

Assessing the Skill Sets from the NEP Policy 2020 : Scale Development and Validation

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Abstract

Purpose : The central aspect of this paper is the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, an education-based policy in the Indian context. The article captured the opportunities from the perspective of the skill set it offers to its important stakeholders, students; the current research has aimed to propose and validate an instrument to measure the skill set identified from the NEP document and academic expertise, which could be used to measure students' skill-based performance.

Design/Methodology/Approach : The first section used EFA to establish four skill sets: Employability Skills, Communal-Based Skills, Social and Emotional Skills, and Individualistic Skills. The CFA model was further deployed to confirm the factors; the study was administered to a sample of 820 students from various commerce and management colleges from South and North Bangalore.

Findings : The research results could be applied to evaluate the effectiveness of skill sets on students' performance to create holistic education.

Originality : The first step is to develop and validate scales for measuring skill sets under NEP 2020. Second, in accordance with the pupils' order of priority, to close the gap between the talents stated and those observed.

Research Limitations/Implications : The study was conducted only with students of commerce and management disciplines in Bangalore.

Practical Implications : NEP has placed a greater emphasis on competency development and skill enhancement, which aids in the development of higher-order cognitive, social-emotional, and 21st-century abilities necessary for employment in the future. NEP gave greater autonomy to students to choose their learning pathway and develop skill sets, which are likely to make them job creators, thereby giving rise to the entrepreneurial culture.

Social Implications : To cultivate an aspirational student body, it is critical to instill the necessary skill sets in pupils. Policymakers and decision-makers could then organize their courses using these skill sets.

Keywords : national education policy (NEP), higher education, commerce and management skill set, employability skills, communal-based skills, social and emotional learning, individualistic skills

JEL Classification Codes : A22, C30, I23

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The National Educational Policy (NEP) aims at the nation's development. It mainly aims at developing empathy, resilience, courage, imagination, scientific temper, and human thinking capacity. The main objective of NEP 2020 is to raise the gross enrollment ratio in higher education, including vocational education, from 26.3% (2018) to 50% (2035). Approximately 3.5 crore new seats will be added to higher education institutions by the end of 2035 (Bhadauria, 2023). The policy visualizes interdisciplinary graduate education with a formative curriculum with different compositions of subjects and several entry and exit levels with qualified certifications. The higher education policy is structured in a way that requires students to complete credentials, including professional and vocational courses, even after a year in a particular course. Students will receive a diploma certificate in the second year and a bachelor's degree upon completion of three years of study.

Additionally, four years of optional bachelor's research are provided. To promote the preservation and growth of all regional languages, NEP suggests setting up an Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI), National Institute for Persian, Pali, Prakrit, Sanskrit, and other regional languages, and encourages local languages in higher education institutions (Jayal, 2020).

Background Theory

The cognitivism theory explains that learning requires analytical thinking, critical thinking, motivation, and knowledge. Teachers must develop learning techniques in accordance with the cognitivism theory of learning to assist students in making the connection between previously learned material and new information (Dwivedi, 2016). The view of constructivism helps to promote the teaching and learning process. When individuals can bring their ideas and perspectives within teaching and learning processes to understand the concepts, they can apply the constructivism theory. Under the constructivist approach to learning, students take ideas and guidance from the teachers to achieve their goals (Kapur, 2019).

The foundation of behaviorism theory, or social-based learning, is a psychological understanding of how people perceive their environment. It analyzes how environmental elements affect students' learning either directly or indirectly and is passive. This theory mainly emphasizes building important internal aspects such as conditioning, reinforcement, and punishment (Kurt, 2022). It is stated that, in addition to what we learn in class, we also learn through social interactions. Students interact, attempt to assess, and imitate each other, and are more likely to carry on in this manner. This theory has influence as well (Srivastava & Rastogi, 2020). These theories suggest that learning is essential to expanding one's knowledge. They will be better able to meet the demands of the academic and business communities if they concentrate on the abilities they have gained from these learning outcomes.

Review of Literature

The Importance of Skills in Education

The competencies and skills that students should learn, as well as the methods by which they are taught, are focused on cooperation, intercommunication, informal learning, and content personalization and development. The Ministry of Skill Development (MoSDE), a government organization that promotes skill development, carried out a skill gap analysis. The Department of Higher Education established the National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education (NCIVE). The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MoSDE) forecasts future job prospects in India and analyzes skill gaps, which allows NCIVE to decide on vocational courses for schools, colleges, and universities (Das & Malik, 2022). It is also possible to succeed in a variety of fields by acquiring a varied range of talents. Collaboration, management, technical, analytical, and

organizational skills will also be included in these skill sets. It is also critical to determine which skills are necessary for both work advancement and personal growth (Sudha & Prasad, 2022).

NEP 2020 emphasizes the value of education in providing students with the essential skills required for employment. This project intends to promote opportunities for lifelong learning and inclusive and equitable education for everyone, in line with the government's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Chaturvedi, 2022). Researchers have found some skills lacking in the students, like teamwork, self-restraint, communication, and risk-taking skills and talent (Bhatnagar, 2020). The Indian education system will undergo fundamental changes due to the NEP 2020. It discusses the educational system, which promotes empirical learning and 21st-century skills such as problem-solving and analytical thinking (Karra, 2020). The essence of 21st-century skills greatly impacts students because they promote analytical thinking, problem-solving, industry and digital proficiency, general awareness, community proficiency, and authority. These skill sets enable students to deal with unforeseen challenges, and students must comprehend not only theoretically but practically to know how to handle a complex situation/problem. India has a unique position in the industry sector and organization where skilled human resources are being hired. To satisfy those skills, NEP aims to offer skill sets where the students will enhance new skills and face the real world to meet post-pandemic demands. The primary goal of the students is vocational education, which supports the fundamental principles of the Skill India Mission.

Additionally, the students will have opportunities to undergo apprenticeships, enhancing job training skills and making students industry-ready professionals (Bordia, 2023). Personal attributes are determined by a person's soft skills, which aid in interactions between clients and colleagues at work or in educational institutions. Acquiring these abilities facilitates the development of an interpersonal personality that is linked to attributes like accountability, optimism, communication, negotiation, and many more. Nowadays, it is stated that a good level of education leads to success in getting suitable and well-paying employment. All of these factors mean that education needs to change immediately; superior soft skills are required in addition to industry knowledge, independent of the vocation of today (Shekhawat, 2012).

Employability skills play an essential role in the communal and economic development of the country. It also highlights the fact that a certain model was used to construct the research study with the initial, lofty entrepreneurial goal of influencing students' futures (Aggarwal, 2019). The future belongs to those who acquire new abilities and creatively integrate them. In the same way that a bud blossoms into a flower, true education entails turning knowledge into application. To achieve such a transformation, education inclusive of skills is essential. NEP makes a revolutionary phase in education as it imparts new helpful skill sets to bring a better person and build an economical and sustainable nation (Bharti, 2022). Employability skills play a vital role in future aspects of the students. This study found that the management students were way behind the other students in employability skills. Employability skills include teamwork, collaboration, planning, analytical thinking, and high-order thinking (Kumar et al., 2019). This paper explores the role of leadership skills among students and its importance in developing students' personal and professional growth in today's dynamic and complex world. It also provides effective practices that can be used for students in nurturing leadership potential among students and youngsters (Kapur, 2019). The entrepreneurial potential is significant among the students and graduates to nurture and foster an entrepreneurial mindset for enhancing the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the country, and it will also have a potential impact on fostering the entrepreneurial culture and innovation among students in the real world (Mukesh et al., 2018).

The Indian economy's financial position entirely depends on Indian banks, which serve as a backbone. A student must have these soft and technical abilities to demonstrate adequate performance in their career. Soft skills substantially impact success in any organization or financial industry, and students who focus on these abilities increase the employment rate in India (Kaur & Batra, 2018). Soft skills are the personal qualities that will improve an individual's interaction, job performance, and growth prospects. Soft skills are interpersonal skills like

optimism, responsibility, sense of humor, and integrity, as well as abilities such as teamwork, communication, leadership, empathy, and sociability. The significance of incorporating soft skills into the higher education curriculum will also enhance students' employability skills (Shekhawat, 2012). In addition to developing digital skills and literacy, e-learning will equip students with a skill set highly desired in the NEP, preparing them for life in the digital age. E-learning will also enhance problem-solving skills and analytical thinking skills, which are also highlighted in the NEP to equip students with the ability to tackle complex problems (Aggarwal, 2017).

Employability Skills

Every aspect of the working world has changed due to recent technological advancements, significantly altering employers' expectations for skill sets. NEP 2020 will be implemented as a critical factor in preparing our labor force to lead the change in this evolving organizational culture. This policy has established the foundation for significant academic transformation, particularly in higher education, focusing on helping graduates and post-graduate students develop technical and soft skills (Srikrishna, 2021).

Employability skills encompass a wide range of attributes and abilities that will enhance an individual and students for securing and maintaining employment opportunities. Analyzing how students' social media usage impacts their perceived employability highlights the role of modern technology and networking in developing these skills (Agnihotri et al., 2023). Employability skills aim to provide a framework for proficiency and key skills required for students to be successful in the workplace. The framework provides the technical know-how required for a specific profession. The foundation of technical abilities is education and training, both of which are essential for students to do their jobs well. Personal skills are the skills that will enable students to work effectively with others. Building relationships with coworkers and creating a healthy work environment require personal skills (Mahajan et al., 2022).

College students need to have strong cooperation skills, and employability skills highlight this need and offer methods for cultivating and evaluating them. Teamwork skills provide students with the opportunities to communicate, collaborate, and solve problems with their colleagues, which are essential skills for success in the workplace. This article suggests that self-assessment and peer assessment can effectively evaluate teamwork skills (Hughes & Jones, 2011).

Communal-Based Skills

The NEP must focus on developing good, thoughtful, well-rounded, and creative students and individuals. The 21st-century skills provide a variety of courses, including humanities, social science, arts, and regional languages, as well as offer professional, technical, and vocational subjects. Higher education will promote self-development and uplift civilian responsibility and community engagement. It must equip students with the skills necessary for more fulfilling careers and lives that promote financial independence (Srinivasan, 2022). Diversity in educational policies plays a significant part as pupils grow among diverse linguistic individuals. In addition to treating everyone equally, discussing academic diversity is one aspect of diversity. The policy brings diversity and inclusion among students during their education period (Sabharwal & Malish, 2018). NEP has made it compulsory that regional language should be mandatory for all students. This policy has focused on bringing multilingualism into education. This system was brought to upgrade students with the regional language's culture, history, and traditions. This knowledge is necessary for an individual to serve this society as a responsible citizen (Gupta, 2021).

Social and Emotional Learning

Several steps have been undertaken to self-empower students by introducing skill-oriented courses, work-based add-on courses, choice-based credit systems, and learning outcome-based curriculum frameworks from the NPE in operation since 1986. The policy mainly focuses on a shift from regular to unique, static to dynamic, and similarity to differentiation. The NEP 2020 primarily emphasizes social and emotional learning to promote students' holistic development. It contends that efforts in education are necessary to create morally upright individuals who are able to reason, behave with compassion, and demonstrate empathy (Pillai & Bhat, 2022). NEP also quickens the process of advancement of the pedagogical skills of the students (Loomba & Chawla, 2020).

Social and emotional learning creates equitable learning conditions that engage students in comprehending their emotional, social, and intellectual skills (Mahoney et al., 2021). Mahatma Gandhi emphasized craft-centric learning as a crucial developing skill for students, and craft-centric learning has been implemented in higher education as socially useful and productive work. Craft-centric knowledge includes pottery, clay modeling, leather work, bamboo crafts, and many other socio-economic relevant creative activities that will enable livelihood. It is also found that socially valuable and productive work can transform the students toward nobility of job and labor (Dubey, 2017).

The persuasiveness of 21st-century learning skills mainly emphasizes analytical thinking. This study highlights explicitly measuring improvements in student learning outcomes by utilizing concept maps in an analytical-based module, enhancing their academic performance and ability to establish knowledge (Sundari et al., 2020). Education is considered equitable when the academic policies, practices, and resources are inclusive of all students regardless of their status, race, gender, religion, and language diversity. Increasing equity in education leads to improved economic benefits, social and personal skills, employment opportunities, and productivity (Singh, 2016).

Individualistic Skills

Value education in student life can contribute to character development because times are changing swiftly. It is common for young individuals to neglect to develop their personalities in favor of their careers. NEP offers pupils a way to embrace personal development and emphasizes the value of developing a strong character (Shrotri, 2020). The development of entrepreneurial skills also includes cognitive elements like attitudes, social norms, and perceived actions, as well as other elements like creativity and risk-taking. Entrepreneurial skills also include abilities to identify opportunities, take risks, and manage ventures. These cognitive factors and behavioral factors will also influence the entrepreneurial intention and policymakers to enhance entrepreneurial skills among students (Parveen et al., 2018).

Intellectual curiosity in students explains the level of interest in acquiring new knowledge as it tries to understand the relationship between the student learning process and cognitive curiosity. This paper states that high levels of curiosity tend to positively impact their learning (Binu et al., 2020). Creating ethical, constitutional values like peace, harmony, and equity is also necessary. Also, inclusion needs to be there in education to facilitate and improve the country's economy (Dhal, 2018). Every person needs to acquire a scientific temperament on an individual basis in order to handle daily tasks and solve issues. It is a primary obligation of a citizen, and this paper mainly tells about the importance of scientific temper to develop among undergraduate commerce students (Acharya, 2021).

Research Problem

The primary research problem identified is the gap between the skills imparted by the Indian education system and

the skills that are demanded by the industry. Students in the Indian education system continue to have a serious lack of these vital employability skills, particularly those pursuing business and management degrees, despite several efforts and rules in place. This gap will also draw attention to the necessity of critically assessing educational methods and implementing workable plans to improve skill development, get students ready for the demands of the modern workforce, and guarantee their success in a cutthroat labor market.

Research Questions

- ↳ To identify the skill sets offered by the NEP for higher education students in commerce and management.
- ↳ To test the fundamental abilities outlined in NEP in order to establish a community of aspiring students and improve performance.

Data Methods

A substantial review of the literature was carried out to find out the interventions of the skill sets of the NEP. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was carried out before conducting confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The EFA factors have been established from content validation by thoroughly reviewing and interviewing academic experts and the academic fraternity and identifying the skill set factors of NEP from the literature. CFA is performed to understand the factor model fitting the data. CFA helps in establishing a relationship between observed variables and latent factors. Thus, EFA and multiple regression will be combined in the graphical depiction. In order to measure skill-based performance in a variety of streams, researchers have attempted to suggest and evaluate an instrument for evaluating the skill set that is advantageous for students and the academic community.

Data Collection Procedure

The targeted sample size group was given questionnaires by the first and second authors themselves, with prior consent from the relevant educational institution authorities. The total sample size for this study was determined as 1,000 respondents as suggested by Daniel (2012), and the final sample size of 820 was collected during the study, accounting for an 82% response rate. The sample size consisted primarily of commerce and business students from South and North Bangalore colleges. The data collection period spanned from February 2023 until July 2023. The investigators thought that persons who are a part of the NEP might provide better data regarding expectations from the policy; hence, they employed the judgmental sampling strategy under the non-probability method. The data was collected on a 5-point scale on each skill's importance level: 1 = *not important* and 5 = *very important*.

Our non-modification of the model has ensured the integrity of the data acquired; all values are provided without any data manipulation. Since this is the first attempt to describe the skills from the perspective of the students, we have not manipulated the data and have made sure that the essential cut-off values for model fit were fulfilled.

Justification of the Sample Framework

The sample size of 820 is adequate for factor analysis, which requires large samples to give reliable and valid results. The sample focused on commerce and management students is justified by their direct relevance to the employability and skill development aspects emphasized in the NEP policy.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Respondents

| Measure | Items | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| Age | 18 | 330 | 40.24 |
| | 19 | 332 | 40.49 |
| | 20 | 120 | 14.63 |
| | 21 | 25 | 3.05 |
| | 22 | 13 | 1.59 |
| Gender | Female | 522 | 63.7 |
| | Male | 298 | 36.3 |
| | Transgender | NA | NA |
| Currently Pursuing | 1st Year UG | 370 | 45.1 |
| | 2nd Year UG | 450 | 54.9 |

Note. * $n = 820$

Table 1 shows the demographic details of ($n = 820$) the respondents comprising students from commerce and management fields, respectively. The population of the study consists of 522 females and 298 males. The data also indicates that most responders were between the ages of 18 and 19. Still, according to the statistics, few respondents took a break from their studies and then resumed their education journey, so we got few responses from the age group of 20–22 out of 820 respondents.

Empirical Analysis and Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

EFA is used to study the dimensions of different factors in NEP. The study excluded items that had less than 0.50 loading from the survey. Three factors were extracted to explain a total variance of 76.503. The Kaiser normalization test yielded a value of 0.979, an extremely good value suggesting the suitability of further factor analysis. Table 2 presents the four criteria that we identified based on their shared characteristics. Employability Skills, or the skill sets needed by students in the organization, is the first factor that came to light. The second factor is Communal-Based Skills, which relates to the skill sets that benefit society. The third factor is Social and Emotional Skills, related to human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing generosity and empathy. The fourth factor, Individualistic Skills, focuses on intellectual curiosity, the development of character, and ethical and constitutional values.

Table 2. Rotated Component Matrix and Cronbach's Alpha

| Dimensions | Items | Standardized Loading | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-----------------------|-------|----------------------|------------------|
| Employability Skills | ES1 | 0.753 | 0.941 |
| | ES2 | 0.737 | |
| | ES3 | 0.729 | |
| | ES4 | 0.710 | |
| | ES5 | 0.681 | |
| Communal-Based Skills | CBS1 | 0.666 | 0.938 |
| | CBS2 | 0.666 | |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------|--------------|
| | <i>CBS3</i> | 0.627 | |
| | <i>CBS4</i> | 0.620 | |
| | <i>CBS5</i> | 0.586 | |
| | <i>CBS6</i> | 0.563 | |
| | <i>CBS7</i> | 0.537 | |
| Social and Emotional Skills | <i>Se1</i> | 0.696 | 0.924 |
| | <i>SE2</i> | 0.670 | |
| | <i>SE3</i> | 0.636 | |
| | <i>SE4</i> | 0.624 | |
| | <i>SE5</i> | 0.609 | |
| | <i>SE6</i> | 0.550 | |
| Individualistic Skills | <i>IS1</i> | 0.748 | 0.88 |
| | <i>IS2</i> | 0.721 | |
| | <i>IS3</i> | 0.695 | |
| | <i>IS4</i> | 0.568 | |

Note. Extraction Method : Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method : Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

To perform an EFA, a number of factors must be taken into account, including a sufficient sample size: A minimum sample size is necessary for EFA to produce accurate results. Generally speaking, a minimum sample size of 100 cases is needed, but a bigger sample size is generally preferable. EFA assumes that the variance of the observed variables is equal across all levels of the underlying factors. It assumes that the observed variables are correlated, which means there is a degree of shared variance. These requirements must be considered before conducting an EFA to ensure that the analysis is valid and the results are reliable.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

CFA mainly focuses on establishing the relationship between latent factors and observed variables. Also, it is used to evaluate how effectively measurable variables capture particular notions. It is a statistical modeling technique that assesses the precision with which various systems measure and rank a concept. CFA is used to reject the measurement hypothesis. Discriminant and convergent validity were also established.

In CFA, a first-order model represents a model with a set of observed variables or indicators directly associated with a single underlying latent variable or construct. First-order analysis was conducted using AMOS version 21.1, as shown in Figure 1. Through the first-order model, four dimensions of employability skills, communal-based skills, social and emotional skills, and individualistic skills, are confirmed to be the independent predictors of the skill set. All the factor loadings are above 0.5 (Hair Jr. et al., 2014), resulting in the first-order model of the construct represented $X^2/df=4.360$, goodness of fit index (GFI)=0.910, comparative fit index (CFI)=0.961, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.064, normed fit index (NFI)>0.950, parsimony normed fit index (PNFI) = 0.835, and parsimony comparative of fit index (PCFI)>0.84. CFA is derived by determining whether the data fits a measurement model proposed by the provided constructs. The findings reveal that, after accounting for the error term, the standardized loadings for each build requirement are met. They further argue that the suggested query makes sense in the context of evaluating the unobserved construct.

Second-order analysis is conducted using AMOS version 21.1, as shown in Figure 2. The primary observable variables' central construct can be measured using the four constructs. All the factor loadings are above 0.5

Figure 1. First-Order Model Checking the Constructs of Skill Sets Mentioned in NEP

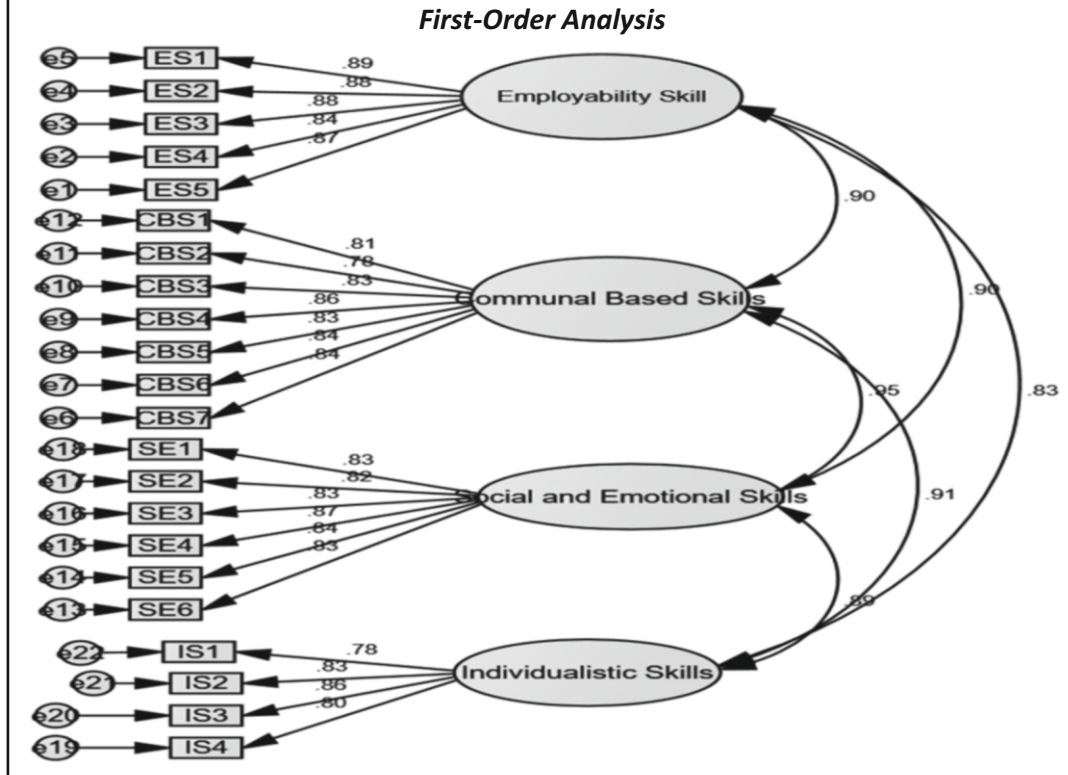
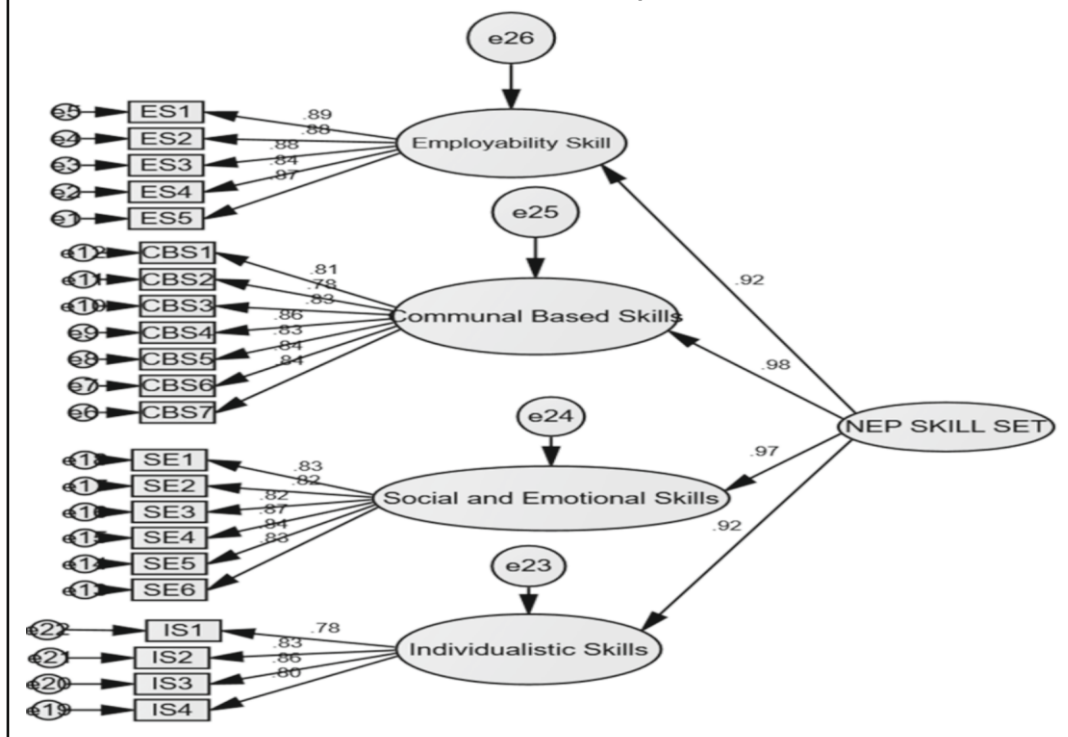


Figure 2. Second-Order Model for the Skill Sets Mentioned in the Policy :
Second-Order Analysis



(Hair Jr. et al., 2014). The results in the second-order model of the construct represent $X^2/df = 4.345$, CFI = 0.961, GFI = 0.910, NFI > 0.950, RMSEA = 0.064, PCFI = 0.853, and PNFI = 0.843. Therefore, the objective of second-order CFA is to indicate the skill sets proposed by NEP being the main constructs that can be studied with the help of the sub-constructs of employability skills, communal-based skills, social and emotional skills, and individualistic skills, which are confirmed in the first order. The second-order analysis is a statistical method that serves as a crucial measuring tool and confirms that the construct used for the study loads is based on the underlying sub-constructs.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

NEP is a platform for students to excel in their careers, which provides vast learning opportunities. It increases focus on skill improvement and competency development, which helps build higher-order cognitive, social-emotional, and 21st-century skills essential for prospective work. It enhances students with both educational and non-educational excellence. NEP provides students with multiple entry and exit facilities to resume their course (Sharma, 2020). Under the NEP 2020, the focus areas of the reforms seek to cultivate “21st-century skills” among students, including critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and digital literacy. It gives greater autonomy to students to choose their learning pathway and develop skill sets, likely to make them job creators, thereby giving rise to the entrepreneurial culture (Chaturvedi, 2022).

Students' cognitive and analytical abilities must be developed, but education also tries to foster the development of “high-order” cognitive abilities like critical thinking, as well as “radical skills” of learning. Empathy, grit, tenacity, leadership, and teamwork are among the soft qualities that are improved. It also aims to develop a personality that builds a strong core of moral, ethical, and constitutional values. The NEP calls for value-based learning and significant curriculum and pedagogical changes (Panda, 2020). The course should focus on employability skills and entrepreneurial ability skills, respectively (Aithal & Aithal, 2020).

Skill sets like community-based skills and individualistic skills are interdependent as the skills that an individual learns benefit their career and society. If an individual is ethical and has some moral values, the fraudulent activities in the community are reduced, and the development of character goes hand in hand. Intellectual curiosity and scientific temper tell about how an individual is willing to learn and explore new things and is interested in gaining knowledge.

These findings also highlight for managers and marketers the significance of matching business demands with Indian educational curricula to guarantee a supply of competent workers. It will also provide an outline for how industries can leverage educational changes to enhance a better workforce. Managers will also benefit from employability skills that are equipped with not only technical expertise but also interpersonal skills. Marketers will benefit from workforce skills in digital literacy, which is important for marketing campaigns. The entrepreneurial skills will focus on fostering innovation, which will encourage students to develop new ideas and business skills. This study offers an understanding of how social-emotional, employment and high-order cognitive skills can be developed through educational changes among students. It will also examine various skill sets and their impact on career development and societal benefits. It will also add value by highlighting the interdependence of individualist skills and communal skills and their impact on ethical behavior and individual development.

Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research

Our study has some of the same drawbacks as any other research. Only undergraduates majoring in management and commerce were the subjects of the data collection. Bangalore's north and south were the only regions included

in the sample. The population is not studied with equal gender as female respondents were higher than male respondents. As the students were part of the policy and its first-time implementation, they expressed their concerns to the physically present researchers, which was challenging and time-consuming.

The current research attempts to capture critical skills emphasized in the policy for creating an aspirational student community. As the policy progresses, the topics listed below can be further investigated. In the academic realm, a considerable lot of policy decisions depend on successful research and repercussions.

✦ **ABC (Academic Bank Credit) :** ABC emphasizes that digitizing the Indian education system has become a need for the hour. NEP was rolled out 3 years back, and students were unaware of the academic bank of credit; the benefit of this ABC is potentially higher for the students when they want to pursue their education after some years of gap and also benefits the distance education students; hence, orientation must be done of ABC as well as a digital locker in connection with such a concept.

✦ **Challenges to the Academic Fraternity :** While conducting the surveys, students also mentioned that due to a lack of clarity on the syllabus, they are not being facilitated with benefits that are being covered under NEP; student interactions suggested that the government must introduce some of the new courses that could be offered to students via extension or integration into the NEP policy. Also, it was assessed that students are unaware of the job opportunities available to them after completing their graduation under NEP. Academic staff can take up these challenges of students to curate courses and implement a policy like a ready reckoner on options available after they complete each year under the NEP policy.

The students need to be attracted by emphasizing that they get an excellent opportunity to start their Ph.D. journey after they complete the undergraduate program for four years. The faculty who are engaging also need better clarity as it was observed in due course of data collection that most of the faculties were clueless on the details of the NEP policy, which can be studied as further awareness or a checklist can be created on what skills needs to be imbibed by the student community to ensure academic success. Future studies can look into ways to ensure that faculty members receive up-to-date training and that the appropriate skills are imparted throughout the educational process.

✦ **Accessibility :** Digital isolation was an issue in India even before the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Equitable access is the main difficulty with this nation's online courses and remote learning. Accessibility in this context also refers to having access to electronic devices like computers and cellphones ; together with an adequate penetration of the internet and technology services, we need to build a tech-savvy nation. Hence, this problem of digital India needs to be researched in the context of accessibility to rural and urban students.

✦ **Multiple Entry and Exit System :** While conducting the research survey, it was noticed that the students were not aware of the provisions of multiple entry and exit. This provision allows students to continue their education after taking a break/after dropping out, as per the student's requirement. We also feel this must be strongly advocated among students for a great move in the education system.

✦ **Scale Development Validation :** The current scale explores the skills of the NEP and links it to the terms mentioned widely in the policy. Further researchers can deploy this scale in measuring these skills and academic performance as the dependent variable. The current research postulates on the commerce and management discipline. Other discipline skill sets may vary in preference, which can be further investigated.

Conclusion

The economy's growth relies on education, one of the significant changes brought in the educational system in India, aiming at “Atma Nirbhar” India, molding young minds for sustainability. The main agenda of NEP 2020 is to bring adaptability and sustainable development goals to the educational system. With the help of skill sets, this can be achieved. Identifying the suitable skill set required for various disciplines ensures the success of the policy implementation. The policy aims to develop in many aspects, and implementing this new policy will determine its success only when the stakeholders benefit from it. Hence, the current research aims at capturing the skill essence in higher education as NEP 2020 pursues to change education toward a more digitized approach in the coming days.

Authors' Contribution

Spoorthy Reddy M. and Pavithra V. mostly collected data for data analysis and manuscript writing under the guidance of Dr. Mary Rani Thomas.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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Appendix

| Constructs | Proposed Measured Items |
|---|--|
| Employability Skills (<i>ES</i>) | <i>ES1</i> : Cognitive thinking <i>ES2</i> : Teamwork <i>ES3</i> : Critical leadership skills <i>ES4</i> : Self-management skills <i>ES5</i> : Entrepreneur skills |
| Communal-Based Skills (<i>CBS</i>) | <i>CBS1</i> : Development of character <i>CBS2</i> : Ethical and constitutional values <i>CBS3</i> : Intellectual curiosity <i>CBS4</i> : Scientific temper <i>CBS5</i> : Service spirit <i>CBS6</i> : Diversity aspect <i>CBS7</i> : Encouraging regional languages |
| Social and Emotional Learning (<i>SE</i>) | <i>SE1</i> : Holistic education <i>SE2</i> : Empathy and resilience <i>SE3</i> : Craft centric learning <i>SE4</i> : Analytical thinking <i>SE5</i> : Equity and inclusion <i>SE6</i> : Conceptual understanding |
| Individualist Skills (<i>IS</i>) | <i>IS1</i> : Development of character <i>IS2</i> : Intellectual curiosity <i>IS3</i> : Ethical and constitutional values <i>IS4</i> : Scientific temper |

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