Feedback on

Draft National Curriculum Framework on School Education (NCF-SE)

This report is the outcome of stakeholders' and experts consultation undertaken by Centre for Educational and Social Studies (CESS)

Centre for Educational and Social Studies
Bengaluru

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ABOUT CESS

Centre for Educational and Social Studies (CESS) is a not-for-profit registered society based in Bengaluru. The vision of CESS is to bring about 'Social transformation with and through Education'. The core domain of CESS is education. Our key engagement areas are research, capacity building and policy advocacy. We undertake deep research studies on India centric education. CESS is a recognized research centre of VTU in Management Studies.

Since its inception in 2006 to till date, CESS has carried out numerous research studies, capacity building workshops and policy advocacy activities. CESS primarily collaborates with government departments, quasi-government bodies and other educational institutions having similar vision. CESS strives to draw the attention of all stakeholders including State and Central Governments on vital issues through series of National and State level seminars, dialogues, consultations, research publications and capacity building programmes. CESS's involvement in the key sectors, especially Education, has enabled it to be an effective think-tank influencing policy decisions.

CESS believes that effective participation in policy making through Policy Advocacy is important to a vibrant democracy and strong nation. To formulate its Policy Advocacy, CESS widely and deeply engages with all important stakeholders in the identified areas. CESS undertakes research including field surveys, stakeholders' consultations, brainstorming sessions with domain experts and reaches out to individuals and institutions whose voices are influential on policy formulation. The outcomes of CESS' consultations are documented and submitted to concerned government departments to help them develop evidence-based policies. In the recent past, to engage stakeholders in policy debates, CESS conducted series of seminars and dialogues across India on the Draft National Education Policy 2019. Since the unveiling of the NEP 2020 to till date, CESS has conducted nearly 200 pan-India level webinars to create awareness among the key stakeholders of education about the policy impact. In its endeavours to facilitate the implementation of the NEP 2020, CESS is now deeply engaged in capacity building of stakeholders. It is our pride to mention that some of the CESS members are on the Central regulatory bodies and on Task Force of Government of Karnataka constituted to develop the implementation roadmap for the State. (to know more about CESS kindly visit https://cessedu.org/)

ABOUT THE CONSULTATION

This feedback report is the consolidation of the comments/views received from experts and stakeholders of school education and education practitioners from across the country. Two approaches were adopted in this consultation. In the first approach, the draft was sent out to select few experts and stakeholders soliciting their written responses/feedback. In a follow up, CESS organized a webinar on 'National Curriculum Framework for School Education' on May 6, 2023, wherein identified experts were invited to speak about the NCF to school teachers, school heads, education practitioners as participants. The feedback/suggestions received from both the approaches are then consolidated in this report by the CESS Research team.

FEEDBACK AND SUGGESTIONS

The comments/responses received from the experts and stakeholders are presented below:

1. On Vocational Education

- The NEP had made it clear that there were two key aspects of vocational education; i) to provide exposure to various vocations to students beginning in middle school or earlier and continuing into high school; and ii) to provide meaningful vocational education opportunities in a selection of vocations, to students who would like to enter the world of work after school, up to NSQF levels 4 or beyond, as a career path.

- The NCF document has a very lop-sided handling of the two aspects. Most of the conversation is about exposure, and the second part does not seem to have been addressed very much at all. This is not good because GER is still only 27% and many students will look for work after 12th grade. The revised NCF must discuss the career path in much better way and present it in an aspirational manner.

- The NCF is not capitalising at all on the fact that there are many white-collar jobs today that are making vocational education a much more attractive proposition to students. For instance, there is little or no mention of any of the industry 4.0 professions and their introduction within classrooms. In this sense it is completely misaligned with the

priorities of the GoI that is seeking to teach all these topics to even school dropouts, through the PMKVY 4.0! These new white-collar areas in ICT, Robotics, IOT, Electric Vehicles, Biotech, and many more areas, are incredibly aspirational ones. Not mentioning them at all is a huge miss.

- Students must have an extremely good handle on all aspects of information technology (and other cutting-edge areas) before they pass out of secondary school. We must remember that students in secondary school are very sharp, keen to learn, and have lots of time to spend on looking up interesting things. Given that the present milieu in India is all about digital India, Fintech, Biotech, it becomes imperative for us to introduce students to all aspects of ICT (hardware and software, at appropriate levels of detail) while they are in school. Only then will we have a generation of students natively comfortable with technology who will be capable of innovating in ways that make India competitive internationally.

- As for integration of the theoretical aspects of various vocations into science, social science, and other subjects, there is only a mention of this under section 9.4 'Nature of Knowledge' but absolutely no detailing of the real 'integration' of VE that the NEP is looking for. This is definitely a lost opportunity. If we could work on getting this integration right, students will understand the value of what they are learning, both in their subject classes as well as in their vocational education class. This will motivate them to learn better and also help them when they get older, when they need to exploit the connections between various fields and innovate solutions to complex societal problems. This could also contribute to lowering dropouts because students will understand better how their education connects with real life.

- The split into Agriculture and Allied subjects, Manufacturing and Services is so poorly handled. This is the time when computer controlled CNC machines are used extensively in precision manufacturing. Yet the conversation about manufacturing is about tailoring and carpentry! Similarly, the Services sector is so much more than interacting with human beings and having people/ soft skills! Nothing can be achieved in the services sector without extensive use of software, logistics, sophisticated machinery, and more. We only have to look at the list of domains of skill development being worked on by MSDE/ NSDC, but the chapter mentions beauty and healthcare, and even these only in passing, as examples!

- The discussion of competencies and learning outcomes is not clear. The Multi-Skill Foundation Course (MSFC) is talked about extensively and that is a good thing. However, their bundling and offerings will have to be reviewed and re-aligned with NEP goals. Most importantly, the MSFC is largely only for exposure from preparatory stage through to secondary stage, but not the career track.

The NEP had high hopes for vocational education and this NCF falls short of its expectations. It would be good to revise this chapter to take all these considerations into account.

2. On life skills and soft skills

- Something important has been forgotten to be addressed in the NCF on School education. This is a framework for the discussion of 21st Century skills, or life skills, or soft skills, or whatever we would like to call it, within the country. We need to adopt a term nationally, define it, and talk about how to teach these characteristics through pedagogical interventions.

- We are referring to a subset of them - communication skills, problem solving and logical reasoning - in Chapter 1 under 'Capacities'. But we have not defined a complete set. So, we have people referring to them in many different ways and there is also a 'Life Skills Collaborative (LSC)' (https://lifeskillscollaborative.in/) that is working on defining and even assessing these! It is best that the schools/ Boards/NGOs engaged in the area work within a framework set by the NCF.

- Meanwhile, everywhere in the world there are many different ways of thinking about these 21st Century/ life/ soft skills. Reference to UNICEF and WEF can be made here. The UNICEF framework claims to have developed for India but not many people seem to know about it. It is a nice one because it is also aligned to the Delors report. The second description from the WEF also talks about how to teach these competencies and personality traits to children using technology. We will need to discuss this framework also in the NCF for Teacher Education so that teachers know what they are to teach towards and how. Most of these life skills are built up through pedagogical interventions over a period of time so it needs to be widely accepted.

- NCERT does talk about soft skills. However, it would be good to review what they have to make sure that we adopt a complete set of life skills, including personality traits like empathy and resilience that we talk about in the vision statement of the policy.

3. On Digital Literacy and Computational thinking

- This is another topic that has not been handled completely. Computational thinking is talked about under Mathematics education, but the aspect of Digital literacy - introducing students to computer hardware, software including basics of programming, networking, databases etc. have been completely left out. Digital literacy and Industry 4.0 related areas as key strategic areas of interest for India as a country should not be overlooked at all. They need to be included in the NCF.

4. On Mathematics Education

- Textbooks: exercises in the textbook should be designed in such a way that the students should become more confident to develop competency of problem solving. Exercises in the textbooks must give more inputs through life situational mathematical problems so that the students are capable of facing any board examination without fear.

- If the class strength is less, it becomes easy for the teacher to document or record the progress of each child but with a strength of 40+ documenting and recording becomes a tedious task for the teachers.

- 20 days may not be sufficient for assessment related activities across the stages throughout the year. There are many activities that are conducted and assessed throughout the year so more number of periods are required.

- More discovery based questions must be encouraged for better understanding at secondary level in teaching Mathematics.

5. On Pedagogy and Assessment

- Project - Centred approach: While going outdoor trips many problems may be faced. Therefore, proper guidance in NCF is needed.

- Indoor infrastructure. Semi open/partially shaded area: Curiosity Corner/Do you Know? Corner can also be created to display educative articles. for eg: locally available berries, locally grown crops (specially millets)

- Approach to Assessment Changes in Board Examination: NCF proposing to create a comprehensive test item bank (question bank) which can be

used to create tests using suitable software is a good initiative but the move towards a system of On demand examination in the near future may affect the commitment of pupils with respect to utility of time to face the board examination. As learning outcomes will differ from one child to another, we need to frame suitable activities which requires considerable time. So, it would be better if time duration is increased.

- Process for textbook development-Writing, review, and pilot run: It would be ideal and more beneficial if schools are selected from metropolitan cities, urban areas, rural areas etc.,

- More time must be allotted for story telling as it creates more interest and motivates the child to convey its thoughts unhesitatingly. This improves fluency. One hour duration for Maths is too long. The child may feel bored. Children are more interested in sports, games and creative activities. Everyday allotting last period for games may invoke their interest in studies, reduce mental pressure and develop competitiveness.

- The NCF 2023 emphasizes the need to shift from a rote-based learning approach to a more experiential and activity-based approach that promotes critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. It also stresses the need to integrate technology in education and to promote digital literacy among students.

- The framework encourages a multidisciplinary approach to learning and emphasizes the need to integrate subjects to provide students with a broader understanding of the world. It also stresses the importance of promoting social and emotional learning, inclusive education, and environmental awareness among students.

- As teachers, we may find the NCF 2023 to be challenging but also exciting. The framework provides a more flexible and learner-centric approach to education, which may require us to adapt our teaching methods to better meet the needs of our students. We may also find that the framework provides us with more opportunities to collaborate with our colleagues and to explore innovative teaching methods.

- Overall, the NCF 2023 represents a significant shift in the way education is approached in India, and as teachers, we will play a critical role in implementing and shaping the curriculum to better meet the needs of our students.

FEEDBACK AND SUGGESTIONS RECEIVED FROM WEBINAR PARTICIPANTS

The participants in the webinar were asked some of the questions reflecting on the challenges that they might face while successfully implementing NCFSE and some strategies to successfully incorporate value education and vocational education in their institutions. Here is the feedback received from the participants. Nearly 200 participants attended the webinar.

1. On challenges to successful implementation of NCF

- Resistance to change among educators and other stakeholders, who may be comfortable with existing teaching methods and curriculum. This can lead to reluctance to adopt new approaches, or a lack of understanding of how to implement the new framework effectively. It may also create a lack of buy-in from students, who may be resistant to new teaching methods or curriculum.
- More teachers have to be recruited and appropriate training is to be provided to them.
- Lack of Infrastructure and digital divide between the urban and rural
- Lack of awareness on NEP and the recent developments at the policy level among the faculty
- Transition between grades and phases
- Designing an entirely new content material for better experiential learning and multidisciplinary integration
- Adapting to the latest methods of learning styles and staying updated with the changes in the field of technology

2. On ways of reducing content and focusing on core essentials

- Emphasis on competency based education and revamping of board examinations
- Focusing on foundational capacities of literacy and numeracy and 'higher order' cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking and problem solving
- Focusing on Experiential Learning and ICT based education.
- Teachers to be spared from clerical work. Instead, more time be given to focus on curriculum and children
- Establish a meta-framework linking goals, processes, and values.
- Simplification in curriculum, Concentration on practical implications of subjects

- Textbooks can be rewritten to build competencies directly aligned to meet learning objectives.
- By creating more activity-based learning rather than content-based, focus on values and basic human skills should be enhanced through experiential learning.

3. On integration of values in school education

- Conducting frequent seminars and workshops to develop ethical and moral values among the students.
- Correlation with real life situations and giving brainstorming activities to awaken their sensibilities towards values and morals.
- Conducting induction programs to imbibe spiritual, ethical and social values to students.
- Incorporating more of moral and value-based stories and role plays
- Textbooks on subjects of humanities and science in specific and all subjects in general can be redesigned to have core values integrated.

4. On ways of enabling vocational education at secondary level for all students

- Experiential learning through skilled professionals
- Vocational courses should be popularized and more full-time teachers should be appointed with assured incentives
- Asking the students to gather information on local occupations and creating scope for internship at the local craft centre/with craftsmen on every Saturday.
- Schools may be encouraged to develop as a Centre of Excellence in identified Vocations, where students would learn from Concept to Practice.
- Localizing the curriculum: India has a rich tradition of various crafts, art forms, and other traditional occupations, which vary from region to region. By localizing the curriculum and incorporating these vocational skills in the syllabus, students can learn practical skills that are relevant to their local context. For instance, in rural areas, students can be taught agricultural practices, while in urban areas, they can be taught skills related to technology, hospitality, or retail. This will not only help in enhancing the employability of students but also preserve the cultural heritage of the region.
- Partnerships with local industries: Another practical way of enabling vocational education at the secondary level is by forging partnerships

with local industries. This can be done by establishing industry-institute collaborations or apprenticeship programs, where students can learn practical skills by working with local industries. By doing so, students can gain hands-on experience and develop the skills required to enter the workforce. Additionally, these partnerships can also help in creating job opportunities and promoting entrepreneurship, especially in rural areas where employment opportunities are limited.

5. Others Suggestions

- Common people such as parents should be made part of this NCF. Every school should be mandated to circulate this in schools and take feedback.
- Need more workshops to create awareness on NCFSE among the teachers.
- Need time for accepting the change, train and make the redressal cell more accessible and trained team to handle the schools.

We are pleased to bring to the notice of the concerned authorities that the webinar participants, largely teachers, appreciated the NCF and requested for such webinars and capacity building workshops on Curriculum Frame for better understanding of the Framework and for its effective implementation in the classroom.

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