

# National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF): Futuristic Perspective in Higher Education

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*Abstract* – National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) which was later on assimilated into National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), Various Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) are developing Qualification Packs (QPs), National Occupational Standards (NOSs) and assessment mechanisms in their respective domains, in alignment with the needs of the NSQF 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. NSQF'S Major future initiatives under NEP2020 and UGC, NCRF regarding learning outcomes, Successful assessment, Skill Based Programme and apprenticeship programme. Ministry for education and skill Development entrepreneurship developing global network for skill development is a new dawn in skill and entrepreneurship ecosystem in India, HISHE is involve to provide skilled work force to the QPs and NOS, 35<sup>TH</sup> MOM meeting provide many agenda regarding advanced qualification, skilled youth to enhance their employment prospects, approved different IT- ITes sector, particularly in the field of skill and technology.

*Keywords* – Higher Skill Education, Vocational Education, Technical Education, National Skill Qualification Framework, NEP2020, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

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## I. INTRODUCTION: NATIONAL SKILL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK

Skills and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development for any country. Presently, the country faces a demand-supply mismatch, as the economy needs more 'skilled' workforce than that is available. In the higher education sphere, knowledge and skills are required for diverse forms of employment in the sectors of education, health care, manufacturing and other services. Government of India, taking note of the requirement for skill development among students, launched National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) which was later on assimilated into National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF). Various Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) are developing Qualification Packs (QPs), National Occupational Standards (NOSs) and assessment mechanisms in their respective domains, in alignment with the needs of the industry.

The UGC implemented the scheme of Community Colleges in pilot mode on the initiative of the MHRD. Thereafter, realizing the importance and the necessity for developing skills among students, and creating work ready manpower on large scale, the Commission decided to implement the scheme of Community Colleges as one of its independent schemes from the year 2014-15. The Commission also launched another scheme of B.Voc. Degree programme to expand the scope of vocational education and also to provide vertical mobility to the students admitted into Community Colleges for Diploma programmes to a degree programme in the Universities and Colleges. While these two schemes were being implemented, it was also realized that there is a need to give further push to vocational education on an even larger scale. Accordingly, 'Deen Dayal Upadhyay Centres for Knowledge Acquisition and up gradation of Skilled Human Abilities and Livelihood (KAUSHAL)' was also incorporated. Since all these three provisions serve a common purpose, they are merged into a single s-

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-cheme for providing skill based education under National Skills Qualifications Framework.

- National principles for recognising skill proficiency and competencies at different Levels leading to international equivalency.
- Multiple entry and exit between vocational education, skill training, general Education, technical education and job markets.
- Progression pathways defined within skill qualification framework.
- Opportunities to promote lifelong learning and skill development.
- Partnership with industry/employers.
- A transparent, accountable and credible mechanism for skill development across.
- The qualification framework is beneficial to Schools, vocational education and training providers, higher education institutes, accrediting as well as industry and its representative bodies, union, professional associations and licensing authorities. The biggest beneficiaries of a framework are the learners who can judge the relative value of a qualification at a particular level on the framework and make informed decisions about their career progression paths.

*The Following are the Key Features of NSQF:*

1. Provide for integrating and crediting vocational education, training and skill learning in various dimensions of academics, skilling and experiential learning including relevant experience and proficiency/ professional levels acquired, subject to assessment;
2. Clearly prescribe the desired competency levels in terms of knowledge, skills, aptitude, responsibility and learning outcomes expected after undergoing the course/ qualification while assigning a pre-defined NSQF/ NCrF level to the same;
3. Facilitate assigning of credit levels across vocational education/ skilling including that in school and higher education, based on the cumulative numbers of hours/ years of learning; Creditization of every type and hour of learning subject to its assessment;
4. Establish academic equivalence between vocational & general education while enabling mobility within & between them;
5. Enable multi-disciplinarily, multiple entry-multiple exit (ME-ME) and progression pathways within and between school education, higher education, technical education, vocational education, training & skilling, and the job markets;
6. Provide flexibility for students/ learners to choose their learning trajectories and career choices, including option for mid-way course correction.
7. Recognize learning through close partnership with industry and employers through internships apprenticeships and on the job training across all sectors;
8. Provide for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) through a credible assessment process;

9. Thus NSQF enables and promotes lifelong learning and skill development.

## **II. OBJECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL SKILL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK (NSQF) ARE TO PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK THAT: PROGRAMME AND CURRICULUM OF NSQF IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

In order to make education relevant and to create 'industry fit' skilled workforce, the institutions recognized under Community Colleges/B.Voc Degree programme, and Deen Dayal Upadhyay KAUSHAL Kendra's offering skill based courses will have to be in constant dialogue with the industry and respective Sector Skill Council (s) so that they remain updated on the requirements of the workforce for the local economy. There will be credit-based modular programmes, wherein banking of credits for skill and general education components shall be permitted so as to enable multiple exit and entry. This would enable the learner to seek employment after any level of Award and join back as and when feasible to upgrade her / his qualification / skill competency either to move higher in her / his job or in the higher educational system. This will also provide the learner an opportunity for vertical mobility to second year of B.Voc degree programme after one year diploma and to third year of B.Voc degree programme after a two year advanced diploma. The students may further move to masters and research degree programmes (NSQF Level 8 -10) As the CBSE and many other school boards are initiating skill based vocational courses with certification at NSQF Level 4 for students completing 10+2, there may be three types of learners getting admission to first semester of skill based courses under NSQF:

Category 1: students already acquired NSQF certification Level 4 in a particular industry sector and opted admission in the skill based courses under NSQF in the institutions recognized under Community Colleges / B.Voc Degree programme / Deen Dayal Upadhyay KAUSHAL Kendra's in same trade with job role for which he / she was previously certified at school level.

Category 2: students who have acquired NSQF certification Level 4 but may like to change their trade and may enter into skill based courses in a different trade.

Category 3: students passed 10+2 examination with conventional schooling without any background of vocational training. The institutions / community college / KAUSHAL Kendra's will develop curriculum and arrange for skill intensive training / teaching for the learners belonging to the 2 category-2 and 3 as above during the first six months who will be assessed and certified for NSQF Level 4 of skill competency by concerned SSC at the end of first semester. However, learners belonging to category-1 will not require such certification as they were already having NSQF level 4 certificates in same industry sector / job role required for specified skill credits. All the learners continuing to Diploma courses or further will be treated at par from second semester onwards. Students may exit after six months with a Certificate (NSQF Level 4) or may continue for diploma or advanced diploma level courses [1].

## **III. SKILL COMPONENTS IN NSQF**

The skill-based programmes shall have a mix of general and skill components in which 30-40% of the total content shall be of general nature including language courses while the remaining 60% (extendable upto 70%) of the content shall be on skill development. In such programs the following formula is used for conversion of time into credit hours.

**A. Skill Component:**

The skill component should have a minimum of 60% (extendable upto a maximum of 70%) of the total credits. The skill component will include practical classes in laboratories/workshops, internships, apprenticeships and any other forms of hands on training.

**B. General Education Component:**

The balance credits of the program i.e. 30-40% are of general component. This will include curricula which are supportive to the core trade in addition to communication skills, soft skills, digital skills, critical thinking, and problem solving skills, environmental studies and value education.

**IV. MAJOR PROVISIONS AND TYPE OF COURSES**

The National Credit Framework (NCrF) is formulated by the Government of India and notified by UGC on 10th April 2023 and the same was further adopted by NCVET on 12th May 2023 to cater to the needs of all stakeholders including students, institutions and industries with an aim of creditization of learning from various dimensions i.e. academic, vocational skills, experiential learning including relevant experience and proficiency/professional level.

Academic Band/ Learning Hours per year	Academic Levels- Education & Higher	Grade/ School	Vocational Education Long Term Trg/ Short Term Trg (LTT/STT)	National Credit Framework (NCrF) Credit levels	Credits Earned/ Credit year	Credit Points Earned	Assessment Stage and equivalence
Doctoral Degree	PhD		NSQF Level 8 STT	8.0	40	320	
PG degree (1/2 yrs)/ ME/ M.Tech (1200 Hrs/yr)	PG- 2 <sup>nd</sup> (Eng) PG - 2 <sup>nd</sup> yr/ PG 1 <sup>st</sup> yr (Eng)		NSQF Level 7 STT NSQF Level 6.5 STT	7.0 6.5	40 40	280 260	M.Tech. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Yr./ Engg PG Degree PG Degree/ M.Voc / M.Sc (eng)
4-year UG with honours/ Honours with Research / B.Tech. OR 3 year UG (1200 Hrs/yr)	4-year UG with honours/ with Research / PG - 1 <sup>st</sup> yr		NSQF Level 6 STT	6.0	40	240	UG- Degree (Hons)/ PG Diploma/ B.Tech/B.E
	UG- 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year		10 <sup>th</sup> +5-Yr NTC/NAC/CITS, 12 <sup>th</sup> +3-Yr NTC/NAC/CITS, NSQF Level 5.5 STT	5.5	40	220	UG- Degree/ B.Voc/ B.Sc Eng
	UG- 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year		10 <sup>th</sup> +4-Yr NTC/NAC/CITS, 12 <sup>th</sup> +2-Yr NTC/NAC/CITS, NSQF Level 5 STT	5.0	40	200	UG- Diploma/ Diploma-Eng
	UG- Year/equivalent	1 <sup>st</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup> +3-Yr NTC/NAC/CITS, 12 <sup>th</sup> +1-Yr NTC/NAC/CITS, NSQF Level 4.5 STT	4.5	40	180	UG- Certificate
2 year- Senior Secondary (1200 Hrs/yr)	Class XII		10 <sup>th</sup> +2-Yr NTC/NAC/CITS, NSQF Level 4 STT	4.0	40	160	Class XII (thru CBSE/ School Boards/ NIOS)
	Class XI		10 <sup>th</sup> +1-Yr NTC/NAC/CITS, NSQF Level 3.5 STT	3.5	40	140	Class XI (thru CBSE/ School Boards/ NIOS)
2 Year- Secondary (1200 Hrs/yr)	Class X		8 <sup>th</sup> +2-Yr NTC/NAC, NSQF Level 3 STT	3.0	40	120	Class X (thru CBSE/School Boards/ NIOS)
	Class IX		8 <sup>th</sup> +1-Yr NTC/NAC, NSQF Level 2.5 STT	2.5	40	100	Class IX (thru CBSE/ School Boards/ NIOS)
3 year- Middle (1200 Hrs/yr)	Class VIII		NSQF Level 2 STT	2.0	40	80	Class VIII (thru School Boards/ NIOS)
	Class VII			1.67	40	67	
	Class VI			1.33	40	53	
3 year- Preparatory (1000 Hrs/yr)	Class V		NSQF Level 1 STT	1.0	33	33	Class V (thru School Boards/ NIOS)
	Class IV			0.8	33	26.4	
	Class III			0.6	33	19.8	
5 year Foundational (800 Hrs / yr)	Class II			0.4	27	10.8	
	Class I			0.2	27	5.4	
	Pre-School (3 years)			0.1x3	27x3=81	8.1	

Where NTC: National Trade Certificate, NAC: National Apprentice Certificate, CITS: Crafts Instructor Training Scheme, NIOS: National Institute of Open Schooling [2].

The National Credit Framework (NCrF) is an enabling framework and aims to integrate and creditize all kinds of learning acquired through different modes like offline, online and blended by removing any kind of distinction between disciplines, subjects and curricular, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities and encompasses school education, higher education and vocational education and training /skilling to ensure flexibility, inclusivity, and mobility.

Enables the assignment, accumulation, storage, transfer and redemption of credit with multiple entry and multiple exit (ME-ME) options to facilitate academic equivalence and lifelong learning. NCrF supports the provisioning of on-demand learning, on-demand assessments and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for learners, coming from non-formal/ informal ecosystems, or out of school students thereby allowing for Lifelong learning and mobility of learner both nationally and internationally.

As mentioned in the NCrF, predefined learning outcomes and assessment is the basis of creditization. The credit assignment is subject to achieving the prescribed learning outcomes determined by successful assessment. The assessment bands therefore hold crucial relevance in determining the accumulation and further transfer of credits. The NCrF is a Meta framework that encompasses and integrates learning based on the different qualification frameworks namely NHEQF, NSQF and NCrF as highlighted in the following table along with various assessment bands:

The qualification framework is beneficial to Schools, vocational education and training providers, higher education institutes, accrediting as well as industry and its representative bodies, union, professional associations and licensing authorities. The biggest beneficiaries of a framework are the learners who can judge the relative value of a qualification at a particular level on the framework and make informed decisions about their career progression paths.

## **V. NEP AND EMBEDDING SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

- One of the important directives of the National Education Policy 2020 was to impart employable skills in the students so that they will participate in the Nation's economic growth.

Chapter 16 of the NEP 2020 states that By 2025, at least 50% of learners through the school and higher education system shall have exposure to vocational education, for which a clear action plan with targets and timelines will be developed. ...Higher education institutions will offer vocational education either on their own or in partnership with industry and NGOs. The B. Voc. Degrees introduced in 2013 will continue to exist, but vocational courses will also be available to students enrolled in all other Bachelor's degree programmes. Different models of vocational education, and apprenticeships, will also be experimented by higher education institutions [3].

- In July 2020, UGC had issued the guidelines for the Apprenticeship Embedded Degree Programmes under which 20% of the total credits (132) are to be allocated for the apprenticeship programme. However, the programme shall have at least 24 credits for the core courses so as to make the student eligible for higher courses in the area if needed.
- However, the progress in this respect is tardy since bringing the industry and educational system together needed special efforts. Study in Uttar Pradesh and Telangana showed that the HEIs are still aligned to the



objectives of NEP in embedding apprenticeship into the degree programmes. Hence the intervention by the Centre for Research in Schemes and Policies (CRISP).

## **VI. DEVELOPING GLOBAL NETWORKS FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT AT THE VIBRANT GUJARAT SUMMIT 2024**

The Hon'ble Union Minister for Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, attended the inaugural session on Developing Global Networks for Skill Development at the Vibrant Gujarat Summit 2024 on 11th January, 2024, held at the Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre, Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The Hon'ble Union Minister emphasized that 'Developing Global Network for Skill Development' is the key to achieving success in this highly interdependent world and further highlighted the G20 group's dedication to plug skill shortages, through initiatives such as global skills mapping and skill harmonization [4]. The Hon'ble Union Minister for Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, interacted with over 100 entrepreneurs on 26th January, 2024 who were trained under various skill development institutions like the National Institute of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD), Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), and Skill India's flagship scheme - Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY). This was the first time that entrepreneurs from the skill ecosystem are accorded the honour of being guests at the Republic Day celebrations and further appreciated and encouraged the entrepreneurs for undertaking vocational training that is heralding a new dawn in skill development and entrepreneurship ecosystem in INDIA.

## **VII. NATIONAL INITIATIVE FOR SKILL INTEGRATED HIGHER EDUCATION (NISHE)**

The National Initiative for Skill Integrated Higher Education (NISHE) proposed to scale up the pilots already done in AP, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh, to 10 states, 1 lakh students covering 15 sectors over a period of 3 years.

Salient Features: The following are the salient features:

- (a) The sectors would comprise a mix of high order and middle order skills depending fully on the type of sector and nature of industry demand, which would be further viewed in relation to the economic growth pattern and educational levels of the State, area.
- (b) All interventions would be in association with the concerned State Governments through timeline based MoUs in partnership mode.
- (c) Associate and involve corporate sector, especially those companies which have prioritized inclusive, outcome-based education.
- (d) The skill embedded courses would not only be in the form of full-fledged 3-year degree courses but also elective courses that can be taken by graduate students of all disciplines. This will ensure greater penetration and coverage of students.
- (e) Project area: The project is proposed to be implemented in 10 States selected on the basis of the willingness of the State Governments, and in 1433 colleges [5].

### **1. NISHE Integration with UGC**

The courses would be degree courses integrated with industry demanded skills woven into the curriculum with apprenticeship/internship linkage as per the UGC stipulated credit structure and guidelines.

- Alignment of the colleges with industry would establish a relationship where dynamic changes in curriculum at pace with industry changes are affected, with the entire skilling component being imparted in accordance with the National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF), regulated by the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) under the umbrella of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MoSDE).
- For the education system in India, especially colleges, the most direct, sustainable and credible industry-connect will come from the SSCs, whose mandate is to provide skilled work force to the industry group they represent. Cutting edge training is facilitated by the SSCs through Qualification Packages (QPs) designed based on National Occupancy Standards (NOS). Although there is an SSC for every industry vertical in the country, in this exercise, we are considering 7-8 SSCs which are active in the college system.
- As per extant UGC guidelines and the flexibility provided therein, skill integration into education can take place through:
  - (i) Full-fledged degree programs.
  - (ii) 35-40 credit elective courses.
  - (iii) 1-year diploma courses.

## 2. *Implementation of the Project "Comprehensive Entrepreneurship & Skill Development Training Program:*

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), in partnership with the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), is implementing the project "Comprehensive Entrepreneurship & Skill Development Training Program for Tribal Artisans & Micro Entrepreneurs across North Eastern States." This initiative is designed to augment the entrepreneurial acumen of beneficiaries under the PM Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY) and SFURTI schemes by offering a comprehensive 30-day training program in entrepreneurship and skill development. The training curriculum will emphasize key areas such as product development, financial management, and marketing strategies. As of April 2024, a total of 4,175 candidates have been enrolled across 167 batches, with their training currently Underway [6].

## 3. *Implementation of the AMBER project:*

MSDE, in collaboration with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), is currently implementing the AMBER project under the SANKALP initiative. The primary objective of this project is to enhance the effectiveness of job placements and job retention resulting from short-term skill training programs, achieved through strategic public-private partnerships. The project aims to provide training to 30,000 candidates, focusing particularly on high-volume technology-oriented job roles utilizing contemporary training methodologies. As of April 2024, a total of 26,346 candidates have undergone training, with 19,545 candidates assessed and 17,638 certified. During April 2024 alone, 3,081 candidates were assessed, and 2,609 were certified [7].

## 4. *MoM of the 35th Meeting of NSQC dated 31st January 2024*

The 35th meeting of the National Skills Qualifications Committee (NSQC) was held on 31st January 2024. The decisions taken by the Committee, w.r.t. agenda items.

- Agenda no. 2

The Committee in its 34th Meeting directed the respective Awarding Bodies to submit their advanced qualifications of 120 hours for NSQF alignment and approval by NSQC. Accordingly, the committee was apprised that out of 10 Awarding Bodies (ABs) whose advanced qualifications were due for submission, eight ABs have submitted the advance qualifications and balance two ABs namely Construction Skill Development Council of India and Capital Goods & Strategic Skill Council are yet to submit the same [8].

- Agenda no. 4

He Committee was apprised that Central and State governments have been initiating various schemes/ skilling programs in the country with the aim of training and skilling the youth to enhance their employment prospects. The Committee was further informed that in numerous instances, the qualifications submitted for NSQF alignment and approval require early/ urgent approval to ensure immediate implementation of these schemes and skilling programs. In order to ensure timely implementation of such schemes/ programs, NCVET has a provision to expedite the approval of qualifications by according on-file approval by the competent authority after following the approval process as per NSQF norms and subsequently place the qualifications before NSQC for ratification.

- Agenda no. 5

1. Approval of three (03) NOSs (IT -ITeS Sector) submitted by HCL Tech.
2. The committee was apprised that HCL Tech has been provisionally recognized as an Awarding Body (dual category) by NCVET through issuance of Letter of Intent (LoI) on 22nd December 2023. Subsequently, as a part of the process, HCL Tech has submitted 3 NOSs (Up skilling) for NSQF alignment and NSQC approval. Further, the Committee was informed that HCL Tech had submitted 03 up skilling NOSs as a part of its collaborative partnership with UPSDM and Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam Technical University (APJAKTU) to undertake skill development initiatives of the youth, particularly in the field of technology.
3. The Committee was apprised that Centre for Development of Advance Computing (CDAC) has been provisionally recognized as an Awarding Body (Dual Category) by NCVET. Subsequently, as a part of the process, CDAC has submitted one (01) new up skilling Qualification for NSQF alignment and approval.

A total of 215 (151 New and 64 Revised) qualifications, 18 NOSs and 11 Micro Credentials have been received at NCVET as on 30th November 2023 and 183 (119 New and 64 Revised) are being considered for placing in this NSQC.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

At least 50% of school and higher education students to have access to vocational education by 2025, emphasizing industry linkages and demand-driven courses. A significant focus in the discourse on the future of work is preparing students for the Fourth Industrial Revolution by adapting to rapid technological advancements. Emphasizes holistic skill development by integrating academic knowledge with practical skills in



education, sports, arts, and vocational training, preparing students for employment and entrepreneurship. MOM meeting provide many agenda regarding advanced qualification, skilled youth to enhance their employment prospects, approved different IT-ITes sector, particularly in the field of skill and technology. NSQF'S Major future initiatives under NEP 2020 and UGC, NCRF regarding learning outcomes, Successful assessments, and skill Based Programme and apprenticeship programme. Ministry for education and skill Development entrepreneurship developing global network for skill development is a new dawn in skill and entrepreneurship ecosystem in India, HISHE is involve to provide skilled work force to the QPs and NOS.

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