

Golden Research Thoughts



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ABSTRACT:-

Providing Quality Education for All children in inclusive setting has been identified as the most challenging, yet the most important issue in education across the world. Inclusive Education means that all students in school irrespective of their abilities in any area, become part of the school community. NCF 2005 emphasizes the need of inclusive curriculum keeping in view the diversity of learners. An inclusive curriculum aims to provide quality education that will enable all children to learn effectively and participate equally in class. It also provides to children the dignity and confidence to learn. As per the NCF 2005, assessment of

functional ability of learners calls for broad-based curriculum to accommodate diversity of teaching approaches and use of TLMs in a given class room.

Keywords:

Inclusive Education & National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 .

PROVISIONS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK (NCF) 2005



INTRODUCTION

Inclusion in Education is an approach once thought only necessary for educating students with special educational needs. Inclusive education differs from previously held notions of integration and main streaming, which tended to be concerned principally with disability and 'special educational needs' and implied learners changing or becoming 'ready for' or deserving of accommodation by the mainstream. By contrast, inclusion is about the child's right to participate and the school's duty to accept the child. Inclusion rejects the use of special schools or classrooms to separate students with disabilities from students without disabilities. A premium is placed upon full participation by students with disabilities and upon respect for their social, civil, and educational rights. Inclusion gives students with disabilities skills they can use in and out of the classroom. Inclusion has two sub types the first is sometimes called regular inclusion or partial inclusion, and the other is full inclusion.

Inclusive education refers to all learners, young people - with or without disabilities being able to learn together in ordinary pre-school provisions, schools and community educational settings with appropriate network of support services. This means that schools have an obligation to try to include children with disabilities in regular classes unless the nature and severity of disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Implementation of such an inclusive curriculum would require a number of changes in present day teaching practices, curriculum content, evaluation procedures and available resources at the school level without which the goal of providing quality education would remain elusive. The National Curriculum Framework, 2005, reaffirms our commitment to the concept of equality, within the landscape of cultural and socio-economic diversity from which children enter into the portals of the school.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK (2005)

India is a free nation with a rich variegated history, an extraordinarily complex cultural diversity and a commitment to democratic values and well-being for all. Ever since 1986 when the National Policy on Education was approved by Parliament, efforts to redesign the curriculum have been focused on the creation of a national system of education. The basic concerns of education—to enable children to make sense of life and develop their potential, to define and pursue a purpose and recognise the right of others to do the same—stand uncontested and valid even today.

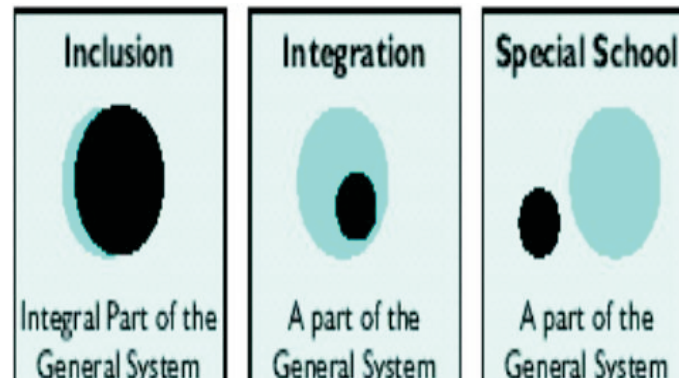
The term National Curriculum Framework is often wrongly construed to mean that an instrument of uniformity is being proposed. The intention as articulated in the NPE, 1986 and the Programme of Action (POA) 1992 was quite the contrary. NPE proposed a national framework for curriculum as a means of evolving a national system of education capable of responding to India's diversity of geographical and cultural milieus while ensuring a common core of values along with academic components.

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005), raises the question of curriculum load on children and emphasizes understanding instead of memorization, following which the children can create their own versions of knowledge. It is not an instrument of uniformity, but an instrument that responds to the diversity of the country in terms of its geography and culture and still ensures a common core of values along with academic components. It suggests systemic reforms like common school system, work and education, children learning in the language of their homes and environment and many more that will help in all children being able to learn and grow in a joyful environment of the school.

ENCOURAGING INCLUSION

The NCF, 2005 underscores the significance of including and retaining all children in school through a programme that reaffirms the value of each child and enables all children to experience dignity and confidence to learn. It states that:

Curriculum design must reflect the commitment to Universal Elementary Education (UEE) not only in representing cultural diversity, but also by ensuring that children from different social and economic backgrounds with variations in physical, psychological and intellectual characteristics are able to learn and achieve success in school. In this context, disadvantages arising from inequalities of gender, caste, language, culture, religion or disabilities need to be addressed directly, not only through policies and schemes but also through the design and selection of learning tasks and pedagogic practices, right from the period of early childhood. Creating an inclusive environment for all students is highly essential, as is highlighted in the "National Focus Group paper on Education for Children with Special Needs."



Inclusion – Integral Part of General System
Figure-1

Inclusive Education denotes that all children irrespective of their strengths and weaknesses will be part of the mainstream education. The feeling of belongingness among all community members – teachers, students and other functionaries is developed through inclusive education. Inclusive education is for all, irrespective of any social community, caste, class gender and disability of the child.

According to the NCF, An inclusive school environment by implication entails doing away with perceptions which are grounded in the notion that inferiority and inequality are inherent in gender, caste and physical and/or mental disabilities.

LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE

NCF (2005) current concern in curriculum development and reform is to make it an inclusive and meaningful experience for children, along with the effort to move away from a textbook culture. This requires a fundamental change in how we think of learners and the process of learning. Hence the need to engage in detail with the underpinnings and implications of child centred education.

‘Child-centred’ pedagogy means giving primacy to children’s experiences, their voices, and their active participation. This kind of pedagogy requires us to plan learning in keeping with children’s psychological development and interests. The learning plans therefore must respond to physical, cultural and social preferences within the wide diversity of characteristics and needs. School pedagogic practices, learning tasks, and the texts we create for learners tend to focus on the socialisation of children and on the ‘receptive’ features of children’s learning.

The NCF recognizes the child as a natural and active learner who learns in a variety of ways and in an atmosphere where they feel safe, secure, valued, respected and are not unduly stressed by the fear of examinations. The association of learning with fear, stress, corporal punishment and total regimentation rather than enjoyment, interest and satisfaction is detrimental to learning. To promote learning as visualised in the NCF 2005, some guiding principles have been stated. These are:

To create an inclusive environment in the classroom for all students, especially those who are at risk of marginalisation, for instance, students with disabilities. Labelling an individual student or a group of students as learning disabled etc. creates a sense of helplessness, inferiority and stigmatisation. It tends to overshadow difficulties that children may be facing in schools due to diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and inappropriate pedagogical approaches being used in the classroom.

A student with a disability has an equal right to membership of the same group as all other students. Differences between students must be viewed as resources for supporting learning rather than as a problem. Inclusion in education is one of the components of inclusion in society. Schools, therefore, have a responsibility of providing a flexible curriculum that is accessible to all students. This document can form a starting point for planning a curriculum that meets the specific needs of individual students or groups of students.

The curriculum must provide appropriate challenges and create enabling opportunities for students to experience success in learning and achievement to the best of their potential. Teaching and learning processes in the classroom should be planned to respond to the diverse needs of students.

TEACHERS RESPONSIBILITIES

Teachers can explore positive strategies for providing education to all children, including those perceived as having disabilities. This can be achieved in collaboration with fellow teachers or with organisations outside the school.

The teachers need to plan activities that could enable them to give individualized attention to children, and to make alterations in a task depending on their requirements and variations in the level of interest. In fact, teachers could also consider involving children and older learners in planning the class work; such variety would bring tremendous richness to the classroom processes. It would also allow teachers to respond to the special needs of some children without making it seem as if it is an obvious

exception. There is still not enough engagement on the part of the teacher with the learning of each child; children are treated en masse, and only those who are regarded as 'stars' or 'problematic' are noticed. All children would benefit from such attention.

The NCF suggests teachers to develop lesson plans for an inclusive classroom, indicating the alterations in the ongoing activities to meet the needs of children and build on their strengths. In fact, planning for an inclusive classroom would require support of appropriate material resources for individualized, small group and whole group work. A lesson plan or unit plan for an inclusive class should indicate how the teacher alters the ongoing activity to meet the different needs of children.

There is a need to revise Teacher education programs in the light of States' Curriculum or NCF 2005, especially from the perspective of Special Needs Students.

- Build on students' diversity as an educational resource by positively using different characteristics, backgrounds, knowledge, prior experiences, and skills of all children, including children with special needs.
 - The teaching in the class room must facilitate equal and diverse participation of all students in the learning activities to avoid advantaging or disadvantaging a particular student or a group of students
 - Teaching in the classroom must facilitate collaborative learning by using appropriate techniques like- peer tutoring, group learning, etc
 - Incorporate teacher facilitated and structured learning environment with appropriately designed routines in context of children requiring individual support
 - As and when necessary specially designed furniture and fixtures may be provided for minimizing physical and mobility barriers and appropriate seating/ positioning arrangements
 - Sensitivity may be exercised in designing/ equipping class rooms for children with sensory challenges in order to minimize disruptions in learning
 - Teachers need to be familiarised with the existing Exemptions/concessions in the state for children with special needs
 - Medium of instruction should support child's everyday/ functional language
 - Sign/total communication must be used in class as an additional medium of instruction
 - The learning process (Knowledge Construction) of children with special needs may require intense interventions (one to one) through well-chosen task and materials (TLMs)
 - Support of Resource Teachers/ Caregivers/ parents/ volunteers may be sought for identifying and understanding learning needs, communication needs, use of assistive devices and therapeutic management. Resource room to be used in this regard
 - Teachers need to be more flexible and creative in building knowledge in all children, including children with special needs and not ridicule anyone for lack of prior experiences
- CURRICULAR AREAS

The NCF revisits the different curricular areas in depth from the perspective of all children. For example, while talking about Language area, emphasizes the use of sign language and scripts like Braille as a basis for making meaning and expression and communication. It states: Children with language-related impairments should be introduced to standard sign languages, which can support their continued growth and development to the fullest. A recognition of the linguistic abilities of learners would encourage them to believe in themselves and their cultural moorings.

It goes further to state: While many of the differently able learners may pick up basic language skills through normal social interactions, they could additionally be provided with especially designed materials that would assist and enhance their growth and development. Studying sign language and Braille could be included as options for learners without disabilities. The NCF also endorses that access to quality mathematics education is the right of every child and suggests that teachers should engage every child in class with the conviction that everyone can learn mathematics.

TEXT BOOKS, EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Curriculum has to be transacted through text books. Hence, while developing text books, it would be important to make them inclusive. The text books would have to be developed in a way so that a particular concept can be understood by a diverse group of learners in a classroom. The following should be borne in mind while developing text books for inclusive classrooms:

- Providing every student with a textbook is not enough if the print medium is inaccessible to students with various disabilities due to physical, sensory, or cognitive barriers. For example, providing textbooks in print format is a barrier for students who are dyslexic and are totally inaccessible to blind students. Technology now enables textbooks to be accessible through conversion to accessible electronic formats. These formats provide great flexibility for meeting the needs of all students with disabilities since the digital format can be read out loud by a computer or screen reader or printed on a Braille printer.
- Developing teaching learning materials like pictorial form of all the text books for the students with hearing disabilities, which is ultimately helping 'ALL' students.
- Electronic textbooks can also be developed that have animation and sound and provide links to several items and suggest associations among ideas. This allows the students to interact with the material, which is especially helpful for children with special needs.
- Text books should allow children to hear text spoken out loud. Text books should also be displayed in

custom color combinations, in different fonts, in larger sizes, or in any of these combinations.

ASSESSMENT

Each school should evolve a flexible and implementable scheme of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), primarily for diagnosis, remediation and enhancing of learning. The scheme should take, into account the social environment and the facilities available in the school. The CCE scheme should be simple, flexible, and implementable in any type of school from the elite one to a school located in rural or tribal areas. Keeping in view the broad principles of the scheme, each school should evolve a simple suitable scheme involving its teachers, and owned by the teachers.

Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE): (i) Reduce stress on children, (ii) make evaluation comprehensive and regular, (iii) provide space for the teacher for creative teaching, (iv) provide a tool for diagnosis and for producing learners with greater skills.

A lot of psychological data now suggest that different learners learn (and test) differently. Hence there should be more varied modes of assessment beyond the examination hall paper-pencil test. Oral testing and group work evaluation should be encouraged.

PARTICIPATION OF ALL STUDENTS

Participation by itself has little meaning. It is the ideological framework surrounding participation that defines it and gives it a political construct, a policy of inclusion needs to be implemented in all schools and throughout our education system. The participation of all children needs to be ensured in all spheres of their life in and outside the school. Schools need to become centres that prepare children for life and ensure that all children, especially the differently abled, children from marginalised sections, and children in difficult circumstances get the maximum benefit of this critical area of education. Opportunities to display talents and share these with peers are powerful tools in nurturing motivation and involvement among children.

The NCF emphasizes participation of all students in the classroom and suggests that teachers need to pay special attention to this aspect. Enabling learning through participation in the life of a community and the nation at large is crucial to the success of schooling. Schools need to become centres that prepare children for life and ensure that all children, especially the differently able children from marginalized sections and children in difficult circumstances get the maximum benefit of this critical area of education.

SPACE FOR PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

The school is a structured space for guided learning, but the process of constructing knowledge is a continuous one, which goes on even outside the school. If learning is continuous, and takes place in arenas other than the school, such as home, the workplace, the community, etc., then school assignments or homework should be planned differently. It need not depend on parents reinforcing what the school has already done. It could set different kinds of activities for children to do, on their own or with their parents.

This could also provide opportunities for parents to understand a little more about what their child is learning in the school and give children the initial impetus to explore and recognise the world outside the school as an arena for learning. Schools could also invite the community into their premises, and give the larger world outside a role in influencing the curricular process. Parents and community members could come into the school as resource persons to share their knowledge and experiences in relation to a particular topic being studied. The relationship between the school, parents and the local community, institutionalized structures such as parent-teacher associations, local-level committees, and also alumni associations in some schools can be used.

CONCLUSION:

The NCF, 2005 is a curriculum that promotes inclusion in various aspects of educational practices. It ensures that when children of different backgrounds study together, it improves the overall quality of learning and enriches the school ethos.

Curriculum adaptation is not a separate method for children with disabilities. It is a process of making necessary changes in learning content such as modification, substitution/ replacement, omission as a last resort and compensation etc. without changing the learning purpose. Keeping the children with disabilities in mind while adapting the curriculum, small changes in learning content, learning friendly environment, appropriate learning approach, adaptation in learning aid and evaluation should be done. If the curriculum is planned in this way and applied like this for all children in the classrooms, then learning can be maximized for all children, including children with disabilities.

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