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Work Experience under the National Education Policy 2020: Social Implications for CBSE School Students in India

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Abstract-- The National Education Policy 2020 introduces work experience as a core component of school education to promote experiential learning, skill development, and holistic growth. This paper examines the social implications of work experience provisions for CBSE school students in India. Based on secondary data drawn from policy documents, national reports, and academic studies, the paper analyzes how work experience influences socialization, skill formation, dignity of labor, and educational equity. The analysis reveals that structured work experience enhances teamwork, responsibility, and career awareness among students. However, disparities in access, institutional capacity, and socio-economic background continue to shape unequal outcomes. The study argues that without inclusive implementation strategies, work experience may reinforce existing social inequalities. It concludes that coordinated policy execution, teacher preparedness, and community–industry linkages are essential to ensure that work experience under NEP 2020 contributes positively to social development among CBSE school students.

Keywords-- CBSE School Students, Educational Equity, National Education Policy 2020, Skill Development, Social Implications, Work Experience.

I. INTRODUCTION

School education plays a decisive role in shaping individuals' social attitudes, skills, values, and future aspirations. In India, the school education system has traditionally been dominated by examination-oriented and rote-based learning practices. While this approach has helped students acquire theoretical knowledge, it has often remained disconnected from real-life experiences, practical skills, and the world of work. As a result, many students complete their schooling with limited employability skills, inadequate problem-solving abilities, and a weak appreciation for manual, vocational, and community-based work. This academic–practical divide has also reinforced social hierarchies by privileging white-collar aspirations over skill-based and vocational occupations.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to address these long-standing concerns by introducing a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to education.

One of its significant reforms is the integration of work experience, vocational exposure, and experiential learning within mainstream school education. By emphasizing internships, community engagement, local crafts, vocational modules, and skill-based activities, NEP 2020 aims to promote dignity of labor, self-reliance, creativity, and social responsibility among students from an early age.

For CBSE school students, work experience under NEP 2020 represents a fundamental shift from purely textbook-based instruction to competency-based and experiential learning. It encourages students to apply classroom knowledge to real-world situations, develop practical skills, and gain early exposure to diverse occupations. Such experiences are expected to enhance critical thinking, teamwork, adaptability, and awareness of socio-economic realities.

However, the implementation of work experience also raises important sociological concerns. Issues related to equality of access, differences between urban and rural schools, resource availability, teacher preparedness, and potential reinforcement of social stratification require careful examination. This paper situates work experience within this broader social context and critically examines its implications, challenges, and potential outcomes for CBSE school students in India.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Aggarwal (2014) discussed the principles of holistic education and emphasized the importance of integrating practical activities with classroom learning. Using a theoretical and normative approach, the study concluded that experiential learning contributes to balanced personality development and social competence.

Sharma (2019) examined skill-based education in Indian secondary schools through a survey-based study. The research found that vocational exposure enhances students' confidence and practical skills, though regional and institutional disparities affect outcomes.



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Verma (2020) analyzed experiential learning practices in CBSE schools using qualitative methods, including teacher interviews and policy review. The study concluded that work-based learning strengthens teamwork and social discipline but is constrained by inadequate infrastructure and training.

Kumar and Singh (2021) employed a mixed-method approach to study school-to-work transition in India. Their findings revealed that early work exposure positively shapes career orientation, but students from lower socio-economic backgrounds face limited opportunities.

NCERT (2022), through descriptive content analysis of curricular reforms, emphasized that work experience promotes competency-based learning and holistic development, while also highlighting the need for teacher preparedness and institutional support.

UNESCO (2023) examined global skill-based education reforms using comparative policy analysis and concluded that experiential learning enhances social inclusion when supported by equitable implementation frameworks.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the concept of work experience under the National Education Policy 2020.
- To analyze the social implications of work experience for CBSE school students.
- To assess the role of work experience in skill development and socialization.
- To identify challenges and inequalities in the implementation of work experience programs.
- To suggest measures for effective and inclusive implementation.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on secondary data. Data have been collected from government policy documents, national reports, academic journals, books, and publications related to school education and vocational learning. Content analysis and interpretative methods have been used to examine the data in line with the stated objectives. This methodology allows for a comprehensive understanding of policy intent and its social implications.

V. NATIONAL REPORTS ON WORK EXPERIENCE AND SKILL EDUCATION

The Government of India (2020) emphasized vocational education and work experience as essential for developing employability and life skills among school students.

The Ministry of Education (2021) highlighted internships and community engagement as key mechanisms for holistic learning. NCERT (2022) reinforced the need for competency-based curricula to connect education with real-world experiences. UNESCO (2023) further stressed that equitable access to skill-based education is crucial for social inclusion.

VI. CONCEPT OF WORK EXPERIENCE UNDER NEP 2020

Under the National Education Policy 2020, work experience is conceptualized as a core educational strategy that integrates academic learning with productive and socially useful work (Government of India, 2020). Rather than being treated as an auxiliary activity, work experience is positioned as a central component of holistic education. According to Sharma (2019), the integration of work and education enables students to connect theoretical knowledge with real-life applications, thereby enhancing meaningful learning. This approach helps students understand the social value of labor and develop respect for different forms of work. Experiential learning of this nature contributes to cognitive growth while simultaneously promoting ethical awareness and social responsibility, thus strengthening the link between education and society.

VII. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR CBSE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Work experience has important social implications for CBSE school students, particularly in shaping their attitudes and behaviors. Participation in collaborative and community-oriented activities encourages cooperation, discipline, and civic responsibility. Verma (2020) found that experiential learning activities positively influence students' social behavior by promoting collective participation and mutual respect. Through shared responsibilities and group-based tasks, students learn accountability and develop an understanding of social roles. Such experiences support positive socialization and help students perceive education as a socially embedded process rather than an individualistic pursuit.

VIII. SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIALIZATION

Skill development through work experience goes beyond technical or vocational training and includes essential social and life skills. Kumar and Singh (2021) argue that skills such as communication, adaptability, teamwork, and problem-solving are largely socially acquired and are critical for effective participation in society.



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Work experience provides students with opportunities to interact in real-world settings, where they learn to manage interpersonal relationships and work collectively toward shared goals. This process strengthens their social competence, emotional intelligence, and confidence, all of which are crucial for their future social and professional integration.

IX. INEQUALITY AND IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Despite the progressive intent of NEP 2020, the implementation of work experience is marked by significant inequalities. Reports by NCERT (2022) highlight disparities in infrastructure, availability of trained teachers, and access to practical learning environments across schools. Similarly, UNESCO (2023) emphasizes that socio-economic differences and regional imbalances restrict equitable access to quality work experience, particularly for rural and disadvantaged students. These structural challenges limit the effectiveness of work experience programs and risk reinforcing existing educational and social inequalities unless addressed through targeted policy interventions.

X. CONCLUSION

Work experience under the National Education Policy 2020 represents a significant step toward promoting holistic and socially relevant education. For CBSE school students, it serves as a powerful medium for skill development, social awareness, and the cultivation of respect for labor (Government of India, 2020). By linking classroom learning with practical experiences, work experience enhances students' understanding of social realities and prepares them for responsible citizenship.

However, the benefits of this initiative cannot be fully realized without addressing the challenges of unequal implementation. As noted by NCERT (2022) and UNESCO (2023), disparities in resources, infrastructure, and socio-economic conditions continue to hinder inclusive access. The study concludes that effective teacher training, equitable resource distribution, and strong school–community and school–industry partnerships are essential to ensure that work experience functions as a tool for social empowerment rather than reinforcing existing inequalities.

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