

# Integrating Skill Development in Commerce Curriculum: A NEP 2020 Perspective

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**Abstract:** The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a transformative shift in India's education system by placing a strong emphasis on skill-based learning, multidisciplinary education, and employability enhancement. Commerce, as a pivotal academic discipline, needs to be recalibrated in alignment with the skill development goals outlined by NEP 2020. This research paper explores the conceptual framework and strategic integration of skill development into the commerce curriculum, evaluates the current gaps, and offers actionable recommendations to align commerce education with the demands of the 21st-century workforce. The paper also reflects on policy implications, pedagogical reforms, industry-academia collaboration, and the role of digital learning in fostering employability through skill integration.

**Introduction** - Commerce education in India has traditionally focused on theoretical knowledge with limited emphasis on practical skills. However, the global economy, driven by digitalization, innovation, and entrepreneurship, demands a workforce that is not only academically sound but also skill-efficient. NEP 2020 calls for a fundamental shift from rote learning to a more holistic, experiential, and skill-oriented approach.

This paper investigates how the commerce curriculum can be enriched by integrating skill development in accordance with the objectives of NEP 2020. It discusses curriculum design, pedagogy, assessment reforms, and the need for interlinkages with vocational education, internships, and real-world exposure.

## Objectives of the Study:

1. To analyze the vision and mandates of NEP 2020 related to skill development.
2. To examine the existing gaps in the current commerce curriculum regarding skill orientation.
3. To identify key skills relevant to commerce graduates in the contemporary job market.
4. To propose a framework for integrating skill development into the commerce curriculum.
5. To suggest policy recommendations for effective implementation and monitoring.

**NEP 2020 and the Vision for Skill Development:** The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, marks a watershed moment in the country's educational reform

agenda. Designed to meet the demands of the 21st-century knowledge economy, the policy focuses extensively on transforming India's education system from one rooted in rote learning to a dynamic ecosystem that nurtures critical thinking, innovation, creativity, and above all, employability through skill development.

**The Paradigm Shift in Higher Education:** NEP 2020 recognizes that the current model of higher education has remained largely content-driven and examination-centric, leading to a mismatch between academic outputs and industry expectations. The policy, therefore, proposes a shift towards a more application-oriented, learner-centric, and multidisciplinary education system. This is especially significant for commerce education, which plays a crucial role in shaping the workforce for sectors like finance, business, trade, banking, entrepreneurship, and digital services.

The policy outlines the following key areas of transformation with direct implications for skill development:

**a. Multidisciplinary and Holistic Education:** NEP advocates for dismantling rigid boundaries between disciplines, encouraging universities and colleges to offer multidisciplinary programs that include both academic and vocational components. For commerce education, this implies integration with subjects like data science, psychology, public policy, and technology, enabling students to acquire diverse skill sets.

**b. Integration of Vocational Education:** A major highlight of NEP 2020 is its focus on integrating vocational

education and skill development into all stages of education. It emphasizes that by 2025, at least 50% of all learners at the school and higher education levels should have exposure to vocational education and skill training. Commerce curricula are thus expected to embed short-term and long-term vocational modules such as:

1. Financial modeling
2. Digital accounting tools (Tally, Zoho, SAP)
3. GST and e-filing practices
4. Retail and supply chain management
5. Business analytics and fintech applications

**c. Flexibility and Credit-Based Learning:** NEP promotes the Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS), Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), and flexible entry-exit points in undergraduate programs. These features enable students to accumulate credits for skill-based courses, certifications, internships, and MOOCs, enhancing the practical value of a commerce degree.

**d. Internships and Experiential Learning:** To enhance employability, NEP mandates the inclusion of internships, on-the-job training, and experiential learning opportunities as integral components of higher education. For commerce students, this may take the form of:

1. Internships with CA firms, corporate finance departments, and banks
2. Industry projects in marketing and supply chain management
3. Hands-on experience with taxation and accounting platforms
4. Community-based projects in microfinance, SHGs, and entrepreneurship

Such exposure allows students to develop soft skills, understand business environments, and apply theoretical concepts in real-world scenarios.

**e. Industry-Academia Linkages:** NEP 2020 calls for the establishment of strong partnerships between educational institutions, industry bodies, and skilling agencies. This aims to ensure that curricula remain updated with industry trends and that students receive mentorship, training, and placement support. In the context of commerce education, this may involve:

1. Advisory boards comprising industry professionals and academicians
2. Joint curriculum development with corporates and skill councils (like NSDC)
3. Faculty development programs in collaboration with industry experts

Higher education institutions must reorient their governance, pedagogy, and evaluation systems to support the seamless integration of skill development within the commerce curriculum.

**Current State of Commerce Curriculum: Gaps and Challenges:** Despite reforms, many Indian universities still follow outdated curricula that:

1. Lack integration of practical skills such as data analysis,

digital accounting, taxation software, business analytics, and communication.

2. Do not include mandatory internships or industry exposure.
3. Have limited use of technology-enhanced learning or interdisciplinary modules.
4. Focus more on content than competencies.

Moreover, there is often a disconnect between what students learn and what the job market demands.

**Key Skills for Commerce Graduates in the 21st Century**

NEP 2020 encourages the development of a wide range of cognitive, technical, and socio-emotional skills. For commerce students, the key skills include:

Skill Category	Specific Skills
Cognitive Skills	Critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, problem-solving
Technical Skills	Accounting software (Tally, SAP), data analysis (Excel, SPSS), taxation tools, blockchain basics
Communication Skills	Business communication, report writing, presentation skills
Digital Literacy	E-commerce platforms, digital marketing, fintech knowledge
Entrepreneurial Skills	Business planning, innovation, startup incubation
Professional Skills	Ethics, teamwork, adaptability, leadership

**Strategies for Integrating Skill Development in Commerce Curriculum**

#### 1. Curriculum Re-design:

- i. Introduction of modular courses with embedded skill components.
- ii. Offering electives on digital finance, fintech, data analytics, and entrepreneurship.
- iii. Incorporating NEP-recommended vocational modules such as retail management, financial services, and e-accounting.

#### 2. Project-Based and Experiential Learning:

- i. Integration of real-life business problems as case studies.
- ii. Live projects with companies and NGOs.
- iii. Encouraging student-led ventures and simulations.

#### 3. Internship and Industry Exposure:

- i. Mandatory internships in commerce programs (minimum 4–6 weeks).
- ii. MoUs with industries and chartered firms for regular student engagement.

#### 4. Use of Technology and Digital Platforms:

- i. Leveraging MOOCs, SWAYAM, Coursera, and Khan Academy for supplemental skill courses.
- ii. Use of LMS for blended learning models.
- iii. Virtual labs and accounting practice software for hands-on experience.

#### 5. Faculty Training and Capacity Building:

- i. Faculty development programs (FDPs) in emerging

areas like data analytics, AI in accounting, and digital business models.

- ii. Incentivizing faculty-industry collaborations.

**Case Studies and Best Practices:** The successful integration of skill development in commerce education, as envisioned under NEP 2020, can be observed through various innovative initiatives undertaken by academic institutions and government platforms. These case studies highlight how diverse models are being implemented to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and employable skills.

**1. Delhi University – Curriculum Innovation in Digital Commerce:** Delhi University has made significant strides in aligning its commerce curriculum with the needs of the digital economy. The B.Com (Hons) program now includes papers on:

- i. Digital Accounting Tools (Tally, SAP)
- ii. Business Data Analytics using Excel and Python
- iii. E-filing of GST and Income Tax Returns

This initiative provides students with exposure to industry-relevant software and practical assignments, encouraging experiential learning alongside traditional classroom instruction.

**2. Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) and Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) – Certification Programs:** Premier institutions such as IIM Bangalore and IIM Calcutta, along with ICAI, have launched short-term certification programs aimed at upskilling commerce and finance graduates in specialized domains. These include:

1. FinTech and Blockchain Applications in Finance
2. Forensic Accounting and Fraud Detection
3. Strategic Financial Management and AI in Business

Such certifications are often delivered through hybrid or online modes, promoting flexible and modular learning in alignment with NEP's emphasis on lifelong and continuous learning.

**3. Shri Vishwakarma Skill University (Haryana) – Apprenticeship-Based Commerce Education:** As India's first skill university, Shri Vishwakarma Skill University (SVSU) has pioneered a unique dual-education model wherein students pursuing B.Voc programs in commerce and business administration undergo:

1. Apprenticeships in industries for 6–12 months
2. Live training in digital marketing, e-retail, and logistics
3. Skill certifications recognized by Sector Skill Councils (SSCs)

This model is closely aligned with NEP 2020's recommendation of integrating vocational education with general education and provides students with both academic degrees and employable skill credentials.

**4. SWAYAM Portal – Democratizing Skill-Based Education:** The SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active–Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) platform, developed by the Ministry of Education, is a flagship initiative under NEP to provide free online courses across disciplines, including

commerce and skill development.

**Key highlights include:**

1. Courses in Tally Accounting, GST Practices, E-Business, Financial Markets, and Excel for Business offered by institutions such as IITs, IIMs, IGNOU, and NPTEL.
2. Integration of 4-quadrant approach (video lectures, reading material, self-assessment, and discussion forum).
3. Courses aligned with National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), enabling credit transfer under the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC).
4. Certification on successful completion, which is recognized by UGC and many universities.

**Example courses relevant to commerce and skills:**

1. *"Introduction to GST"* by Dr. Bhavana G. (Mumbai University)
  2. *"Accounting for Managers"* by Prof. Anil Kumar (IGNOU)
  3. *"Digital Marketing"* by IIT Roorkee faculty
  4. *"Financial Accounting and Analysis"* by IIM Bangalore
- SWAYAM enables self-paced, cost-effective, and inclusive skill acquisition, especially for students in Tier-II and rural institutions who may not have access to elite faculty or infrastructure.

**Policy and Institutional Recommendations:**

**1. National Curriculum Framework for Commerce:** Aligning with NEP's curriculum design principles.

**2. UGC and AICTE Collaboration:** To standardize skill benchmarks across commerce disciplines.

**3. Industry-Academia Boards:** Setting up advisory boards for curriculum and internship planning.

**4. Assessment Reform:** Moving from memory-based exams to competency-based evaluations.

**5. Credit Recognition for Skill Courses:** As proposed in the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC).

**Expected Outcomes:** If skill development is effectively integrated, the outcomes will include:

1. Increased employability and self-employment opportunities among commerce graduates.
2. Better alignment between academic learning and industry needs.
3. Promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship.
4. Achievement of NEP 2020's vision for a robust, relevant, and dynamic higher education system.

**Conclusion:** Integrating skill development into the commerce curriculum is not merely a policy directive under NEP 2020—it is a necessity for India's socio-economic transformation. The commerce discipline must evolve into a practice-oriented, skill-enhancing academic stream that empowers students with the competencies required in a rapidly changing world. Through strategic curriculum reforms, industry engagement, digital integration, and faculty training, commerce education in India can truly become a catalyst for national development and global

competitiveness.

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