



## Relevance of Skill Enhancement Course under NEP 2020 with Special Reference to Assam

Dr. Dhiren Tamuli <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, DKD College, Dergaon

### Abstract:

The socio-economic conditions of a state are influenced by the nature of youth employment and their work ethics, which directly affect the production, exchange, and distribution of various economic goods. All the principles of a genuine democracy can be appreciated by a government that promotes economic democracy. For effective economic democracy, individuals, particularly the youth, must possess efficiency and technical proficiency along with innovative ideas and skill-based expertise. Education plays a crucial role in this area, as emphasized by the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP). Many states in India have begun to implement the NEP, aiming to transform the nation's socio-economic landscape by guiding the people of India through the reform of the traditional education system. Assam is among the states that have adopted the NEP via several universities. Additionally, it is anticipated that the NEP will help alleviate unemployment issues by offering Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC).

**Keywords:** SEC, NEP, Job Opportunities, Advanced Education, Skills Enhancement.

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India is regarded as the largest democratic country in the world. Equality, liberty, fraternity, and justice are the four basic foundations of democracy. The success and failure of every democratic country depend upon the nature and status of these, guaranteed by the state and enjoyed by the people. The Economy of a country plays a critical role in this regard. Again, the socio-economic conditions of the state depend upon the nature of employment youths and their work culture which directly influence the production, exchange, and distribution process of all kinds of economic goods. All the values of a real democracy can be valued by a government, where existed economic democracy. For proper economic democracy, the people especially the youth must be efficient and technically sound with innovative ideas and skill-based knowledge. Education can play a vital role in this field, which has been clearly defined by the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP). Most of the states of India have implemented the NEP through which it is trying to change the socio-economic conditions of the nation by properly guiding the people of India by reforming the traditional education pattern. Assam is one of those states that has implemented the NEP through the various Universities. It is also expected that NEP will be able to reduce the unemployment problems by providing Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC).

**Objectives of this research:** This study aims to

- i. investigate the nature of Skill Enhancement Courses offered by Universities and Colleges in Assam
- ii. analyse the nature of implementation for these courses
- iii. assess the interest of the students' in selection of SEC
- iv. illustrate the nature of the teaching-learning methods employed in SEC

**Methodology:**

The methodology employed in this study incorporates both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered through field research, with respondents chosen from undergraduate students enrolled at Dibrugarh University, utilizing a simple random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was developed and disseminated via a Google Form to facilitate data collection, resulting in responses from 610 students. Secondary data were sourced from books, articles published in esteemed journals, newspapers, and other relevant materials. Additionally, electronic resources, methods, and pertinent websites were specifically utilized to support the research.

**Nature of Skill Enhancement Courses offered by Universities and Colleges in Assam :**

The University Grants Commission through its website published that the fundamental principles of the NEP 2020 are recognizing, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student, by sensitizing teachers as well as parents to promote each student's holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres; flexibility, so that learners can choose their learning trajectories and programs, and thereby choose their paths in life according to their talents and interests; creativity and critical thinking to encourage logical decision-making and innovation; life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience etc. In the vision of NEP, the UGC mentioned that one of the main visions is to maintain a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen. All of these reflect the employment-oriented aims of NEP 2020. The UGC's official website also pointed out that NEP 2020 must prepare students for more meaningful and satisfying lives and work roles and enable economic independence.

India being the largest democracy in the world and one of the fastest-growing economies in the world has been facing the problem of unemployment for a long time. The problem was worse during the post-independence era and after independence, the government took various schemes and necessary provisions to tackle this (Anil Kumar And Sakshi Pandey, 2021). The NEP, along with the SEC programs is trying to make the young generation capable of various skills so that they can do something in the future. It means, higher education is in favor of providing knowledge to earn with learning. If it fails to do so, the unemployment problem will become more crucial. Unemployment is one of the vital problems in India. It is increasing day by day. Most of the young generation are in search of jobs. Because of this, some of them are involved in unwanted activities that are not only insecure for them but also dangerous for society. "Unemployment among young people begins when they are eligible to work. According to the International Labor Office (ILO), young people are increasingly having trouble when looking for their first job (ILO 2011)." (Axelrad et al., 2018) . "A university education increases the probability of being employed for both men and women aged 30–44." (Axelrad et al., 2018). The daily needs for sustenance of a man cannot be fulfilled due to unemployment. Some of them are discretionary and some of them are the most essential. "Discretionary Expenses include spending on recreation, restaurants, clothing and other accessories, mobile phones,

cosmetics and health enhancements, fitness, pocket money, intoxicants, social and religious obligations, pets, painting and renovation, and travel. Durable expenses include expenditures on appliances, jewellery, furniture, light fixtures, and utensils. In each regression, we control for the household size and household fixed effects. All results denote linear regressions using actual values of the consumption expenditure measured in Rs. as the dependent variable.” (Gupta & Kishore, 2022). It is also essential to find out the obstacles to mitigate the daily needs of unemployed youths. “A university education increases the probability of being employed for both men and women aged 30–44. Furthermore, for older people (55+) an academic education reduces the negative effect of age on the probability of being employed. While a vocational education increases the likelihood of finding a job for those aged 30–44, such a qualification has no significant impact on the prospects of older people.” (Axelrad et al., 2018). Thus, it can be stated that SEC programmes of NEP may play a positive role in this regard. It is one of the main barriers to the development of our country. When talented and skilled people cannot find a suitable job for themselves for various reasons, this is referred to as being unemployed (Agrahari et al., 2023). To increase employment and absorb a sizable population of unemployed people, the government must therefore create a favourable environment and flexible labour market policies or legislation that attract many private sector and small businesses(Jamal et al., 2024). Skill Enhancement Courses as advocated by the NEP2020 may play a vital role in this regard. Thus, to find out the nature of Skill Enhancement Courses and its role in employment generation, an analysis is attempted based on the data collected from various sources with special reference to the courses provided by Dibrugarh University of Assam.

**Nature of the Implementation of these Courses:**

According to the information provided on the official website of the Higher Education Department of Assam, there exist two central universities, namely Assam University and Tezpur University, along with 14 state universities dedicated to General Higher Studies. All these institutions have adopted the National Education Policy 2020, aligning with its fundamental objectives. Among these, Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University are recognized as the oldest universities, serving the largest student populations in the state. For this study, Dibrugarh University has been chosen to assess the core objectives. This university boasts 177 affiliated colleges across 10 districts in Assam. It has introduced over 85 Skill Enhancement Courses aimed at enhancing employment prospects for students by providing practical skills, hands-on training, and soft skills development. Notable SEC Courses offered by this university are listed in Table 1.0.

**Table 1.0.: Notable Skill Enhancement Courses prescribed by Dibrugarh University**

1 <sup>st</sup> Semester	2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester	3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> semester
Aquarium Fish Keeping	Startups and Entrepreneurship	Cyber Security Management
Banking and Confectionary	Vermicomposting	Basics of Remote sensing and GIS
Creative Writing	Photoshop and Animation	Catering Management
Entrepreneuring Librarianship	Mass Media and Communication	Internet Technology and Computer Network
Food Preservation and Processing	Good Governance and E-Governance	MATLAB Programming
Foundation of Rupcharcha (Beautician)	Hospitality-Food and Beverage Service Steward	National Service Scheme
Graphic Design	Event Management	Small Tea Garden Management
LED Bulb Making and Repairing	Digital Economy	Civil Service Foundation Course etc.
Knitting and Cutting, Stitching, Embroidery	Electrical Wiring and Rural Marketing	

Tourism Management	Translation and Transcription	
Retail Management	Solar Energy Basics and System Design etc.	
Soft Skills		
Wildlife Photography		
MS Excel and its Application in Business etc.		

Source: Compiled from the FYUGP Syllabus, Dibrugarh University

In alignment with the National Education Policy 2020, numerous colleges provide a variety of Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC) for undergraduate students, subject to the approval of the University. A survey conducted among 610 students indicated that the most favored SEC subjects are Management of Non-Government Organisation (21.64%), Agricultural and Rural Marketing (7.87%), and Basic Analytical Chemistry (6.72%). The ten most frequently chosen subjects are detailed in Table 1.1. It is noteworthy that the college offers more than 50 SEC subjects; however, certain important subjects, including Aquaculture, Electrical Circuits and Networks Skills, and Renewable Energy and Energy Harvesting, were selected by fewer than 1% of the students. Additionally, around ten students were unable to accurately identify their SEC subject.

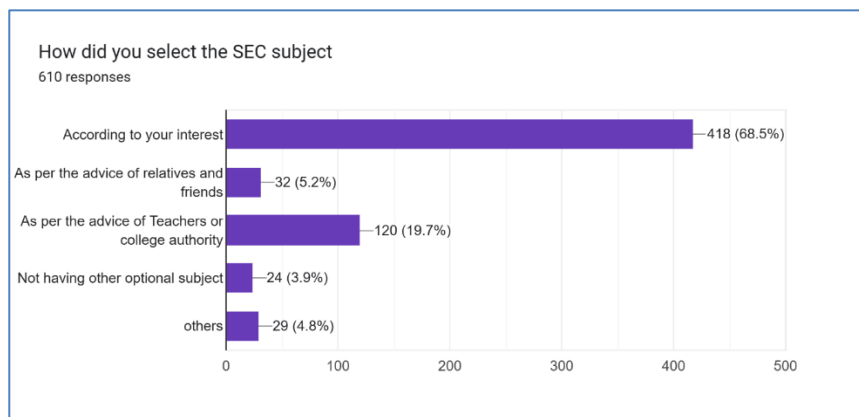
**Table 1.1: Top ten SEC Subjects as opted by the respondents**

SEC Subject	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Management of NGO	132	21.64
Agricultural and rural marketing	48	7.87
Basic analytical chemistry	41	6.72
Methods and techniques of field study	39	6.39
Legislature Procedure	36	5.90
Event Management	30	4.92
Bio-fertilizers	27	4.43
Creative writings	27	4.43
Computer Laboratory	23	3.77
Critical thinking	18	2.95

Source: Compiled from data collected by the researcher.

**Nature of choice of SEC subjects Selected by the students:** As per NEP 2020 and the notification of Dibrugarh University, it has been prescribed that students can select any subject as an SEC subject according to their choices. It is expected that this SEC subject will help them to choose their career along with their major subjects or students will get an alternative way of development by enhancing their multi-skills quality. In this regard, the interest of students to choose the SEC subject plays an important role. Thus, data have been collected to know about the nature of the selection of the subject during admission time in the colleges or universities. The response has found as like figure 1.1.

Figure: 1.1



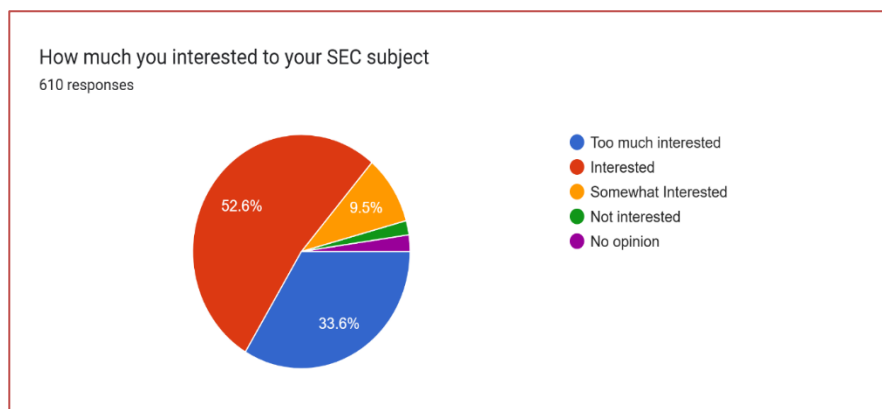
Source: Data compiled by the researcher from the Respondent’s responses by using computerized google form.

A positive picture has been found from the figure that 68.5 percent of students have selected their SEC subject as per their interests. Somehow, it has also been found that 19.7 percent of responses have nodded the selection of the subject according to the advice of teachers or college authorities, which is traditional. It should be avoided as far as possible. Significantly not having other options 3.9 percent of students responded that they have taken the subject out of their interest.

**Interest students' in selection of SEC :**

The incorporation of Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC) in undergraduate programs under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has marked a significant shift in the teaching-learning process of general education. To assess the value of this initiative, a survey was conducted to gauge students' interest in SEC subjects. The findings, as depicted in Figure 1.2, indicate that a substantial majority (over 85%) of students are enthusiastic about the opportunity to learn SEC subjects. Furthermore, the primary motivation behind students' selection of SEC subjects appears to be the perceived benefits for career development and future employment prospects. Specifically, 36.7% of respondents believed that SEC subjects would be very helpful, 48.2% considered them helpful, and 9.7% deemed them somewhat helpful for career advancement. In contrast, a minority (2.3%) felt that SEC subjects would not be helpful at all, and 3.1 percent nodded without responding in a certain way.

Figure: 1.2: Student’s interest in having the SEC subject NEP 2020

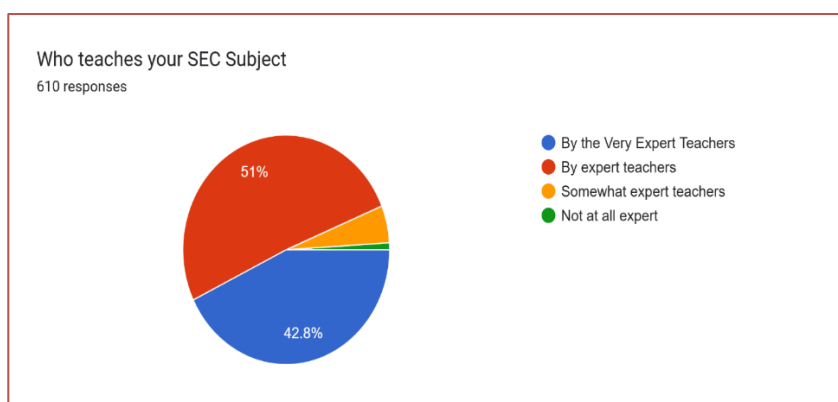


Source: Data compiled by the researcher from the Respondent’s responses by using computerized google form.

**Nature of teaching- learning process of SEC in Higher Educational Institutions (HEI):**

A large number of students attend government educational institutions, the majority of which have long provided a traditional method of instruction. Teachers or instructors were chosen accordingly. As a result, the majority of teachers are subject matter specialists. However, with the introduction of new courses such as SEC, each institution needs some new professional lecturers. In the instance of Assam, the government has not created new positions to teach SEC topics but is attempting to meet the needs with the assistance of current faculty. To learn about the pupils' feelings, certain data was collected. The figures shown below were created using computer programming and based on obtained data. Figure 1.3 illustrates that over 6 percent of respondents perceive the teachers responsible for imparting SEC knowledge as somewhat expert or lacking expertise entirely. To ensure the comprehensive development of all students, rather than just the majority, the government or relevant authorities must appoint qualified teachers to address this issue. Without specialized knowledge, no SEC subject can effectively contribute to a student's career advancement.

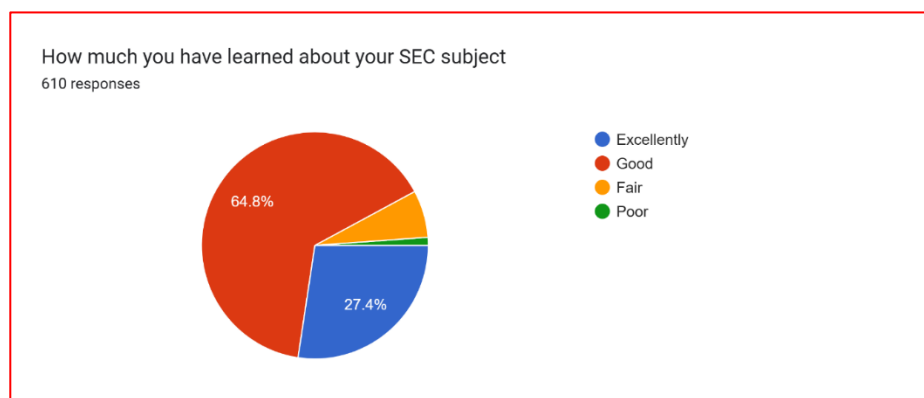
**Figure 1.3: Quality of the teachers who teach SEC subjects**



Source: Data compiled by the researcher from the Respondent's responses by using computerized google form.

The study indicates that traditional, knowledge-based teaching methods are currently in use, and to accurately assess students' understanding, data has been gathered regarding their learning experiences. The findings reveal that only 27.4 percent of students have gained substantial knowledge, while 64.8 percent have learned adequately, and 7.8 percent have not responded favorably.

**Figure 1.4: Enhancement Level of student's SEC knowledge**



Source: Data compiled by the researcher from the Respondent's responses by using computerized google form.

### Findings, Suggestions, and Evaluation:

- This research was conducted to examine the current state of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, with a particular focus on Skill Enhancement Courses (SEC) and their significance in the career advancement of students. A satisfactory number of responses were collected from participants, revealing that a majority of students aspire to secure employment and believe that knowledge gained from SEC subjects will aid them in achieving this goal. While students express satisfaction with the integration of contemporary Skills Enhancement Courses in the undergraduate curriculum at Dibrugarh University, they have suggested several modifications to enhance the effectiveness of these courses. Respondents have indicated a desire for increased project-based learning, the inclusion of subjects that provide lucrative career prospects and future earning potential, as well as greater flexibility in selecting SEC subjects. Based on the feedback received, the following recommendations can be proposed:
- The courses should be designed to be productive, fostering skill development in alignment with the essence of Skill Enhancement Courses.
- Institutions must thoroughly assess the courses offered and ensure that students are adequately prepared to engage with the subjects, as limitations may hinder effective course management.
- The selection of available courses should remain stable; discontinuing subjects mid-semester may not be beneficial for students wishing to continue in the same field of study. - SEC subjects should be applicable in real-world scenarios, contributing to the enhancement of practical skills.
- The curriculum should prioritize practical applications over theoretical knowledge. - The incorporation of active learning methodologies is crucial.
- An increase in skill-based subjects is recommended.
- Courses related to finance, such as stock and cryptocurrency trading, should be introduced, along with offerings like AI for Everyone, video editing, and coding, which are increasingly relevant. - The recruitment of more expert instructors is advisable.

The preceding discussion leads to the conclusion that the examination of the significance of the Skill Enhancement Course (SEC) within the framework of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP2020) remains in its nascent stages, having been conducted for a mere two years. As students have yet to graduate from the institution, their academic pursuits are still ongoing. Consequently, the practical implications of the SEC for students and its potential impact on employment opportunities will only become evident in the coming years. Furthermore, this period marks a transition from traditional educational methods to a more technologically advanced approach. Given the rapid pace of global development, higher education institutions must adapt and offer educational programs that will ensure a brighter future for the next generation.

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