

The Student Mart: A School-Based Educational Training Model for Practical Retail and Entrepreneurial Learning Aligned with NEP 2020

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 strongly emphasizes experiential learning, vocational integration, and entrepreneurship development at the school level. However, vocational education in many Indian schools continues to rely heavily on theoretical instruction, resulting in limited practical exposure for students. This study presents *The Student Mart*, a school-based educational training model designed to integrate classroom learning with real-world retail operations conducted within the school premises.

The Student Mart functions as a student-managed retail unit that provides essential merchandise such as stationery and permitted food items to the school community, while simultaneously serving as a hands-on learning platform for vocational students. Through structured role rotation, self-investment, and guided supervision, students acquire practical skills in retail management, customer service, inventory control, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship.

Using a descriptive and experiential research approach, this paper analyses the conceptual framework, implementation process, and educational outcomes of the Student Mart model, which was first implemented by me in a Z. P. (Ex. Govt.) Girls High School in Amravati, Maharashtra, India. The findings indicate improved student engagement, confidence, teamwork, and employability skills. The study concludes that the Student Mart represents a low-cost, scalable, and policy-aligned innovation with significant potential for strengthening vocational education under NEP 2020.

Keywords: Experiential Learning; Vocational Education; NEP 2020; Retail Education; Entrepreneurship; School-Based Training

1. Introduction

The evolving demands of the 21st-century workforce require education systems to move beyond theoretical instruction and focus on practical competencies, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship. Vocational education plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between academic knowledge and

employable skills. However, in many school systems, vocational subjects continue to be delivered in a predominantly theoretical manner, limiting their effectiveness.

In India, the **National Education Policy 2020** advocates for the integration of vocational education into mainstream schooling and emphasizes experiential learning approaches. Despite this policy direction, there remains a lack of structured models that enable students to engage in real-life vocational practices within school environments.

Retail is one of the largest sectors contributing to employment and economic growth. Yet, school-level retail education often lacks practical exposure. Simultaneously, students require daily-use items such as stationery and food products, which are typically sourced outside school premises, leading to inefficiencies and disruptions.

To address these challenges, *The Student Mart* model was conceptualized as an innovative educational intervention that transforms a school-based retail unit into a **dynamic experiential learning platform**.

2. Rationale and Need of the Study

Most schools rely on external vendors or nearby shops to meet students' daily needs. This often leads to inconvenience, safety concerns, and loss of instructional time. From an educational perspective, vocational learners lack authentic platforms for skill application.

The Student Mart addresses this dual need by:

1. Providing essential merchandise within the school premises, and
2. Offering a real-time learning environment for retail and entrepreneurship education.

This approach transforms a routine facility into a structured pedagogical innovation.

Research Gap

Despite policy emphasis on vocational education and experiential learning, there is a lack of:

- School-based models that provide **continuous real-life practice**,
- Integration of **economic activity within educational settings**,
- Dual-purpose systems that combine **learning with utility**, and
- Scalable frameworks aligned with **NEP 2020 objectives**.

This study addresses these gaps through the Student Mart model.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

- Examine the effectiveness of Student Mart as an experiential learning model.

- Analyse its contribution to retail and entrepreneurial skill development.
- Assess its alignment with NEP 2020 vocational education objectives.
- Explore its scalability and replicability across schools.

4. Conceptual Framework

The Student Mart is a **student-managed retail unit** established within the school campus. It operates under the guidance of a vocational teacher and follows a structured educational process:

- Classroom instruction
- Role-based practical engagement
- Financial participation and reinvestment
- Continuous reflection and evaluation

Students rotate through roles such as store manager, cashier, sales assistant, inventory controller, and marketing assistant, ensuring holistic exposure to retail operations.

5. Methodology

This study adopts a **qualitative descriptive research design** based on experiential implementation.

5.1 Research Design

- Practice-based and observational study

5.2 Data Collection Methods

- Direct observation of student participation
- Student performance records
- Reflection reports
- Informal feedback from students and teachers

5.3 Study Setting

The model was implemented in a secondary school in Amravati district, Maharashtra, India.

- Direct observation of student participation,
- Analysis of operational records,
- Student reflection notes, and
- Teacher evaluations.

The prototype implementation occurred in a government secondary school in Amravati district, Maharashtra.

6. Implementation of the Student Mart Model

A designated area within the school was converted into a mini retail outlet. Students managed procurement, pricing, display, sales, billing, and accounting under teacher supervision. A nominal student investment formed the initial capital, and profits were reinvested for sustainability.

6.1 Setup

A designated space within the school was converted into a mini retail outlet. Items such as stationery, notebooks, hygiene products, and permitted food items were stocked.

6.2 Student Participation

Students formed teams and were assigned rotational responsibilities. Each student experienced multiple retail functions during the academic term.

6.3 Financial Model

Students contributed a small initial investment. Sales revenue was recorded daily, and profits were reinvested for sustainability, helping students understand capital, profit, and reinvestment concepts.

6.4 Teacher's Role

The teacher acted as a facilitator, mentor, and evaluator rather than a traditional instructor.

7. Alignment with NEP 2020

The Student Mart directly supports NEP 2020 by:

- Promoting experiential and competency-based learning,
- Integrating vocational education with academic curriculum,
- Encouraging entrepreneurship and financial literacy,
- Developing employability and life skills, and
- Strengthening local relevance and community engagement.

8. Results and Findings

The implementation of Student Mart led to:

- Increased student engagement and motivation,
- Improved communication and customer-handling skills,
- Better understanding of accounting and inventory systems,
- Enhanced leadership, teamwork, and responsibility, and
- Positive perception of vocational education among students.

9. Discussion

Unlike simulated learning activities, the Student Mart exposes students to real responsibilities, decision-making, and accountability. The model demonstrates that vocational education can be both academically rigorous and socially relevant when embedded in everyday school needs.

10. Scalability and Replicability

The Student Mart model is cost-effective and adaptable. It can be replicated across:

- Government and private schools,
- Vocational and skill development institutions, and
- Other trades such as agriculture, tailoring, or food processing.

11. Conclusion

The Student Mart represents a practical, policy-aligned innovation that strengthens vocational education through experiential learning. By integrating retail operations into the school ecosystem, the model bridges the gap between theory and practice while fulfilling real student needs. Its alignment with NEP 2020 makes it a promising and scalable solution for vocational education reform in India.

12. Limitations and Future Scope

The study is based on a single-site implementation. Future research may include multi-school comparative studies, quantitative outcome analysis, and long-term employability tracking.

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