

# Nurturing Inclusive Classrooms

## Background Note

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### Introduction

The National Policy on Education 2020 has come up with a vision to provide to all students, irrespective of their place of residence, a quality education system, with particular focus on historically marginalized, disadvantaged, and underrepresented groups. It commensurate with the Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030 global Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by India in 2015 - seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030. The Policy proposes that education is a great leveller and is the best tool for achieving economic and social mobility, inclusion, and equality. It affirms that initiatives must be in place to ensure that all students from such groups, despite inherent obstacles, are provided various targeted opportunities to enter and excel in the educational system.

### Nurturing Inclusive Classrooms

Many factors are required for nurturing inclusion effectively in the classrooms like developing sense of community in the classroom, leadership among students and teachers, bringing quality in discussions and learning at high standard, collaboration and cooperation among teaching force, changing roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, array of accessible support services, partnership with parents and school management committees, bring flexibility in learning environments as per the learning needs of children, application of effective strategies in teaching-learning and evaluation, sense of responsibilities and accountability and continuous updating of professional skills and knowledge. Equitable learning opportunities can thus be provided to all the students in the classrooms. But it is not an easy task for a teacher. Teachers have to identify and consider student learning styles and preferences, involve students in lessons, adapt expectations of students’ learning, allow different levels of participation of different students, provide number of choices of formats for students to respond or demonstrate their understanding and finally assessing students on the basis of their individual differences.

## **Recommendations in NEP 2020**

The policy has a number of sections and in each section equity and inclusion is an underlying theme. For better learning by all, the following recommendations indicate the measures to be taken for nurturing of inclusive classrooms:

- Special attention is required to be given to reduce the disparities in the educational development of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other disadvantaged groups. As a part of the efforts to enhance participation in school education, special hostels in dedicated regions, bridge courses, and financial assistance through fee waivers and scholarships should be offered.
- For additional concerted efforts on education of children belonging to SEDGs, regions of the country with large populations of SEDGs will be declared Special Education Zones (SEZs). Particularly in disadvantaged areas, pre-school sections covering at least one year of early childhood care and education will be added to schools around the nation.
- ‘Gender-Inclusion Fund’ and ‘Inclusion Fund’ will be developed to provide equitable quality education for all girls, transgender students and other SEDGs.
- The school curriculum should have material on human values such as respect for all persons, empathy, tolerance, human rights, gender equality, non-violence, global citizenship, inclusion, and equity. It would also include more detailed knowledge of various cultures, religions, languages, gender identities, etc. to sensitize and develop respect for diversity.
- One-on-one teachers and tutors, peer tutoring, open schooling, appropriate infrastructure, and suitable technological interventions to ensure access can be particularly effective for certain children with disabilities. Schools/school complexes will be provided resources for education of children with disabilities, recruitment of special educators with cross-disability training, and for the establishment of resource centres
- Strengthening Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, establishing additional Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Kendriya Vidyalayas in SEZs are recommended to increase the participation in quality schools.
- Barrier free access, assistive devices and appropriate technology-based tools, language-appropriate teaching learning materials will be made available for all needy children.

- Knowledge of how to address the diverse learning needs of children and how to teach all children together will be an integral part of all teacher education programmes. All stakeholders of school education will be sensitized to the requirements of all students, the notions of inclusion and equity, and the respect, dignity, and privacy of all persons.

## **Way Forward**

- There is a need to sensitize and educate all the stakeholders at all levels about educational and learning needs of children belonging to SEDGs from the perspective of their human rights and social justice. The teachers, teacher educators, parents, administrators, policy makers, therapists, health care providers, students and all others involved in education of children belonging to SEDGs, need to be educated.
- The infrastructure of the school including all facilities like classroom, laboratory, water and sanitation area, dining hall, library, playground, staffroom, school-office, approaching road to school etc.; as well as curriculum, pedagogy, teaching learning materials and assessment, communication & interaction, sports equipment, devices and other recreational materials; and all school classroom and school activities, websites, online programmes, transport etc. must be made accessible to all learners and other stakeholders.
- Necessary efforts must be made to make the curriculum flexible enough to accommodate the diverse learning needs of school children including children belonging to SEDGs. Universally designed curriculum approach must be adopted.
- Learners should have multiple options of choosing subjects, including local trade-based, vocation-based, scientific, technologically advanced and culture oriented subjects, of their interest and competencies from middle stage onwards.
- Approaches like differential curriculum and teaching, adapting activities, universally designed teaching learning materials and resources, individualized approach, multi-sensorial mode, multiple means of communication, accepting and applying the accessible format of presentation and response feedback, harnessing technology etc. are some of the ways to provide equal opportunities of learning and participation to all learners.
- Teaching in classrooms and interaction in schools must be in the language of children. This will allow all SEDGs and other children to participate actively in learning

activities of the classrooms and act as a catalyst in their achievement and overall development. Learners must be allowed to respond in their own choice of means and mode of representation.

- Establishment of resource centres within school complexes and resource room in every school, not restricted to children with disabilities, but for all learners including talented SEDGs children, require array of resources of different nature like human resources-special education and therapeutic services, social workers, counsellors, volunteers, health care providers, part-time teachers, local trade experts/artisans etc., accessible equipment, teaching aids, devices, language enrich materials, trade-based and techno-based equipment etc., for classroom intervention and support services to students, teachers and parents.
- Collaborative models of teaching and resource support with close connections between special educator, regular teacher, parents and therapeutic personnel and other professionals like social workers, counsellors are required to be developed and implemented in schools.

## **Conclusion**

NEP 2020 emphasizes upon inculcating inclusive educational structure and inclusive educational culture in our school education system through infrastructural support and by making corresponding changes in curriculum, incorporating materials on human values such as respect for all persons, empathy, tolerance, human rights, gender equality, non-violence, global citizenship, inclusion, and equity. Schools, today, need to have welcoming school environment. It needs to be a creative and responsive place, where collaboration among teachers, students, counsellor, therapists and all other stakeholders can be automatically generated. Classrooms should be the place of shared learning using cooperative and innovative practices to serve all students in an effective manner to provide opportunity to every student to grow and live as a contributing citizen of the country.