

Guidelines for Addressing Special Needs concerns while developing State Curriculum

The unique characteristics, interest and attitudes of children and diversity in learning styles demand differential teaching methods to be used by a teacher in the classroom to facilitate learning. In order to meet the diversity, there is a need to develop an inclusive curriculum. NCF 2005 also 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. The guiding principle of school curriculum should be based on the theme of RTE Act 2009 to include and retain all children in school.

The curriculum being developed by the States must be inclusive as envisioned in NCF 2005. States should also assure that the same curriculum be followed for children with and without special needs.

The RTE 2009 has mandated entry of diverse learners in the existing classrooms. For example, learners with & without special needs have a right to inclusive learning environment. This calls for appropriate modification in conventional curriculum models.

Within the context of facilitating entry and retention of learners with & without special needs, flexible approaches become necessary. This refers to introducing creative strategies to introduce inclusive learning environments along with systemic changes in teacher preparation. Diversity among learners demands appropriate mechanisms that facilitate optimal learning through curriculum adaptations that includes need based teaching strategies, inclusive TLMs and flexibility in evaluation methodology. Curricular adaptations aim to facilitate learning in every possible manner to maximise learning or to provide opportunities in such a way, where all children can learn including children with disabilities.

When every child in the classroom including children with special needs are provided with an opportunity to learn maximum according to their learning potential, to make required adaptation in regular curriculum (learning content, learning approach, learning aids and evaluation), to apply all possible approaches, it is known as Curriculum adaptation.

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.

While planning curriculum, attention must be given to the needs of any child with disability. Here learning purpose may be the same for all students, but the learning experiences may vary from child to child. The following guidelines must be kept in mind while developing an inclusive curriculum for all children.

The curriculum must:

- Include child centered pedagogy keeping in mind the child's psychological development, interests and specific learning needs
- Ensure equal access in every possible manner (physical, attitudinal, academic and social) to maximize learning
- Facilitate learning in an inclusive learning environment with accessible material, positive attitude and relevant/adaptive teaching strategies
- Incorporate required adaptation in curriculum (learning content, learning approach, learning aids and evaluation) to address and accommodate individualised learning styles,
- Prescribe for use of all available educational / assistive technologies to ensure equal participation of and effective learning in all children specifically for children with special needs
- Include all children with and without special needs by providing differential opportunities to demonstrate learnt skills according to their learning abilities,
- Include components of life skills through transitional stages working towards independent living
- Include locally available conditions/ opportunities/ situations to develop pre-vocational and vocational competencies
- Integrate work pedagogy in education and include broad-based work experiences taking care of the needs of children with special needs
- Ensure participation of children with special needs in play, games, social and cultural activities to improve the physical and mental health by developing appropriate adaptations
- Provide flexibility in school and class time tables to address individual needs of children
- Create opportunities for facilitated social interaction
- Construct knowledge by connecting new ideas to existing ideas on the basis of materials/ activities.

The above guidelines have been developed to be used by the States while developing their curriculums based on the NCF 2005.

Guidelines for Text Books and Effective Teaching & 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.
- Developing and providing access to e-text versions of the print material.
- 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.

Teacher Education stands out as a key factor in bringing out change towards inclusive schools. With more and more children from the disadvantaged groups being a part of the mainstream education system, the classroom teacher has to assume greater responsibility in the implementation of inclusive practices. Hence, in this context, the teacher education programmes need to be revised and should reflect the relevant teacher learning strategies. All in service teachers, therefore, need to be trained accordingly.

Considering the need for support regarding differential classroom teaching must address variant learner needs in context of Special needs. Teacher education modality needs to be modified for including students with special needs in educational process. 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
- While planning school and class room experiences the teachers must take into account specific learning needs of children

The purpose of assessment is necessarily to improve the teaching-learning process and materials, and to be able to review the objectives that have been identified. Hence it needs to be continuous, simple, realistic and set those standards and goals that can be achieved in terms of diversity of children.

The assessment should:

- Use different test items/ questions should be graded in accordance to learner base-line and difficulty level in terms of providing successful experiences to all children so that they gain confidence in their ability to answer and solve problems
- Be comprehensive including multiple sources like- routine activities, observations, documenting daily dairies, reviewing work samples and compiling test (verbal, non-verbal, performance and written) scores and report cards
- Be effective by means of alternative modes (like computers, communication boards, scribe, sign language etc) and organizers (like calculators, dictionaries etc)
- Allow flexible timings and settings for effective assessment

Purpose of the above guidelines is to be used in conducting teacher education programmes under the State curriculum based on NCF 2005.

All IE functionaries at the State/ district/ block level to attend all the training programmes conducted by the state on RTE, School development plan, CCE, vision of school etc.

Structure for Teacher Training to Address the Needs of CWSN under SSA

Under SSA, Annual Training of in-service teachers is undertaken to provide quality education. This training is undertaken for 20- days, spread out in a phased manner. With a large number of CWSN enrolled now in schools, it is imperative that the regular teachers are adequately equipped with knowledge and skills to facilitate learning of all children in an inclusive classroom. The following is the framework on which the teacher training should be based:

Unit- 1: Introduction to IE (lecture, field visits to inclusive schools, resource rooms, videos)

Concept and rationale of IE

Glossary of important terms (special education, integrated education, inclusive education, etc)

Social model of inclusion- addressing issues related to labeling, discrimination, zero rejection, stereotyping, etc)

Sp. Needs in context of RTE

Unit- 2: Understanding Learning Approaches (lecture, illustrations, observations, case studies, using checklist on learning styles)

Process of learning- Knowledge construction

Learning styles

Behavioural Management

Multiple intelligence theory

Unit- 3: Classroom for All (Case study, demonstration of assessment by trainer, discussion, group reports, practice lessons, hands- on, concrete experiences, model lesson plans)

Identifying learning needs of children with SEN

Functional assessment in terms of identifying the strengths and weakness

Developing a teaching plan for an inclusive classroom

Barrier - free classroom arrangement (use of space, seating, mode of access to information in class using various techniques- large print, Braille, signs, tactile maps, etc)

Teaching techniques (multi- sensory, co-operative learning, peer teaching, co- teaching with a RT)

Inclusive TLM (tactile, 3-D, multi- sensory approach, models, visual and auditory aids, tactile aids, etc)

Adaptations in terms of size, length, content, time, presentation of activities, number of learning objectives expected to learn, given time to complete a task or activity, TLM)

Modifying Comprehensive and Continuous Evaluation (CCE) for children with SEN (shorter examinations, shift from content based testing to problem solving skills, changing typology of questions, modifications in extra curricular activities, physical education, and any other modes of assessment taken up by the State)

Unit- 4: (collaboration, partnership teaching)

Utilizing resources available in the community

Resource rooms

Resource teacher

Parents/ volunteers/ care- givers/ therapists

Therapeutic assistance

Convergence areas between resource teacher and a general teacher (IEP, Time-table, structuring group activities, assistance in teaching in an inclusive classroom).

Possible modalities

The State can either integrate the above components in the 20-day training programme in appropriate sessions or give separate sessions on each of the above topics. Related material for the above training will be provided to the states by the national level. The states can then develop training modules at the State level with the help of resource teachers, general teachers, experts. Modules would be reviewed at the national level. After review, the State will improvise the teacher training modules. Teacher trainings would then be conducted and pre and post training feedback would be taken from the trainees.

Duration

5-10 days

Trainers

The State Missions are advised to select a Team of resource persons from the following to be Trainers:

- Members of SRGs and DRGs
- BRCC/CRCC
- SCERT and DIET Faculty
- Experts in CBR, HBE/School Readiness and IE
- Faculty from National / Regional Institutes, DDRC/CRC and University
- Therapists, Rehab and Medical experts
- Experts from NGOs/ Special schools/ Persons with Disability and Parents
- Faculty from Teacher Training Centres for Spl. Education (in SRG/DRG)
- Resource Teachers
- Teachers with disability

The List of must haves in an inclusive classroom

- Computers with appropriate software (JAWS, DAISY, educational CDs)
- Abacus
- Taylor frame
- Embossed TLMs
- Tactile maps
- Visual and auditory aids/ toys/ puzzles/ talking books
- Magnifying glass
- Charts and posters
- Adaptive furniture
- Braille books

- How do I learn best
- MI theory
- Behavioural management
- ADHD presentation
- UDL presentation