Rationale of the policy
The policy envisions the establishment of a National Skill Development Initiative. Its mission is to empower all individuals through improved skills, knowledge and recognized qualifications to gain access to decent employment and ensure India’s competitiveness in the global market. The aim of skills development in the country is to support rapid and inclusive growth through: a) enhancing individuals’ employability and ability to adapt to changing technologies and labour market demands; b) improving productivity and living standards; c) strengthening competitiveness; and d) attracting investment in skills development.

Concept of lifelong learning
Although the term ‘lifelong learning’ is used in the policy, there is no definition or description of the concept. It is mentioned in some of the objectives and measures to be taken within skills development.

Main challenges
Skills development faces many challenges including:
- Increasing the capacity and capability of the existing system to ensure equitable access to all
- Promoting lifelong learning and maintaining quality and relevance according to changing requirements, particularly with regard to the emerging knowledge economy
- Creating effective convergence between school education, various government skills development efforts and private-sector initiatives
- Institutional capacity building for planning, quality assurance and involvement of stakeholders
- Creating institutional mechanisms for research development, quality assurance, examinations and certification, and affiliations and accreditation
- Increasing stakeholder participation, mobilizing adequate investment in skills development, attaining sustainability by strengthening physical and intellectual resources

Main targets and measures
The policy’s emphasis is on skills development and it mainly targets the vocational education and training sector. The policy covers institution-based skills development (industrial training institutes, vocational and technical schools, polytechnics, professional colleges, etc.), sectoral skills development, formal and informal apprenticeships, training for entrepreneurial development, adult learning, non-formal training and training by civil society organizations, e-learning and distance learning. Additionally, primary, secondary and higher education are included as important sectors of the education system that promote skills development.

The following objectives and some selected measures of the policy are:
- **Expansion of outreach**: expansion of capacity and innovative delivery approaches and public-private partnerships
- **Equity and access**: addressing entry barriers such as lack of educational qualifications, transportation difficulties, low income, lack of language skills, etc.; establishment of vocational skills; provision of basic skills as an integral component of the curricula
- **Vocational training for women**: expansion of women’s vocational training programme and the institutional network providing training facilities exclusively for women; elimination of gender stereotyping in vocational courses
- **Regional imbalance in opportunities**: improving productivity and working conditions in the agricultural sector by developing skills in rural areas and enabling rural workers to access emerging employment opportunities beyond the agricultural sector; deployment of various mobile training arrangements
- **Disadvantaged groups**: expanding skills development opportunities for minority groups and promoting the formalization of non-formal skills acquisition and transfer in traditional arts and crafts sectors; providing appropriate adjustment training and skills training for people with disabilities
- **School drop-outs and child labour**: strengthening school education to prevent drop-outs and increase vocational awareness among young people
- **Economic challenges**: skills development for employability in order to reduce poverty; better integration of skills development into broader poverty reduction programmes

**Particular feature of the policy**
The policy includes a section on **skills development for the informal sector**.

Approximately 93 per cent of the country’s workforce is in the informal sector, which cuts across all economic activities and includes rural and urban areas. Strengthening the skills base of the informal sector will improve productivity, working conditions, labour rights, social security and living standards. Training providers will be encouraged to conduct skills development programmes for the informal sector. Training will be predominantly short-term to encourage participation. Informal apprenticeships will be upgraded so that they address modern skills. Skills development initiatives for the informal sector will include components on literacy, basic education and soft skills. Institutes for entrepreneurship development, technological incubation centres and other such institutional arrangements will be utilized to support the adoption of entrepreneurship by informal sector workers. Also, competency standards and certification systems will be developed for informal sector work and incorporated into the national testing and certification system.

**Relevant documents that the strategy refers to:**

**Stakeholders involved in the development of the strategy:**
- Ministry of Labour and Employment

**Stakeholders responsible for implementation of the strategy:**
- National Skill Development Co-ordination Board
- National Skill Development Agency
- National Council for Vocational Training

**Further readings and web links:**
- Ministry of Human Resource Development
- Directorate General of Employment and Training
- New Policy on Distance Learning in Higher Education
- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act