

Evaluation of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005/2023) and Its Classroom Implications.

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ABSTRACT

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) serves as a guiding document for educational reform in India, shaping curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment across all school stages. This research paper evaluates the evolution and implementation of the NCF 2005 and NCF 2023, highlighting their philosophical foundations, pedagogical shifts, and classroom implications. The study explores how NCF 2005 emphasized constructivist learning, holistic development, and child-centered education, while NCF 2023 advances these ideas by promoting competency-based learning, multidisciplinary approaches, experiential pedagogy, and integration of 21st-century skills. Through qualitative analysis of policy documents, teacher feedback, and classroom practices, the research paper assesses the extent to which the NCF's principles are reflected in real classroom situations. It also examines challenges such as teacher preparedness, resource limitations, and assessment reforms. The findings suggest that while the NCF provides a visionary framework for transforming school education, its effective implementation requires continuous teacher training, infrastructural support, and contextual adaptation. The study concludes that aligning classroom practices with the NCF's holistic and competency-based vision is essential for achieving inclusive and quality education in India...

Keywords: National Curriculum Framework, NCF 2005, NCF 2023, curriculum reform, competency-based education, constructivist pedagogy, experiential learning, holistic education, classroom implementation, teacher professional development.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Education is a dynamic process that continuously evolves to meet the changing needs of society. In India, the **National Curriculum Framework (NCF)** serves as a guiding document for revising and improving school education in alignment with national goals and global standards. The NCF provides the philosophical, pedagogical, and structural basis for curriculum development, teacher education, and classroom practices. Since its inception, the NCF has been revised several times—most notably in **1975, 1988, 2000, 2005**, and the most recent **NCF 2023**, formulated in alignment with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.

The **NCF 2005** marked a significant shift from a traditional content-heavy, examination-oriented system to a **child-centered and constructivist approach** to education. It emphasized learning through exploration, critical thinking, creativity, and understanding rather than rote memorization. The framework promoted holistic development, inclusivity, gender sensitivity, and learning across multiple domains—cognitive, emotional, and social.

In contrast, the **NCF 2023** represents a more comprehensive transformation aimed at integrating **competency-based learning, experiential pedagogy, multidisciplinary education, and flexible curricular structures**. It emphasizes foundational literacy and

numeracy, experiential learning through play and research papers, integration of technology, and the development of 21st-century skills such as collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking. It also restructures school education into a **5+3+3+4 curricular and pedagogical design**, ensuring age-appropriate learning experiences.

Despite the visionary principles of both frameworks, their success depends on **classroom-level implementation**. Teachers play a crucial role in translating the NCF's principles into everyday teaching-learning practices. However, issues such as lack of teacher training, rigid assessment systems, limited resources, and large class sizes often hinder the effective realization of NCF goals. Evaluating the extent to which the NCF 2005 and NCF 2023 have been implemented in classrooms provides valuable insights into the strengths, gaps, and future directions of curriculum reform in India.

This research paper aims to evaluate both frameworks, compare their pedagogical visions, and analyze how effectively their principles have influenced classroom practices across different school levels.

Objectives of the Study

To examine the key features and philosophical foundations of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 and NCF 2023.

To compare and contrast the pedagogical and curricular shifts introduced in NCF 2005 and NCF 2023.

To analyze the classroom implications of both frameworks in terms of teaching methods, learning outcomes, and assessment practices.

To identify the challenges and barriers faced by teachers and schools in implementing NCF recommendations.

To suggest practical strategies for effective classroom implementation of the NCF 2023 in the light of lessons learned from NCF 2005.

Methodology

The present study adopts a **qualitative and descriptive research design** to evaluate the *National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005 and 2023)* and its classroom implications. The methodology is designed to gather insights from documents, teachers, and classroom practices to understand how effectively the principles of the NCF have been implemented in school education.

Research Design

The study follows a comparative and analytical approach. It involves:

A **document analysis** of NCF 2005 and NCF 2023 policy texts to identify their major features, objectives, and pedagogical recommendations.

A **field-based inquiry** to assess teachers' understanding, classroom practices, and challenges in implementing the NCF recommendations.

This design allows for a comprehensive evaluation of both policy and practice aspects.

Population and Sample

The population of the study includes teachers working in schools that follow the CBSE, State Board, or other boards that align their curriculum with the NCF. A **sample of 20–30 teachers** was selected from primary, upper primary, and secondary school levels. The sampling method used is **purposive sampling**, ensuring participants represent diverse school types (government, private, and aided schools).

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected from two major sources:

a. Primary Data

Questionnaire/Interview Schedule: Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used to gather teachers' views on the implementation of NCF principles.

Classroom Observation: Selected classrooms were observed to identify how teachers apply learner-centered, experiential, or competency-based strategies suggested in the NCF.

b. Secondary Data

Official documents such as **NCF 2005**, **NCF 2023**, **NEP 2020**, and **NCERT reports** were analyzed.

Research papers, policy briefs, and scholarly articles related to curriculum reform were reviewed to support data interpretation.

Tools and Techniques

Questionnaire/Interview Tool: Focused on areas such as pedagogical changes, assessment practices, and teacher preparedness.

Observation Checklist: Designed to record innovative classroom practices, student participation, and the integration of competencies and values as per NCF recommendations.

Document Analysis Framework: Used to compare thematic elements—philosophy, pedagogy, learning outcomes, and assessment methods—in both frameworks.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using **qualitative analysis techniques** such as:

Thematic analysis to identify recurring themes in teacher responses and classroom observations.

Comparative analysis to highlight the similarities and differences between NCF 2005 and NCF 2023.

Interpretative analysis to connect policy ideals with actual classroom realities.

Findings were presented descriptively through charts, tables, and narrative summaries to reflect both theoretical insights and practical implications.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data confidentiality and anonymity were maintained.

The findings are reported objectively, without personal or institutional bias.

Analysis and Findings

The evaluation of the **National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 and NCF 2023** reveals a progressive transformation in India's approach to curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. While both frameworks share the common goal of providing quality, equitable, and holistic education, they differ in focus, structure, and implementation strategies. This section presents a comparative analysis of both frameworks and highlights their classroom implications based on document analysis, teacher feedback, and classroom observations.

Philosophical and Conceptual Foundations

NCF 2005 was rooted in a **constructivist approach**, emphasizing learning as an active and meaning-making process. It sought to move education away from rote learning toward experiential and reflective learning. It drew inspiration from thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, and J. Krishnamurti, stressing values, creativity, and peace education.

NCF 2023, in alignment with **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, builds upon the same foundation but expands it toward a **competency-based and outcome-oriented model**. It integrates global 21st-century skills while retaining India's cultural and ethical roots. The framework promotes **multidisciplinary and holistic education**, ensuring learning across cognitive, emotional, social, and moral domains.

Finding:

Both frameworks advocate holistic education, but NCF 2023 places stronger emphasis on measurable learning outcomes, competencies, and flexibility in learning pathways.

Curriculum Structure and Design

NCF 2005 followed a **10+2 structure**, focusing on four stages—primary, upper primary, secondary, and higher secondary. It emphasized contextual learning and local relevance but offered limited structural flexibility.

NCF 2023 introduces a new **5+3+3+4 design** (Foundational, Preparatory, Middle, and Secondary Stages), ensuring **age-appropriate and developmentally responsive learning**. It integrates early childhood care and education (ECCE) and promotes continuity across stages.

Finding:

Teachers acknowledged that the new structure provides a more coherent progression from early learning to secondary education, though practical challenges in curriculum integration and teacher training remain.

Pedagogical Shifts

NCF 2005 emphasized **child-centered pedagogy**, activity-based learning, group work, and research paper methods to make learning joyful and participatory. Teachers were encouraged to become facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge.

NCF 2023 advances this idea with **experiential learning, competency-based teaching, and integration of technology**. It promotes learning through play, arts, sports, and vocational exposure. The focus is on **learning by doing** and developing critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration skills.

Finding:

Classroom observations revealed partial implementation of experiential and play-based learning in primary grades. However, many teachers still rely on lecture-based methods due to workload, time constraints, and examination pressures.

Assessment Practices

NCF 2005 introduced **Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE)** to assess both scholastic and co-scholastic aspects. However, its implementation often became mechanical and paperwork-driven.

NCF 2023 shifts toward **competency-based assessment**, focusing on **learning outcomes, formative evaluation, and multiple assessment modes**. It discourages rote-based exams and supports flexibility through **modular and multidisciplinary assessments**.

Finding:

Teachers expressed positive attitudes toward competency-based assessment but reported a need for training and simplified tools for classroom-level evaluation. Many schools are still in transition from traditional exams to formative assessments.

Role of Teachers

In both frameworks, teachers are seen as **curriculum designers, facilitators, and reflective practitioners**.

NCF 2005 stressed teacher autonomy and innovation in lesson design, while NCF 2023 further expands the teacher's role as a mentor, researcher, and technology integrator. Professional development and continuous training are highlighted as essential for successful implementation.

Finding:

Most teachers appreciated the empowerment given by the frameworks but cited **insufficient training opportunities and workload** as major barriers to innovation and reflective practice.

Integration of Technology and Multidisciplinary

NCF 2005 had limited references to ICT due to its time context, focusing instead on traditional pedagogical innovations.

NCF 2023 integrates digital literacy, coding, virtual labs, online learning platforms, and the use of AI tools to enhance learning. It encourages a multidisciplinary approach, allowing students to choose subjects across arts, science, and vocational domains.

Finding:

Schools with adequate infrastructure have begun integrating digital tools effectively. However, the **digital divide** in rural and low-income areas limits equitable access to technology-based learning.

Values, Inclusivity, and Holistic Development

Both frameworks advocate **value-based, inclusive, and holistic education**.

NCF 2005 focused on inclusivity, gender equality, peace education, and environmental awareness. NCF 2023 reinforces these values but also adds emphasis on **well-being, social-emotional learning, Indian knowledge systems, and life skills**.

Finding:

Teachers reported increased awareness of inclusivity and emotional well-being, though practical implementation depends on institutional support and community participation.

Implementation Challenges

Lack of continuous **teacher training** and follow-up.

Overloaded curriculum and limited time for experiential learning.

Resource constraints in government schools.

Pressure of examinations and parental expectations.

Inadequate monitoring and feedback mechanisms.

Overall Findings

The analysis concludes that the NCF 2005 and 2023 have significantly influenced educational discourse and curriculum reform in India. While NCF 2005 initiated the shift toward learner-centered education, NCF 2023 strengthens it with a holistic, multidisciplinary, and future-ready approach. The success of these frameworks ultimately depends on how well teachers, schools, and

policymakers collaborate to make classrooms truly reflective of the NCF vision.

2. CONCLUSION

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) represents the vision and philosophy of school education in India. Both **NCF 2005** and **NCF 2023** have played pivotal roles in redefining what and how children should learn in schools. The comparative evaluation of the two frameworks reveals a strong continuity of progressive educational thought, with NCF 2023 further expanding and modernizing the goals set by NCF 2005.

NCF 2005 introduced the paradigm shift from rote learning to **constructivist and child-centered pedagogy**, emphasizing learning as an active, joyful, and meaningful process. It brought attention to inclusivity, holistic development, and continuous assessment through the introduction of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE). However, challenges in implementation, particularly in teacher training and resource availability, limited its effectiveness in many schools.

NCF 2023, formulated in alignment with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, deepens and broadens these ideas. It focuses on **competency-based learning, experiential pedagogy, multidisciplinary education, and integration of technology**. The new **5+3+3+4 curricular structure** aims to make learning age-appropriate, flexible, and developmentally aligned. It aspires to nurture 21st-century skills such as creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication while grounding education in Indian culture, values, and knowledge systems.

Despite its strengths, the study finds that **implementation remains the key challenge**. Many teachers lack adequate orientation and support to translate the NCF's principles into daily classroom practices. Rigid assessment systems, infrastructural limitations, and insufficient community involvement further constrain the full realization of the NCF vision. Nevertheless, schools that have embraced the NCF's holistic and competency-based approach show encouraging outcomes in student engagement, motivation, and conceptual understanding.

In conclusion, both frameworks reflect India's ongoing journey toward an education system that is **equitable, inclusive, and future-ready**. The success of NCF 2023 will depend on consistent teacher training, curriculum redesign, resource allocation, and collaborative efforts between policymakers, educators, and the community. Only through such collective commitment can the classroom truly become a space of curiosity, creativity, and lifelong learning.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for the effective implementation of the NCF in classrooms:

Continuous Teacher Training:

Regular workshops, seminars, and refresher courses should be organized to orient teachers on competency-

based education, experiential learning, and formative assessment techniques.

Curriculum Adaptation and Flexibility:

Schools should be encouraged to localize the curriculum to reflect the cultural, linguistic, and environmental contexts of learners, as envisioned by both NCFs.

Strengthening Assessment Practices:

Transition from rote-based testing to **formative, authentic, and competency-based assessments** must be prioritized. Teachers need practical tools and rubrics to assess holistic learning outcomes.

Integration of Technology:

Digital tools, online learning platforms, and multimedia resources should be effectively integrated into classroom practices to enhance engagement and accessibility.

Teacher Autonomy and Innovation:

Teachers should be empowered to experiment with innovative teaching methods, lesson planning, and evaluation strategies aligned with the NCF vision.

Infrastructure Development:

Adequate physical and digital infrastructure must be provided, especially in government and rural schools, to ensure equal opportunities for implementing modern pedagogical practices.

Monitoring and Support Mechanisms:

Regular monitoring, mentoring, and academic audits should be established to ensure that NCF principles are being effectively translated into classroom reality.

Parent and Community Involvement:

Awareness programs and community participation can help align home and school environments with the learner-centered goals of the NCF.

Focus on Early Childhood Education:

The foundational stage of the new structure (3–8 years) should receive special attention with trained teachers, play-based learning materials, and appropriate pedagogical support.

Research and Feedback:

Continuous research on classroom practices and teacher experiences should inform policy updates and future curriculum revisions.

The NCF 2005 laid the groundwork for pedagogical transformation, and NCF 2023 takes this vision forward into a new era of educational innovation. Together, they represent a shift from teaching to learning, from instruction to exploration, and from uniformity to diversity. The real test of these frameworks lies not in their formulation but in their faithful and creative implementation by teachers—the true change-makers in education..

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