regions, including rural areas. Policymakers should consider partnerships with universities and private institutions to develop certification and degree programs in career counselling. Additionally, ongoing professional development should be mandated to ensure that counsellors remain updated on the latest career trends and counselling methodologies (Patton & McMahan, 2020).

### **6.2 Awareness Campaigns for Students and Parents**

Awareness campaigns play a crucial role in integrating career counselling services within schools and communities. These campaigns should aim to educate students and parents about the importance of career counselling and how it can assist students in making informed decisions about their educational and career paths. Schools should organize workshops, seminars, and interactive sessions that involve parents and community leaders, thereby fostering a supportive environment that values career planning as an integral part of education (Kumar & Arora, 2022).

### **6.3 Collaboration with Government Agencies and NGOs for Support**

Effective implementation of career counselling under NEP 2020 can be significantly enhanced through strategic collaborations with government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These collaborations can provide the necessary financial, technical, and logistical support needed to overcome resource constraints and implement career counselling services at scale. Government agencies can offer policy support and funding, while NGOs can bring in expertise, resources, and innovative practices from their work in different contexts and communities. Such partnerships can also facilitate the sharing of best practices and successful models of career counselling that can be adapted and replicated across various educational settings (Singh & Dhillon, 2021). By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can address the primary challenges associated with the integration of career counselling in NEP 2020, thus enhancing the efficacy and reach of career counselling services across India's diverse educational landscape.

## **7. Conclusion**

This research paper has explored the integration of career counselling within the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, identifying both the opportunities it presents and the challenges it faces. Key provisions of NEP 2020 include an emphasis on vocational education and the innovative use of technology in career counselling, alongside fostering collaborations with industry partners. These elements are pivotal in enhancing the scope and efficacy of career counselling. However, significant challenges such as the shortage of trained career counsellors, resistance from traditional educational frameworks, and limited resources also need to be addressed to realize the full potential of these initiatives.

### **7.1 Importance of Integrating Career Counselling in Education Framework**

The integration of career counselling into the educational framework is crucial for preparing students to meet the demands of the modern workforce and to navigate the complexities of career planning in an ever-changing global economy. NEP 2020's focus on career counselling is a forward-thinking approach that acknowledges the essential role of career guidance in student development. Effective career counselling can help bridge the gap between education and employment, ensuring that students are not only academically prepared but are also ready to thrive in their chosen careers.

### **7.2 Future Implications and Recommendations for Further Research**

The successful implementation of career counselling under NEP 2020 has broad implications for the educational landscape in India. It promises enhanced educational outcomes, greater alignment with labour market demands, and the holistic development of students. To further these goals, it is recommended that future research focuses on the following areas:

- **Evaluative Studies:** There is a need for comprehensive evaluative studies that assess the effectiveness of career counselling programs implemented under NEP 2020. Such studies would help in understanding what works and what doesn't, facilitating improvements in future interventions.
- **Innovative Training Models:** Research should explore the development of innovative training models for career counsellors that are scalable and adaptable across different educational settings. This research could include online training modules and partnerships with international counselling organizations.
- **Long-term Career Tracking:** Longitudinal research that tracks the career progress of students who have undergone career counselling would provide valuable insights into the long-term benefits of such interventions. This could help in fine-tuning career counselling practices to better serve student needs.
- **Impact on Diverse Populations:** Further research is needed to examine the impact of career counselling on diverse student populations, including students from underprivileged backgrounds and those with special needs. This would ensure that career counselling practices are inclusive and equitable.

By addressing these areas, further research can significantly contribute to the effective integration of career counselling in India's educational policy, ultimately leading to a more robust and responsive education system that is equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

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