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| **Title: Synergizing Credit and Skill Frameworks: Transforming Education and Empowering Individuals.** |
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**1.The context**

The concept of vocationalization is not explicitly mentioned in the ancient scriptures of India. However, there are some references to the importance of education and training in various places. In Arthashastra, a treatise on statecraft and economics written by Kautilya in the 4th century BCE, mentions the importance of training for different occupations. Here is the passage from the Arthashastra where vocationalization is mentioned**:"अर्थशास्त्रे चतुर्वर्गफलप्राप्तिहेतुः कर्मसु निपुणता विधीयते।"**This passage is from the 12th chapter of the Arthashastra, which is titled "Dharma". It states that vocational training is essential for the attainment of the four goals of life (dharma, artha, kama, and moksha). The Upanishads, a collection of philosophical texts dating from the 7th to 5th centuries BCE, also emphasize the importance of knowledge and skills. It states that a person should acquire knowledge and skills so that they can live a meaningful and fulfilling life. Here are some other quotes from the Manusmriti and Upanishads that are relevant to the concept of vocationalization:

* *"The wise man should learn a trade or profession so that he can support himself and his family." (Manusmriti)*
* *"A man should acquire knowledge and skills so that he can live a meaningful and fulfilling life." (Chhandogya Upanishad)*
* *"Education is not just about academic success. It is also about preparing people for the challenges of life and helping them to achieve their full potential." (Ishavasya Upanishad)*

These ancient scriptures suggest that the concept of vocationalization was not alien to the ancient Indian mind. However, it was not seen as a separate stream of education, but rather as an integral part of the education system. The concept of "vocationalization of education" is not explicitly mentioned in a single specific article of the original Constitution of India. However, the Directive Principles of State Policy, especially Articles 41, 45, and 46, reflect the broader ideals and principles that can be associated with vocational education and skill development. These articles emphasize the importance of education, work, and economic upliftment of various sections of society.

After Indian Independence much of the importance is given to vocationalization in almost all the major education commission. The Kothari Commission report talks about vocationalization in paragraph 4.12, "*Vocationalisation of education should be an integral part of the educational process at all stages. It should not be regarded as a separate stream of education. There should be a variety of vocational courses available to students at different levels, so that they can choose the courses that are most suited to their interests and aptitude. Vocational courses should be developed in consultation with industry and other employers, so that they are relevant to the needs of the economy. The government should provide financial support for the development and implementation of vocational education*."

The term "vocationalization" is used in the National Education Policy (NPE) 1986 in paragraph 6.2.2, which states*: "The need for vocationalization of education at different levels has been emphasized. This would involve introduction of a variety of courses, both general and vocational, at the secondary stage, with provision for easy transfer from one stream to another. At the higher secondary stage, there should be greater flexibility in the choice of courses, so that students can opt for studies leading to direct employment or to further education."*

The Programme of Action (POA) 1992 further elaborates on the concept of vocationalization, stating in paragraph 4.3.2: *"Vocationalization of education implies the introduction of a variety of courses, both general and vocational, at different stages of education, so as to enable the students to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for gainful employment and for self-employment.*" The POA 1992 also lays down the following guidelines for the implementation of vocationalization.

The Kothari Commission, the National Education Policy -1986, and the Programme of Action (POA) 1992 have all stressed the need for vocationalization in education.

The National Education Policy (NEP) -2020 was incremental in terms by introducing the concept of credit framework and skills. NEP-2020 mentions credit framework and skilling in **Para 12.3.3**, which states: "*A National Credit Framework for Skills (NCFS) will be developed to facilitate the accumulation and transfer of credits across different skilling and education institutions, both formal and informal. The NCFS will be aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF). It will be based on the principles of modularity, flexibility, and portability*. "

NEP for the first time provided a broader concept of credit and skilling which is indispensable for young nation like India where median age is 28.2 years. Today, India is one of the youngest nations in the world with more than 62% of its population in the working-age group (15-59 years), and over 54% of its total population below 25 years of age. Its population pyramid is expected to bulge across the 15–59 age groups over the next decade. This is a huge opportunity and at the same time poses a formidable challenge (Draft NCrF,Page-17).

As a result National Credit Framework (NCrF) was developed by a High Level Committee constituted by the Government of India with members from the University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), Central Board of Secondary Education(CBSE), National Council of Education Research and Training(NCERT), Ministry of Education(MoE), and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship(MSDE).

**2. The National Credit Framework (NCrF)**

The NCrF is an enabling framework and may not be construed as a regulation (NCrF,Page-8)**.** NCrF is a comprehensive framework that integrates learning across school education, higher education and vocational education & training. It provides for creditisation of all learning, including academics, vocational skills and experiential learning. NCrF also enables credit transfer between different education streams and institutions. The implementation of NCrF would be a game changer in making the India “world skill capital” .It would remove the distinction between general and vocational education, and ensure flexibility and mobility for students. NCrF would also open up numerous options for further progression of students and inter-mingling of school & higher education with vocational education & experiential learning. The key features of NCrF are:

* It is aligned with the National Education Policy 2020 and ensures quality and accountability in long run.
* It is a single credit framework for all levels of education.
* It provides for creditisation of all learning, including academics, vocational skills, and experiential learning.
* It enables credit transfer between different education streams and institutions.

The advantage of NCrF

* It will remove the dichotomy between general and vocational education.
* It will ensure flexibility and mobility for students across the field.
* It will provide different vistas for further progression of students.
* It will promote a defined trajectory from School education to higher education.
* It will help in overcoming the constraints of physical infrastructure & scalability.
* It will enhance access, equity, and affordability in education.
* It will promote internationalization of education.

The implementation of NCrF is a complex task that will require the collaboration of all stakeholders. The benefits of NCrF are immense and it has the potential to transform the education system in India but will require designated equivalence within and amongst institutions, universities, boards, and other regulating bodies. NCrF is complex framework in terms of pan India acceptability and implementation ability of all the institution of School and Higher education. Some individual might find out that it is not able to cater their specific individual needs. Many of the institution may lack the human resource and technical know- how. The exiting education system require some more time for alignment with new system. Moreover, designated technical architecture is also required to provide the foundation on which it will stand.

Thus, the implementation of NCrF should be carefully considered, considering the complexity of understanding it, its inflexibility in terms of learning trajectories, the cost of implementation and maintenance, the lack of international and national standardization, and the misalignment between the needs of institutions, individuals, regulating authorities, and industries.

**3.An overview of existing Frame for Vocational and skill Education.**

The use of skill first got the permeance in 12th five -year plan (2012-17). It was mentioned that “*The Government will focus on promoting skill development and entrepreneurship as a key driver of economic growth and social transformation. The Government will invest in developing a skilled workforce through a variety of measures, including vocational training, apprenticeships, and entrepreneurship training (12th Five-year Plan, Para-3.3)*.” As a successor to this Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015 was formulated as it was imperative to respond to the demand of skill ecosystem both national and international. Moreover, National Skill Development Policy,2009 itself advocates for review of policy every five years as a result National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015 supersedes the policy of 2009.It was more comprehensive and futuristic in nature. The NSD-2009 envisaged NVQF(National Vocational Qualification Framework) whereas 2015 policy provided for NSQF(National Skills Qualification Framework).The latter policy advocated for innovations and branding as well. NVQF latter assimilated into NSQF.NSQF was education and competency-based framework. “…*NSQF organizes qualifications according to a series of levels of knowledge, skills and aptitude. These levels, graded from one to ten, are defined in terms of learning outcomes which the learner must possess regardless of whether they were acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning (*[*https://www.nielit.gov.in/content/nsqf)*](https://www.nielit.gov.in/content/nsqf%29)*”.*

At this point National Credit Framework (NCrF) and NSQF show marked similarity by acting as competency-based skill and quality assurance framework that calls for multiple pathways both horizontal as well as vertical. Here, one learning level is linked to another higher level.

**4.What need to be done next?**

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