

Breaking gender and professional stereotypes through competency-based training: a career guidance and mentoring model based on artificial intelligence and the beauty and wellness sector at Army Public School Miran Sahib, Jammu

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Abstract—Career guidance at the school level helps students discover their interests, break free from stereotypes, and choose the right career path. Under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and CBSE skill education initiatives, Army Public School Miran Sahib, Jammu, introduced Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Beauty & Wellness as skill subjects.

An interesting disparity was observed at the outset. Artificial Intelligence garnered immense enthusiasm from both students and parents, as it was associated with technology and future career prospects. In contrast, Beauty & Wellness faced initial hesitation and misconceptions; many perceived it merely as makeup-related or a career path suited only for girls. Recognizing this challenge, the school adopted a structured career guidance model involving counseling, experiential activities, and continuous dialogue.

This initiative gradually transformed student perceptions. Beauty & Wellness came to be recognized as a multidisciplinary field that fosters health, hygiene, personality development, and entrepreneurship. Simultaneously, AI promoted creativity through project-based learning. These subjects served as effective platforms for career exploration.

This research paper presents the implementation model, highlights the role of continuous counseling in shifting mindsets, and demonstrates how skill education supports gender equality and an entrepreneurial mindset.

Index Terms—Career guidance, mentorship (counseling), skill education, Artificial Intelligence, Beauty & Wellness, entrepreneurship, gender equality, NEP 2020.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapidly changing world of work demands that career awareness begins much earlier than the senior secondary stage. Students today need opportunities to explore emerging careers, understand their own strengths, and develop practical competencies that prepare them for future education and employment.

Recognising this need, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 promotes the integration of vocational and skill education from the middle school level. In alignment with this vision, Army Public School Miran Sahib introduced Artificial Intelligence and Beauty & Wellness as skill subjects in Class VI.

The school's objective extended beyond teaching technical content. It aimed to use these subjects as tools for career guidance, mentorship, and experiential learning, enabling students to discover new career pathways while challenging long-standing gender and occupational stereotypes.

II. NEED FOR THE STUDY

The introduction of the two skill subjects revealed contrasting perceptions among students and parents.

Artificial Intelligence was welcomed with enthusiasm because it is widely recognised as a modern technology shaping the future. Students were excited to learn AI, and parents viewed it as an important subject linked to future employment.

Beauty & Wellness, however, was initially misunderstood. Many parents believed the subject

focused only on makeup and beauty parlours and was relevant only for girls. Some students, especially boys, were hesitant to participate due to gender stereotypes. These differing perceptions highlighted the need for structured career guidance, continuous mentoring, and awareness programmes to help students understand the broader scope of vocational education and make informed career choices.

III. OBJECTIVES

The study aimed to:

- Introduce career awareness from the middle school stage.
- Challenge gender stereotypes associated with vocational education.
- Promote informed career exploration through continuous guidance.
- Encourage equal participation of boys and girls.
- Develop entrepreneurial thinking and innovation.
- Strengthen confidence, communication, and life skills through experiential learning.

IV. CAREER GUIDANCE AND MENTORSHIP MODEL

The school adopted a learner-centred guidance model in which teachers functioned as mentors rather than only subject instructors. The model included:

- Classroom discussions on emerging careers.
- Counselling sessions to address misconceptions.
- Career awareness linked to skill subjects.
- Practical demonstrations and activity-based learning.
- Project-based learning in Artificial Intelligence.
- Hands-on learning in Beauty & Wellness.
- Continuous encouragement based on students' interests and strengths.
- Parent interaction to build awareness about vocational education.

This integrated approach helped students connect classroom learning with future career opportunities.

V. BEAUTY & WELLNESS: FROM STEREOTYPE TO CAREER AWARENESS

Beauty & Wellness was introduced not as a beauty-oriented subject but as a life skill promoting health,

hygiene, personality development, communication, professionalism, and entrepreneurship. Students explored:

- Personal hygiene and grooming
- Hair and skin care
- Nutrition and wellness
- Communication skills
- Personality development
- Workplace ethics
- Customer interaction
- Safety and hygiene practices
- Entrepreneurship in the wellness sector

Practical learning included demonstrations, role plays, group activities, healthy lifestyle projects, poster-making, and peer learning.

As students engaged with these activities, they began to understand that Beauty & Wellness is a professional field with diverse opportunities in wellness, cosmetology, salon management, product development, health promotion, and self-employment. Equal participation of boys and girls gradually helped remove gender stereotypes associated with the subject.

VI. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: INSPIRING FUTURE-READY LEARNERS

Artificial Intelligence generated immediate interest among students. The curriculum encouraged students to explore:

- AI in everyday life
- Design thinking
- Problem-solving
- Responsible use of AI
- Innovation
- Digital literacy
- Project development

Students actively participated in classroom projects, demonstrated creativity, and developed confidence in using technology to solve real-life problems.

Teacher mentorship encouraged students to think beyond textbooks and explore emerging careers in technology and innovation.

VII. IMPACT OF CONTINUOUS GUIDANCE

The sustained mentoring process produced significant positive outcomes.

Students demonstrated:

- Greater confidence in expressing ideas.
- Increased curiosity towards emerging careers.
- Improved communication and teamwork.
- Better hygiene and grooming habits.
- Respect for all professions.
- Reduced teasing and judging based on appearance.
- Equal participation of boys and girls.
- Improved personality development.
- Greater awareness of entrepreneurship.

- Increased interest in project-based learning. Many students began discussing career opportunities that they had never considered before.

VIII. CASE STUDIES / STUDENT SUCCESS STORIES

This section will present selected student success stories demonstrating the impact of career guidance through skill education. Suggested case studies include:

- Case Study 1: Student excelling in AI through innovative projects and competition



AI SKILL classes from Resource person





Different projects

Project 1 :- NexusLearn SmartFlow IoT organized by Awes Idea Innovation Hack fest

Project 2: Lumina Hume Scanner by ATL Middle Wing Club

Project 3: Smart Fire Detection System

Project 4: Smart Waste Separation System etc

- Case Study 2: Student who developed entrepreneurial aspirations after learning Beauty & Wellness
- Case Study 3: Change in perception among boys regarding Beauty & Wellness.





(refer to case 2 and 3)

- Change in perception among boys regarding Beauty & Wellness: Various activities, demonstrations, and practical sessions are being conducted under the Beauty & Wellness skill subject. External resource persons are also invited to provide students with practical exposure and information about the industry and career opportunities. Initially, some boys were hesitant to participate and did not consider Beauty & Wellness as a suitable career option. However, after understanding the available career pathways, entrepreneurship opportunities, and the importance of having it as a Plan B, they developed a more positive attitude towards the subject.
- Entrepreneurial aspirations: Through practical activities, interactions with external resource persons, and exposure to different career opportunities in Beauty & Wellness, students have started recognizing the subject as a potential career and entrepreneurship pathway. Some students have developed an interest in starting their own ventures and exploring Beauty & Wellness as a future career option.

XII. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The introduction of skill subjects such as Artificial Intelligence and Beauty & Wellness at the school level is a progressive and welcome step. These subjects provide students with exposure to emerging fields, practical competencies, entrepreneurship, and diverse career opportunities. They also help broaden students' understanding of work beyond conventional academic and professional pathways.

However, the effective implementation of skill education requires a stronger alignment between curriculum, allotted instructional time, assessment, and the existing academic workload. At present, skill subjects may sometimes be perceived as additional subjects rather than an integrated component of the school curriculum. When substantial syllabi are prescribed for skill subjects within stipulated teaching hours, while their completion carries little or no weightage in the final examination, both teachers and students may find it challenging to devote adequate time and seriousness to their implementation.

Based on the experience of implementing Artificial Intelligence and Beauty & Wellness, the following suggestions are proposed:

- **Introduction of Minimum Assessment Weightage:** Skill subjects should be given a defined minimum weightage in the annual assessment, similar to other academic subjects. Even a modest but meaningful percentage of marks could encourage students to take these subjects seriously and provide recognition to the learning and competencies acquired.
- **Assessment Beyond Written Examinations:** Since skill education is primarily practical and competency-based, assessment should include projects, practical demonstrations, portfolios, activities, presentations, and continuous assessment, rather than relying solely on written examinations.
- **Rationalisation of the Overall Curriculum:** The introduction of additional skill subjects should be accompanied by a review of the existing syllabus and academic workload. The curriculum of other subjects may be rationalised wherever possible so that schools have sufficient time for meaningful implementation of skill education.
- **Integration with School Activities:** Wherever possible, skill education should be connected with projects, experiential learning, clubs, exhibitions, competitions, and CCA activities. This can reduce duplication of effort and make skill education a natural part of the school experience rather than an additional responsibility.
- **Recognition of Teachers' Workload:** Teachers are already required to manage syllabus completion, assessments, remedial teaching, projects, CCA, administrative responsibilities, and other school activities. The implementation framework should therefore consider the actual workload of teachers and provide realistic time and resources for skill subjects.
- **Greater Flexibility in Curriculum Delivery:** Schools should be given reasonable flexibility to adapt activities and projects according to local resources, student interests, available infrastructure, and the expertise of teachers, while retaining the core competencies prescribed by the curriculum.
- **Career Linkages and Exposure:** Skill subjects should be explicitly connected with information about higher education, vocational courses, entrepreneurship, employment opportunities, and emerging careers. This will help students understand that these subjects are not merely additional classroom activities but potential pathways towards future careers.
- **Strengthening Parent Awareness:** Regular orientation programmes for parents can help them understand the purpose and career potential of skill education. This is particularly important for subjects that may initially be viewed through traditional gender or occupational stereotypes.
- **A Balanced Implementation Framework:** At the policy level, NCERT and other curriculum-planning bodies may consider developing a framework in which the introduction of a skill subject, its prescribed syllabus, allotted teaching hours, learning outcomes, and assessment weightage are planned together. Introducing a full-fledged syllabus without corresponding time and assessment provisions may make implementation difficult at the ground level.

XIII. CONCLUSION

The experience of Army Public School Miran Sahib demonstrates that skill education has considerable potential to transform career awareness at the middle-school stage. Artificial Intelligence opens avenues towards technology, innovation, creativity, and problem-solving, while Beauty & Wellness introduces students to health, hygiene, personality development, professional services, entrepreneurship, and a wide range of emerging career opportunities. Both subjects can play an important role in breaking stereotypes and helping students discover abilities beyond conventional academic streams.

At the same time, the success of skill education depends not merely on its inclusion in the curriculum but on how realistically it can be implemented in schools. If skill subjects are introduced with stipulated instructional hours and substantial syllabi but without adequate assessment recognition or corresponding rationalisation of the overall academic workload, their implementation may become difficult for teachers and

students. In such circumstances, there is a risk that skill education may remain strong in policy documents but face practical challenges at the classroom level.

Therefore, there is a need to move from “introduction of skill subjects” to “effective integration of skill education.” Providing appropriate instructional time, meaningful assessment weightage, practical evaluation, curriculum rationalisation, teacher support, and career linkages would make these subjects more purposeful and sustainable.

Skill education should not be viewed as an additional burden, but as an integral component of holistic education and career preparation. With suitable policy support and realistic implementation mechanisms, subjects such as Artificial Intelligence and Beauty & Wellness can provide students with vast opportunities to explore careers, develop entrepreneurial thinking, acquire practical life skills, and become better prepared for the rapidly changing world of work.

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