

The Compulsory Career Guidance Bill, 2017 (Bill No. 261 Of 2017)

Executive Summary

The Compulsory Career Guidance Bill, 2017 aims to institutionalize mandatory career counselling for students at the school level to ensure informed educational and vocational decisions. It mandates the involvement of qualified professionals, government support, and periodic evaluation to equip students—particularly those from marginalized communities—with the tools to chart meaningful career paths. A significant number of Indian students complete schooling without adequate guidance, leading to unsuitable career choices, high dropout rates, and youth unemployment. This issue is intensified among underprivileged communities.

Key Provisions

- ❖ Mandatory career counselling before secondary and higher secondary board exams.
- ❖ Government responsibility to provide trained counsellors and comprehensive information on academic and vocational streams.
- ❖ Scholarships for economically weaker sections and support for weak students.
- ❖ Establishment of a National Review Committee and annual reporting by the National Career Service.

I support the bill. The Bill addresses a key gap in the education-to-employment pipeline. With proper operational planning and resource allocation, it can positively transform educational outcomes and employability.

Background and Context

Current situation:

- No mandatory nationwide framework for school-level career counselling.
- The National Career Service (NCS) provides job and skill data but lacks integration with the school curriculum.
- Students often make career decisions based on social/family pressure rather than aptitude or market demand.
- Rising unemployment, technological advancements, evolving job roles and misalignment between education and job markets make this intervention crucial.

Legislative History:

- No comprehensive central legislation has previously mandated compulsory career guidance at the school level.
- Existing policies (e.g., NEP 2020) advocate for skill-based and multidisciplinary education but without legal mandates.

Stakeholders

- ✓ Students and parents: Key beneficiaries of structured guidance.
- ✓ Schools and educational institutions: Will need capacity-building and coordination with NCS.
- ✓ Counsellors and teachers: Critical implementers; require training and incentives.
- ✓ Central and State Governments: Funders and regulators.
- ✓ Marginalized groups (SC/ST/OBC/BPL): Targeted for scholarship and focused support.

Key Sections

- Section 3 mandates career counselling responsibility on the appropriate government.
- Section 4 outlines government obligations e.g., timing (six months before exams), use of qualified professionals, awareness on streams, jobs, vocational training, and scholarships.
- Section 5 requires the National Career Service to submit annual reports to Parliament.
- Section 6 constitutes the National Review Committee for performance evaluation.
- Section 7 mandates Central Government to fund State implementation.

Key Definitions

- 📌 Career counselling: Guidance sessions before Board exams.
- 📌 Stream: Chosen academic discipline post-secondary education.
- 📌 Vocational training & technical education: Skill-based alternatives to traditional academia.

Impact Analysis

- ❖ Economic: Positive: Reduces unemployment by aligning student choices with market demands. Investment: Initial setup costs, but long-term return via better job readiness and reduced dropouts.



- ❖ **Social: Equity:** Encourages inclusion through scholarships and support for economically weaker students. **Empowerment:** Increases self-awareness and confidence among youth, particularly in rural and underserved areas.
- ❖ **Operational:** Implementation Needs: Nationwide network of trained counsellors, digitized tools, coordination between schools and NCS. **Monitoring:** Strong reporting and review mechanisms built into the Bill.

Arguments For and Against

For:

1. **Informed Decision-Making:** Prevents students from choosing unsuitable streams under pressure or ignorance.
2. **Reduces Dropouts:** Helps students see a future in vocational or alternative careers.
3. **Bridges Skill Gap:** Aligns education with employability.

Against:

1. **Administrative Load:** Requires significant coordination between states, NCS, and schools.
2. **Resource Shortage:** Trained counsellors may not be available, especially in rural areas.
3. **One size fits all Risk:** Uniform implementation may not address regional or cultural differences.

Fiscal Implications

- ❖ **Estimated costs of implementation and enforcement:** Estimated Recurring Cost: ₹7 crore annually from the Consolidated Fund of India. Non-Recurring Cost: ₹11 crore initially for infrastructure, training, and setup.
- ❖ **Potential revenue changes:** Minimal direct revenue change; indirect long-term benefits through productivity and reduced unemployment. **Budgetary impacts on government agencies or other entities:** Scholarships: Additional but unquantified expenditure for supporting disadvantaged groups.

Conclusion

The Bill is a forward-thinking step toward enhancing the relevance of education and addressing youth unemployment. By making career guidance compulsory, it institutionalizes student support and introduces a much-needed link between schooling and future livelihood, empowers youth with informed career choices, reduces misalignment between education and employment and reinforces the objectives of NEP 2020 and India's skilling mission.

Recommendations

1. Develop a phased implementation plan beginning with urban and semi-urban schools.
2. Establish a national training program for counsellors under NCS.
3. Integrate with digital platforms for remote and low-cost counselling.
4. Include monitoring indicators in the annual report to track student outcomes.
5. Involve alumni of the schools and colleges to share practical industry-based experiences to students.

Appendix

Dhruvanarayana, R. (2017). *The Compulsory Career Guidance Bill, 2017 (Bill No. 261 of 2017)*. Lok Sabha. <https://loksabha.nic.in>

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