



National Curriculum Framework for School Education, 2023: Implications for Career Guidance Practice

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Abstract

This paper serves as a sequel to a previous contribution in Issue I, Volume 10 of this journal, which aimed to delineate the implications of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 for career guidance practitioners in India. The NEP, 2020 mandates the development of four National Curriculum Frameworks related to Early Childhood Care and Education, School Education, Teacher Education, and Adult Education. While each framework is poised to significantly impact the practice of educational and vocational guidance in India, this article specifically concentrates on the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE). The reason lies in its potential to profoundly influence students' career development by shaping their exposure to subjects, skills, practical experiences, and learning pathways. Consequently, career practitioners must stay abreast of the changes outlined in the new guidelines and collaborate closely with schools and educational authorities to ensure that their counselling practices align with the evolving educational landscape. This paper elucidates these critical linkages, delineates the evolution, structure, and key features of the NCF-SE, expounds on its key implications and challenges for career guidance practice, and finally, outlines key imperatives for various stakeholders.

Keywords: career guidance practice, career guidance policy, guidance and counselling in Schools, national curriculum framework for school education (NCF-SE), 2023, National Education Policy (NEP), 2020.

Introduction

In 2020, the Indian government introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) with the goal of instigating transformative reforms in the country's education system by 2040. The policy envisions achieving this through advancements in teaching methodologies, knowledge generation, innovative delivery methods, and integrated management. It aspires to realize a vision characterized by

increased access, equity, excellence, inclusion, and affordability, with the ultimate aim of positioning India as a knowledge superpower. NEP 2020 mandates the development of National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE), the National Curriculum Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCF-ECCE), the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCF-TE), and the National Curriculum Framework for Adult Education (NCFAE) (MHRD, 2020).

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NCF-ECCE for children in the age group of 3-8 years was issued with the modified name National Curriculum Framework-Foundational Stage (NCF-FS) on 20 October, 2022 (NCERT, 2022) while NCFSE came up on 23 August, 2023 (NCERT, 2023). Issue 1, Volume 10 of this journal carried a paper on implications of the NEP, 2020 on the career guidance practice in India (Kumar, 2021). The present paper extends that contribution and makes an attempt to identify implications of NCF-SE for career choice and development of young people and for career guidance practice. Beginning with an exploration of conceptual linkages between the curriculum framework and career development, the paper addresses the scarcity of empirical evidence. Subsequently, it delves into the evolution, structure, and significant aspects of the NCF-SE. While the framework covers extensive guidelines spanning all 4 stages of the school system, this paper confines its focus to the secondary stage due to its specific relevance for career guidance practice. Herein, it articulates the implications of key features pertinent to secondary education and the challenges they pose. The final section of the paper outlines key imperatives for various stakeholders.

Curriculum Framework, Career Development and Career Practice: The Linkages

A curriculum framework serves as the backbone for educational systems, influencing curricula, syllabi, textbooks, learning paths, pedagogies, and assessment models. Its impact extends beyond classrooms, shaping the vocational trajectories of young individuals and guiding practitioners in educational and vocational guidance and counselling. The design of a curriculum framework significantly influences the quality, clarity, and structure of education, directly impacting students' career choices and development. A well-constructed curriculum framework serves as a roadmap for students, providing a structured and comprehensive educational foundation.

Beyond imparting essential knowledge and skills, it offers exposure to diverse subjects and practical experiences. This exposure becomes a catalyst for students to explore their interests, strengths, and passions, contributing significantly to shaping their career choices. The integration of career-oriented components, including vocational training, internships, and career counselling, enhances students' awareness of various professions and industries.

Moreover, an effective curriculum emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills, equipping students with versatile competencies essential for success in their careers. This alignment of educational objectives with real-world demands transforms the curriculum framework into a guiding force, aiding individuals in making informed career choices and preparing them for the dynamic challenges of the workforce. It ensures a seamless transition from education to professional development, bridging the gap between academic learning and practical application.

The development of a national curriculum framework carries profound implications for career guidance practices within a country. Firstly, the framework establishes a standardized educational structure, providing career counsellors with a clear understanding of the skills and knowledge students acquire at different educational levels. This clarity becomes the foundation for more tailored and informed career guidance, aligning individual aspirations with the competencies emphasized in the curriculum.

Furthermore, a well-designed framework can seamlessly integrate career-focused elements such as vocational training, internships, and exposure to various industries. This integration enhances career guidance practices by offering students hands-on experiences and insights into potential professions, making their educational

journey more meaningful and applicable to real-world scenarios.

A study conducted 45 years ago, examining the vocational effects of school curriculum in six countries, revealed its significant impact on young people's life chances, expectations, qualifications, goals, and ultimate employment (Watts & Ferreira-Marques, 1978). This influence extends to occupational opportunities, destinations, and socialization, as evident in several countries, including India (Mehta & Watt, 1978). In the same volume, Watts (1978) outlines three ways in which career guidance practice interacts with curriculum content. Firstly, the structure and content of the curriculum shape specific perspectives on the world of work, influencing entry into the labour force. Career guidance is pivotal in observing these effects, evaluating their functionality, suggesting necessary additions. Secondly, vocational consequences often stem from decisions during a student's educational journey, which are curricular in nature but have vocational implications. Career guidance offers insights into students' preparedness for these decisions and ways to make outcomes less restrictive. Thirdly, there is a shifting perspective on career guidance, moving beyond a diagnostic and prescriptive role to a developmental process. It focuses on equipping students with concepts, information, and skills for ongoing sequential career decisions, making a case for its inherent educational nature and a deserving place in the school curriculum.

NCF-SE: Evolution, Structure, Key Features

Evolution

NCF-SE, 2023 is the fifth Framework which has been brought forth by the National Council for Education, Research and Training (NCERT). In 1975, the NCERT developed its first curriculum framework titled "The Curriculum for the Ten Years of School Education – A Framework in 1975." This framework, influenced by the recommendations of the

National Education Commission 1964-66 (commonly known as the Kothari Commission) and the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1968, provided ample space for their considerations. As a response to the National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986, the NCERT released another curriculum framework in 1988 titled "The National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education - A Framework." This framework emphasized the significance of the common core outlined by the NPE 1986. In the year 2000, yet another curriculum framework, titled "The National Curriculum Framework for School Education - 2000," was introduced. The primary focus of this curriculum was on fostering learning that could counteract inequality and address the social, cultural, emotional, and economic requirements of learners. The fourth framework simply entitled "National Curriculum Framework" which came up in 2005, emphasised holistic education, learner-centric approaches, and promotes critical thinking and creativity in students.

The development of the NCF-SE, 2023 was a comprehensive and inclusive process led by the National Steering Committee (NSC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). Beginning with State Focus Groups comprising over 4000 experts across States and Union Territories (UTs), the initiative aimed to create Position Papers on 25 themes relevant to the NCF. National Focus Groups were formed to provide an integrated national perspective. District-level consultations and a MyGov platform survey engaged diverse stakeholders, accumulating over 1550 District Consultation Reports and input from 1,50,000 participants.

Consultations extended to various ministries, NGOs, universities, and educational institutions, involving over 200 institutions and experts. Open consultations with teachers, parents, and students, as well as the Digital Citizen-centric Survey for National Curriculum, garnered insights from over 13,00,000

citizens. The draft NCF for School Education was publicly released in April 2023, receiving 1,500 detailed suggestions from diverse stakeholders, ultimately resulting in a deeply inclusive framework involving educators, parents, government departments, schools, NGOs, scholars, and citizens across India.

Structure

The NCF-SE is organized into five parts, encompassing a total of 26 chapters and spanning nearly 600 pages. In Part A, the broad objectives of school education are outlined. It establishes principles and approaches for selecting content, implementing pedagogy, and conducting assessments. Additionally, it provides a rationale and design principles for the four stages of schooling. Part B concentrates on key overarching themes in NCF-SE, such as a foundation in Indian culture, education emphasizing values, awareness and concern for the environment, inclusive education, guidance and counselling, and the integration of educational technology. Part C consists of individual chapters dedicated to each school subject. These chapters define learning standards for all relevant schooling stages, along with specific guidelines for content selection, pedagogy, and assessments tailored to each subject. This section also features a chapter on the Foundational Stage and one on the design and scope of subjects in Grades 11 and 12. Part D addresses school culture and processes that foster a positive learning environment and instill desirable values and attitudes. The final part, Part E, delineates the prerequisites for a comprehensive schooling ecosystem that facilitates the realization of the NCF-SE's objectives. This encompasses aspects of teacher capabilities and working conditions, physical infrastructure needs, and the involvement of the community and family.

Key Features

NCF-SE is designed in alignment with the 5+3+3+4 schooling structure proposed in the NEP 2020. It emphasizes the importance of school culture and

values, empowering teachers through engaging pedagogies. The framework defines clear learning standards and competencies, focusing on critical thinking, creativity, and understanding. It advocates diverse pedagogical methods such as play-based, inquiry-based, and dialogue-based approaches, utilizing engaging teaching-learning materials, including textbooks. Furthermore, NCF-SE reinforces subjects like Art Education, Physical Education & Well-being, Environmental Education, and Vocational Education. It aims to develop well-rounded, ethical, creative, and adaptable individuals, preparing them for higher education and gainful employment. Rooted in Indian knowledge and thought, the framework integrates contributions across disciplines and emphasizes multilingualism. It addresses contemporary challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution through Environmental Education, promoting environmental awareness and sustainability values. The framework also encourages interdisciplinary understanding in Social Sciences and enhances Mathematics with conceptual understanding. Additionally, it introduces stress-reducing changes to exam formats, including Board exams, and offers flexibility and choice in subject combinations during the Secondary Stage, fostering reasoning on contemporary challenges through multiple disciplines.

As mentioned earlier, this document suggests curricular changes for the four stages of schooling, namely Foundational, Preparatory, Middle and Secondary. While each stage is important from the career development practice, but secondary stage assumes more significance since at this stage students make academic and career choices that shapes their future. Foundation laid here influences lifelong paths. Therefore, it would be pertinent to look at changes proposed for this stage detailed in Section 2.3 of the framework document. Secondary Stage has two phases: Grades 9-10 offer a broad curriculum; Grades 11-12 provide more specialization options while maintaining breadth.

Key features of Phase 1 pertaining to classes 9 and 10 are as under:

- To complete Grade 10, students will complete two Essential Courses from each of the eight curricular Areas available i.e., a total of 16 Essential Courses across two years of Grades 9 and 10. (See Annexure 1 for the certification scheme.)
- Language study includes three languages with at least two being native to India.
- Seven subjects are covered: Mathematics and Computational Thinking, Social Science, Science, Art Education, Physical Education and Well-being, Vocational Education, and Interdisciplinary Areas.
- Subjects are well-integrated studies of multiple disciplines, focusing on core concepts/competencies rather than memorization.
- Learning Standards for each subject are detailed in the corresponding Curricular Areas, expecting all students to attain them.
- Secondary schools must offer three languages and all seven subjects for Grade 10 completion.
- Grades 9 and 10 will follow an annual structure with Board exams twice a year.

Key features of Secondary Phase 2 involving Classes 11 and 12 are as under:

- Continuation of the same set of eight Curricular Areas is ensured, as detailed in Annexure 2.
- Phase 2 introduces choice-based courses designed for each semester, unlike Phase 1.

- Students are required to choose disciplines from a minimum of three Curricular Areas, completing four choice-based courses in that discipline. (Refer to Annexure 3 for examples of possible combinations.)
- Language Education (Group 1) mandates the study of two subjects, including one native Indian language. Literature subjects are also categorized under Language Education.
- A choice of four subjects (with an optional fifth subject) is to be made from at least two of the following three groups:
 - Group 2: Art Education, Physical Education, Vocational Education.
 - Group 3: Social Science and Humanities, Interdisciplinary Areas.
 - Group 4: Science, Mathematics, and Computational Thinking
- Completion of Grade 12 requires the fulfilment of 16 choice-based courses, outlined in the certification scheme (See Annexure 4).
- Schools are required to provide a minimum of two languages and offer subjects from at least two out of Groups 2, 3, and 4. Over a five-year span, schools are expected to expand their offerings to include subjects from all four Groups.
- Within a decade, the goal is to further enhance the variety of subjects within each Group, providing students with increased choices and greater flexibility in their academic pursuits.

Key Implications and Challenges for Career Guidance Practice

While the features of NCF-SE inherently carry implications and challenges for the field of career guidance, this section of the paper specifically centers on the key features outlined in the preceding section. Additionally, given that NCF-SE incorporates a brief chapter on Guidance and Counselling in Schools, the final part of this section of the paper provides a brief commentary on its content as well.

- The clear definition of learning standards in the NCF enhances career guidance by establishing a structured foundation. It aligns content, pedagogy, and assessments, aiding educators in equipping students with essential skills. This ensures a holistic education that better prepares individuals for informed career decisions and future success. However, there could be challenges as well due to this feature. One potential challenge could be the rigid adherence to standardized learning standards, limiting flexibility in addressing individual students' unique needs and career aspirations. Striking a balance between a standardized framework and personalized career guidance may pose challenges in catering to diverse student interests and talents.
- The NCF-SE further puts emphasis on holistic development which aligns with career guidance by prioritizing not just knowledge but also critical skills and values. This approach prepares students for versatile roles, encouraging informed career choices aligned with personal growth, ethical considerations, and societal contributions, fostering well-rounded and responsible professionals. One potential challenge, however, could arise in balancing the emphasis on holistic development with specific career-oriented skills. Ensuring that

career guidance effectively incorporates both general capacities and specialized skills might require careful navigation to address the diverse needs of students pursuing various career paths.

- Diverse pedagogical approaches in the curriculum framework allow flexible tailoring of career guidance. Varied methods enable educators to adapt strategies to students' learning styles, fostering a dynamic and engaging environment. A potential challenge is ensuring consistency in guidance delivery across diverse approaches, requiring careful coordination and training for effectiveness and equity in preparing students for their future careers.
- The transformed Secondary Stage, marked by flexible subject choices and a blending of disciplines, brings about a significant shift in career guidance. This alteration enables students to customize their education, nurturing a diverse skill set that corresponds to their individual interests and fostering adaptability for a range of career paths. Focus on personalized learning necessitates an adaptive approach from career guidance. This adjustment centers on individual interests and skills, assisting students in navigating diverse pathways and aligning their distinct combinations with prospective career opportunities. However, it would be really challenging to stay current on a broad spectrum of subjects, to harmonise academic and vocational elements, to fill potential skill gaps, and enable vertical mobility for students with unconventional subject combinations. The complexity lies in manoeuvring through an extensive range of subject combinations, guaranteeing the availability of comprehensive information, providing personalized counselling, and aligning strategies with diverse career paths. Successful

coordination of guidance efforts to effectively address the distinctive challenges and opportunities stemming from this flexibility necessitates meticulous planning and allocation of resources.

- Ensuring that guidance remains both relevant and tailored to each student's unique academic journey presents its own set of challenges. Historically, guidance practitioners tailored their sessions, materials, and information resources based on subject streams. However, this traditional approach would become increasingly redundant in the face of evolving educational paradigms and the emphasis on multidisciplinary learning.
- The introduction of Interdisciplinary Areas of Study at the secondary stage, equips students with critical thinking skills to address contemporary challenges like climate change. Career guidance benefits as students develop a holistic perspective, fostering interest in environmental careers and encouraging the pursuit of professions that address complex issues through multidisciplinary approaches, enhancing societal impact. However, the introduction of Interdisciplinary Areas of Study may pose challenges for guidance practitioners who may face the need for specialized knowledge in diverse fields, and guiding students toward careers addressing complex issues. It further requires staying updated on evolving interdisciplinary trends, posing ongoing challenges in providing effective and informed counselling.
- The curriculum's integration with India's rich intellectual heritage enhances career guidance by instilling cultural relevance and a deep understanding of local contexts. Connecting educational goals to the nation's intellectual legacy empowers

students to navigate careers that contribute meaningfully to their heritage, fostering a sense of identity and purpose. A potential challenge may arise in balancing traditional knowledge with the dynamic demands of modern careers. Integrating ancient wisdom with contemporary career guidance might require thoughtful adaptation to ensure relevance and prepare students for diverse, rapidly evolving professional landscapes while still honouring cultural roots.

- Renewed emphasis on Art and Physical Education enriches career guidance by recognizing diverse talents. Counsellors can assist students in exploring careers in arts, sports, wellness, aligning passions with paths for a personalized educational experience. Challenges include ensuring equal recognition, dispelling stereotypes, and addressing disparities in resources for non-traditional paths.
- The emphasis on Environmental Education in the curriculum provides unique opportunities for career guidance. Counsellors can guide students toward careers in sustainability, conservation, environmental science, and related fields. Fostering awareness of green jobs, careers and professions aligns with the curriculum, preparing students for impactful and socially responsible career choices in addressing environmental challenges. Challenges in career guidance may include dispelling misconceptions about the limited scope of environmental careers. Counsellors may face the task of showcasing the diverse and growing opportunities in environmental fields. Additionally, ensuring students have access to relevant resources, mentorship, and practical experiences in these specialized areas may pose logistical challenges.

- The emphasis on Vocational Education in the curriculum broadens career guidance possibilities. Counsellors can guide students toward diverse vocational paths in agriculture, technology, and human services. Fostering practical skills and awareness of vocational options aligns with the curriculum, enhancing students' readiness for varied and fulfilling career choices. Challenges in career guidance may arise in addressing potential societal biases that perceive vocational paths differently from traditional academic routes. Dispelling stereotypes, and ensuring that vocational options receive equal recognition and support may be crucial. Additionally, providing access to quality vocational education resources, internships, and mentorship can pose logistical challenges that need careful consideration.
- The emphasis on multilingualism in the curriculum expands career possibilities. Career guidance can highlight language-related professions, translation and interpretation services, cultural liaison roles, and opportunities in diverse linguistic sectors. Encouraging proficiency in native languages aligns with the curriculum, preparing students for careers where linguistic skills are valued and essential. Potential challenges in career guidance may include the need to address varying proficiency levels in multiple languages among students. Coordinating guidance strategies that consider linguistic diversity and supporting students in developing literary-level proficiency might require additional resources and specialized counselling approaches. Additionally, ensuring that career advice aligns with linguistic skills across diverse professional fields poses a complex task for career counsellors.
- The emphasis on conceptual understanding and problem-solving in Mathematics & Computational Thinking enriches career guidance. Counsellors can highlight careers in STEM fields, data science, programming, and technology. Fostering appreciation for the subject and emphasizing practical applications prepare students for a wide range of mathematical and computational careers, aligning with contemporary job demands. Challenges in career guidance may arise from varying levels of comfort with mathematics among students. Addressing math-related anxieties and promoting its practical applications in diverse fields can be a complex task. Additionally, staying current with rapidly evolving technology and ensuring students receive adequate exposure to coding and computational thinking opportunities may pose logistical challenges for career counsellors.
- The national curriculum's focus on scientific inquiry and foundational knowledge in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Earth Science enriches career guidance. It steers students towards STEM professions, cultivates critical thinking for diverse fields, and prepares them for research, innovation, and specialized roles, fostering a skilled, globally competitive workforce. However, this emphasis on scientific inquiry in the NCF-SE can pose challenges for career guidance by necessitating dynamic counselling strategies to align with evolving STEM landscapes. Providing adequate support for specialized paths ensuring inclusivity, and managing resource constraints present ongoing challenges.
- The Social Science curriculum's emphasis on interdisciplinary study cultivates a holistic understanding of human societies. This broad perspective in the Middle Stage aids

career exploration. Transitioning to disciplinary depth in the Secondary Stage refines analytical skills, benefiting career guidance by preparing students for diverse professions, including Social Sciences, Law, and Humanities. Challenges in career guidance may arise from the Social Science curriculum's shift from interdisciplinary study to disciplinary depth. Navigating diverse career paths within the social sciences, addressing evolving job market demands, and providing tailored guidance amid varying student interests and aptitudes pose potential challenges for educators and career counsellors.

- The NCF-SE also aims at integrating school culture into the curriculum which has the potential to enhance career guidance, aligning strategies with the school's ethos for well-rounded individuals. Challenges include aligning diverse cultural values, maintaining consistency across varied environments, and addressing biases. Ensuring inclusivity and relevance demands careful consideration, ongoing assessment, and adaptation to evolving cultural dynamics.
- The NCF-SE also claims to propose an equity and inclusion-focused curriculum framework which implies that career guidance must be tailored to diverse needs. It necessitates strategies to address individual strengths, challenges, and cultural contexts, ensuring fair access to opportunities. Career guidance should promote inclusivity, offering support that acknowledges and respects the varied backgrounds and abilities of all students. Potential challenges in career guidance may include addressing systemic biases and ensuring that counselling practices are genuinely inclusive. Recognising and overcoming cultural, socioeconomic, and other

barriers to access and opportunity requires proactive measures. Equipping counsellors with the necessary training and resources to navigate diverse challenges is crucial for effectively implementing equity and inclusion principles in career guidance.

- NCF-SE articulates several dimensions of the role of Guidance and Counselling in schools. Firstly, it involves addressing the health and well-being of the school community, extending basic guidance and counselling to students, parents, and administrators. Academic and career counselling is another vital aspect, assisting students in decision-making across various stages of their school life, including choices related to new curricular areas and decisions post the Secondary Stage. Additionally, Guidance and Counselling support contributes to administrative and systemic improvements, ensuring that individuals in these roles are consulted when making decisions about the school's functioning, policies, programs, and activities. The text further suggests that while teachers and principals will continue to play guiding roles and should receive basic training, a specialist at the cluster or school complex level should be appointed. Schools with resources and access to professionals are expected to take the lead. Thus, NCF-SE significantly broadens the responsibilities of guidance professionals, introducing new roles within the school system, and emphasizes capacity building for teachers and school heads. It also makes provision for recruitment of trained counselling professionals at cluster level. However, it falls short of explicitly institutionalizing guidance services. There is a lack of unequivocal provision for integrating career education content into the school curriculum, allocating dedicated time within the timetable, and providing the necessary

resources. The framework could benefit from clearer directives to ensure the seamless integration and prioritization of career guidance services within the overall structure of the school system.

Key Imperatives for Various Stakeholders

- The NCF-SE advocates for the placement of trained counsellors within the school cluster/complex framework. According to the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020, a school complex is defined as comprising one secondary school along with all other institutions providing education to lower grades within a radius of five to ten kilometres, encompassing Anganwadis as well (Ministry of Education, 2022). Current statistics reveal the presence of 1,50,452 secondary schools and 1,42,398 higher secondary schools in India (Government of India, 2022). This implies the need for recruiting approximately 3 lakh counsellors, a task hampered by the absence of adequate training infrastructure for such a substantial number of professionals (Kumar, 2013; Kumar, Arulmani & Miranda, 2022). Consequently, it is imperative for educational planners to establish institutions and introduce courses aimed at cultivating a cadre of professionals equipped with the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitude to effectively administer guidance services at the cluster level. Further, within the existing curricula intended for the training of guidance professionals, career counselling is typically treated as just one of several modules. To enhance the efficacy of career counselling education, there is a critical need for the development and introduction of dedicated courses specifically designed to prepare individuals for delivering quality career guidance services.
- The NCF-SE introduces an interdisciplinary area as a novel and mandatory curricular category, proposing subjects such as Environmental Education, Business Studies, Sustainability and Climate Change, with an expectation of incorporating similar subjects in the future. This presents a significant opportunity for counselors' associations. They can champion the inclusion of Career Education as one of the potential subjects within this category. Moreover, these associations can actively participate in developing curricula, teaching-learning materials, and pedagogical approaches for different educational stages. At the same time, it is crucial for these associations to advocate for the swift creation and filling of positions in school clusters/complexes to ensure the effective implementation of these initiatives.
- In the preceding section, we outlined various challenges facing the field of career guidance within the evolving educational landscape. It is imperative that professionals undergo updated and comprehensive training to effectively address these challenges. To achieve optimal functionality, career practitioners must remain well-informed about tertiary-level courses, internship opportunities, and associated career prospects in areas such as Art, Physical Education, Sports and Wellness, Environment and Sustainability, Languages, as well as emerging digital technologies and vocational specializations. It is crucial for practitioners not only to acquire knowledge in these areas but also to develop skills in dispelling stereotypes associated with unconventional career paths and fostering wider acceptance of diverse options.
- Given the introduction and promotion of new subjects, it is essential for

career practitioners to guide students through unconventional subject combinations. This is particularly challenging as eligibility criteria for subsequent educational levels may remain uncertain until further clarification is provided. Until clarity is established, guidance practitioners are advised to encourage students to pursue conventional combinations, ensuring a stress-free transition onto well-established pathways.

- Moreover, the NCF-SE emphasizes the necessity of incorporating a compulsory module in counsellor training curriculum focused on a social justice approach rooted in inclusion principles. This module is pivotal in achieving the objectives outlined in the NCF-SE. Notably, instilling confidence in students from disadvantaged communities to choose STEM courses and careers poses a significant challenge. Simultaneously, NCF-SE expects counsellors not only to attend to the well-being of students but also to extend their support to parents and administrators. Their role extends to contributing to administrative and systemic enhancements within the school. In light of these evolving responsibilities, there is an urgent need to update current curricula for the training of counsellors. This update is necessary to equip practitioners with the knowledge and skills essential for fulfilling their expanding roles. Counsellors must proactively rise to these challenges, ensuring they are adequately prepared to navigate the dynamic landscape of career guidance and contribute meaningfully to the holistic development of students, parents, and school administrators.
- The NCF-SE emphasizes the ongoing role of teachers as counselors, necessitating revisions in training curricula for both pre-service and in-service teachers. Presently, guidance and counseling constitute

one of the optional courses in the Bachelor's program in Education, a mandatory qualification for becoming a secondary stage teacher. This course should transition to a compulsory status. Simultaneously, the existing syllabus primarily leans towards theoretical aspects. To address this, it is essential to introduce graded practical components, accompanied by supervised practice in guidance and counseling. Currently, in-service teacher training modules incorporate a few sessions on basic skills for career counseling, but these sessions are inadequate, incoherent, and predominantly focus on career information without imparting essential skills. Consequently, there is a pressing need for training planners to augment the component of career guidance training in alignment with the knowledge, skills, and mindsets outlined by the provisions of the NCF-SE.

- NCF-SE puts special emphasis on the role of school heads in the effective delivery of Guidance and Counselling services. To fulfill this responsibility competently, principals need to possess and be prepared for several key tasks (SCERT, 2022). Firstly, they should be adept at identifying suitable teachers to take charge of Guidance and Counselling initiatives, providing them with the necessary time, space, funds, and other resources. Additionally, principals should actively delegate teachers for training and capacity building, recognizing the importance of ongoing professional development in this field. Furthermore, principals are tasked with lightening the overall workload of the teacher in charge of Guidance and Counselling. By reducing other responsibilities, principals enable these educators to concentrate more effectively on their guidance activities. It is incumbent upon principals to stay informed about any developments in the field

of guidance and counselling and disseminate this knowledge among the staff. In fostering a holistic approach to student well-being, principals must also identify suitable individuals from the community who can contribute to the provision of counselling services. This involves establishing and maintaining strong linkages between the school, family, and community to create a supportive environment.

Concluding Thoughts

Two distinct sets of questions are being asked concerning NCF-SE. Advocates of this document are probing the practicability of implementing its guidelines, questioning their feasibility (e.g., Nehru, 2023, August 31). Conversely, critics of the NCF-SE are scrutinizing the very necessity of its implementation, deliberating on whether these guidelines should be applied at all (e.g., Rampal, 2023, April 19). However, due to a strong political commitment at the central level, the enforcement of NCF-SE is positioned to advance expeditiously. According to the government's proclamation, textbooks aligned with the NCF are slated for introduction into schools in the academic session of 2024-25. This marks the initiation of the implementation of the proposed modifications from that session onward. Importantly, education in India falls under the concurrent list, signifying that the

adoption of the NCF-SE depends on the will of provincial governments. It is notable that several opposition-led provinces are presently formulating their curriculum frameworks. Nevertheless, the implementation by central boards and those of larger provinces is expected to induce a ripple effect, ultimately encouraging others to align with the new framework. This implies that career counsellors, associations, and associated stakeholders such as teachers and educational administrators should remain updated, aligned, and prepared to address the situations arising from the gradual implementation of NCF-SE provisions.

The NCF-SE document uses the Mobius strip as its leitmotif throughout, signifying the continuous, evolving, and dynamic essence of knowledge, and illustrating its endless and ongoing nature. Interpreted in the context of career guidance, the Mobius strip represents continuous, holistic growth, viewing individuals comprehensively in an evolving, non-linear career development journey of adaptation and growth. To ensure that this journey is facilitated and not jeopardized by the evolving curriculum framework and associated educational practices, it is critical to leverage the opportunities that NCF-SE creates, confront the challenges it poses, and nurture the enabling environment for stakeholders that it warrants.

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Annexure 1 Certification Scheme for 10th Board

Source: NCERT, 2023, p. 79

Curricular Areas	Subjects	Examinations	10 th Board Certification
Languages	Language 1	External Examination	
	Language 2	External Examination	
	Language 3	External Examination	
Mathematics & Computational Thinking	Mathematics	External Examination	
Science	Science	External Examination	
Social Science	Social Science	External Examination	
Art Education	Art Education	Local Assessment with External Examiner	
Interdisciplinary Areas	Environmental Education	External Examination	
Physical Education & Well-being	Physical Education	Local Assessment with External Examiner	
Vocational Education	Vocational Education	Local Assessment with External Examiner	

Annexure 2

Curricular Areas and Illustrative List of Subjects

Source: NCERT, 2023, p. 81

Group 1		Group 2		
Languages		Art Education	Physical Education & Well-being	Vocational Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Languages native to India (Compulsory) • Other Languages (Compulsory) • Modern Indian Languages • Classical Languages • Foreign Languages 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indian Classical Music • Folk Music • Contemporary Music • Theatre • Puppetry • Sculpture • Fine Arts • Folk Painting • Graphic Design • Motion Pictures • Photography • Textile Designing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yoga & Lifestyle • Sports & Nutrition • Physical Education for Students with Disabilities • Biomechanics and Sports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture - Cereal Production • Agriculture - Seed production • Agriculture - Gardening • Automobile Servicing • Machining • Electronics • Community Health • Accounting Services • Data Entry & Management • Banking Services • Retail Services • Textile & Garments
Group 3		Group 4		
Social Science	Interdisciplinary Areas	Mathematics & Computational Thinking	Science	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History • Geography • Political Science • Psychology • Psychology & Mental Health • Economics • Development Economics • Sociology • Philosophy • Anthropology • Archaeology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Studies • Accounting • Sustainability and Climate Change • Journalism • Indian Knowledge Systems • Legal studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mathematics • Computer Science • Business Mathematics • Advanced Mathematics • Probability & Statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physics • Chemistry • Biology • Earth Sciences • Astronomy • Modern Physics • Biology 	

Annexure 3

Illustrative Subject Combinations for Classes 11 and 12

Source: NCERT, 2023, p.30

Combinations for Commerce	Combinations for Science	Combinations for Social Science	Multidisciplinary Combinations
<p>Combination 1</p> <p>Hindi, English</p> <p>Business Studies, Accounting, Economics from Group 3</p> <p>Business Mathematics from Group 4</p>	<p>Combination 1</p> <p>Classical Telugu, Sanskrit</p> <p>Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry from Group 4</p> <p>Sustainability and Climate Change from Group 3</p>	<p>Combination 1</p> <p>Marathi, French</p> <p>History, Economics, Psychology from Group 3</p> <p>Contemporary Music from Group 2</p>	<p>Combination 1</p> <p>Classical Tamil, Hindi</p> <p>Gardening from Group 2</p> <p>History, Journalism from Group 3</p> <p>Mathematics from Group 4</p>
<p>Combination 2</p> <p>Bengali, English</p> <p>Business Studies, Accounting from Group 3</p> <p>Business Mathematics from Group 4</p> <p>Fine Arts from Group 2</p>	<p>Combination 2</p> <p>Gujarati, English</p> <p>Biology, Physics, Chemistry from Group 4</p> <p>Indian Classical Music from Group 2</p> <p>[Optional] Mathematics from Group 4</p>	<p>Combination 2</p> <p>Assamese, Sanskrit</p> <p>Geography, Political Science from Group 3</p> <p>Indian Classical Music from Group 2</p> <p>[Optional] Mathematics from Group 4</p>	<p>Combination 2</p> <p>Pali, Malayalam</p> <p>Folk Music from Group 2</p> <p>Automobile Servicing from Group 2</p> <p>Business Studies from Group 3</p> <p>[Optional] Business Mathematics from Group 4</p>

Annexure 4 Certification Scheme for 12th Board Source: NCERT, 2023, p.83

