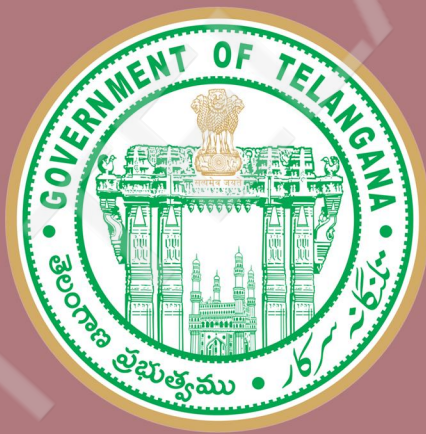# State Curriculum Framework-2011

Position Paper
on
Diversities

School Education Department
Telangana, Hyderabad.
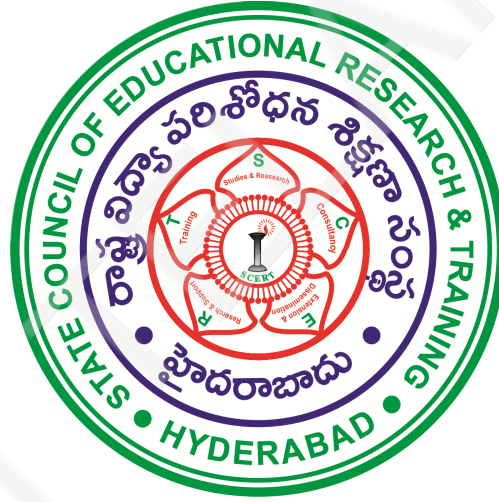
State Council of Educational Research & Training,
Telangana, Hyderabad.

State Curriculum Framework-2011

Position Paper

on

Diversities

Vision of the State

The vision of the State is that ALL children should receive high quality education and become responsible citizens with an acute sense of the other. They should be aware of their environment and think about it critically. They should listen carefully and speak fearlessly. They should be able to understand what they hear and read; but they should also be able to question it. Teachers should promote these skills, provide meaningful teaching learning processes in natural and friendly environment that enable children to express themselves freely and ask questions. Teachers are collaborative learners and reflective practitioners. Parents and community should have a sense of ownership and participate in the life of the school. In a world which is becoming increasingly instrumental, materialistic and competitive, school should become a space for reflection, cooperation and promotion of human and ethical values.

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Executive Summary

Diversity gets manifested in society in a variety of ways. We have unfortunately created a world around us that is built in the name of normative sameness. It is built in the image of an 'ideal person' who actually does not exist. The underprivileged and deprived sections of society including such groups as SCs, STs, OBCs, girls, minorities and children with disability and special needs. We are collectively responsible for them and we need to create a world where all of them can live with a sense of respect and dignity.

Even though the enrolment rates of these groups have shown dramatic growth, we have not been able to retain them in the education system with the result that their social deprivation has not changed at all. We need to create a system which ensures free quality education to all. The condition of girls and children with disability is perhaps the worst hit at the moment.

All schools must become barrier free in the widest sense of the term and they must ensure free and compulsory quality education to ALL children in an inclusive way. The security of girls, minorities and children with disability at home, on the street, in the buses and schools must be ensured. There is an urgent need for higher levels of positive discrimination and higher levels of financial investments into education. There is need for flexibility in school structures and cultures. School timings, calendars and holidays must keep in mind local contexts. Curricular goals must emphasize critical thinking and critical evaluation and appreciation of Indian society and culture. Equal opportunity for intellectual growth, cognitive, social and emotional development of underprivileged children including minorities, girls, SC, ST and others must be sought. Curriculum must aim at promotion of creative talents, productive skills, dignity of labour, underlined by values of equality, democracy, secularism, social and gender justice. An approach rooted in critical theory and critical multiculturalism is essential to critique the unjust social order, to indigenize and incorporate diverse cultures and prevent loss of valuable cultural heritage. We must make a commitment to the preservation of all languages as a matter of communities' cultural rights as well as of national pride.

There is also a need to appreciate that diversity can be used as a resource and it will help not only in cognitive growth but will also create a climate in which children from marginalized groups will be able to study with a sense of dignity. This perhaps is also the only way to make a start towards changing the attitudes of teachers and the community towards these minority groups.

1. Diversity and its Importance

1.1 What is Diversity?

This Position Paper addresses the issue of diversity in Andhra Pradesh including diversity as manifested in different minority groups such as SCs, STs and Muslims; it also deals with girl child education and the education of children with special needs. A common feature that binds all these diversities together with the rest of people is the multiplicity of languages and cultures represented in any classroom and school. Diversity gets manifested in race, caste, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, disability, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other aspects of society. It is the understanding and exploration of these differences in a positive and nurturing environment that would help us to make them all an integral part of social living. We examine the challenges that all these groups face and suggest what kind of steps society and the government can take towards making our society more just and free of discrimination.

1.2 Diversity and School

Schools may be an ideal place to make children aware of the importance of diversity and how to respect and appreciate it. Some of the reasons for this include:

- Understanding that there's a whole new and very different world out there will help them appreciate diversity;

- Studying about different cultures, their habits, dressings, eating habits and value systems will help them to take the good points from their systems and become better individuals;

- Encouraging cultural diversity in the classroom will help them appreciate their own culture as they will go back to their roots to find out more;

- If they ever travel to any other part, adjustment will be minimal because they are used to being with a diverse group of people;

- Feelings of superiority, prejudice and bias will hopefully be eliminated and therefore they will become world citizens at an early age.

1.3.1 Promoting Diversity in Schools

How do we promote respect for diversity among children and make them respect others cultures and other groups? With increasing globalization, whereas the world is looking the same everywhere, different kinds of diversities are knocking at our doors

on the other. It is now a common experience to see Chinese, Japanese, American, European, African and other people in the cities and towns of India. What kind of things must happen in the class and the school that children begin to appreciate and respect each other's heritage? We also notice more girls, more persons with disability and more children from underprivileged groups such as SC, ST and minorities amongst us. We need to focus on these differences NOT because of them but because of ourselves. A sympathetic understanding will enrich us. These advantages may include: Acceptance of differences, Freedom from bias, intellectual growth, more patriotism and a more responsible citizenship of the world as a community. Children would learn about different cultures, their habits and other things which are unique to that culture. This promotes education not only in the manner of books, but also in facing different cultural issues in the classroom and overcoming them. It thereby helps develop cultural sensitivity in them. Again, when students learn about different cultures, they not only learn about them, but it also helps them to compare it with their own culture and they learn to appreciate the good in their culture. Earlier perhaps there was no urgent need to go back to their roots, now they want to find out more. Thus the love for their land increases.

This position paper deals not only with diversities but also the problems that are faced by SCs, STs, Girls, Minorities, and children with special needs particularly in education so that the strategies to address diversity positively can be formulated.

2.   SC and ST Children
2.1   Introduction
In this chapter, we try to examine the current condition of the children belonging to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities with special reference to AP. As the NCERT Position Paper (3.1) on these issues says, these groups "have been historically excluded from formal education – the former due to their oppression under caste feudal society and the latter due to their spatial isolation and cultural difference and subsequent marginalization by dominant society. There are thus sharp differences between these two categories of population in terms of socio-economic location and the nature of disabilities. However, there is also growing common ground today in terms of conditions of economic exploitation and social discrimination that arise out of the impact of iniquitous development process. Concomitantly, the categories themselves are far from homogenous in terms of class,

region, religion and gender and what we face today is an intricately complex reality. Bearing this in mind this paper attempts to provide a contextualized understanding of the field situation of the education of SC/ST children and issues and problems that directly or indirectly have a bearing on their future educational prospects" (p. 1).

2.2   Education for SC and ST and other Marginalised Children

Education is the key to the development of any community. It can broaden the world view of people, equipping them to meet the present day challenges. This is particularly so when systems of unequal strength come in contact.

The educational effort for the SC and ST communities has to be significantly different than that for the general groups, particularly middle and lower middle class. In the case of advanced groups, the demand for education is already there. Establishment of an educational institution itself is sufficient to attract the children from the advanced communities because their parents are interested in their education. This is not the case with the poorer section of the community. The message has as yet not reached the more backward rural and tribal areas where the citizen is still not aware of the potential of education. A number of socio-economic factors are also coming in the way of members of SC and STs and others in sending their children to schools. Children are needed to help at home, in the field and at sites of work; girls are needed at home to look after the kitchen chores, collect wood and mind younger sibling. Therefore, the universal educational programmes at the elementary stage in the case of these communities have to be much more than mere opening up of educational institution. The students belonging to these communities may have to be provided with free textbooks, mid-day meals, and in the case of girls, even a pair of uniform. As the children grow, they become economic assets to the family. It may be necessary, therefore, that they are provided suitable scholarships and stipends in higher classes. It has to be ensured that if we cannot compensate the family, at least education should not be a burden on a poor family. In the case of tribal areas, it may be necessary that at middle school and high school levels adequate hostel facilities are also provided, as an institutional network itself will not be of much help. It is commonly observed that in some tribal areas much of the institutional capacity remains under-utilized.

According to the NCF Position Paper (3.1), special state institutions were set up for the advancement of SC/ST and various legislations, social policies and programmes

were drafted, which were geared to their economic and political development and achievement of equal social status. It has been difficult however, to identify these categories in terms of criteria laid down by the state. The 'problem' of the scheduled tribes has been a vexed one, given the various levels of social and cultural distance and varying degrees of voluntary or forced assimilation exploitation and /or displacement." (pp. 1-2)

Recent years have further witnessed the decline of the Welfare State under the powerful impact of neo- liberal economic policies. The economic dispensation which is regulated by the corporate world and a free economy has pushed the agenda of universalisation of education and social welfare many decades back. A dream of an equal society that was beginning to take shape is perhaps shattered forever. The state is withdrawing from social sectors of education, health and shelter delegating its social commitments to private agencies and corporations. The number of people on the margins it seems is going to multiply manifold.

With varying degrees of success, urban migration, education, occupational change and religious conversion have been pursued by the scheduled castes as key strategies of socio-economic emancipation, status change and acquisition of a new social identity. Yet, in recent years the degree of discrimination against and exploitation of dalits and STs and other groups on the margins has increased. They are offered menial jobs and often suffer the wrath of feudal power, particularly in the rural areas. The so-called modern model of development is being implemented not only at a huge cost to our environment but also results in destroying the life patterns, habitat and culture of the tribal populations. This displacement of large scale populations often results in a denial of any education to a variety of groups on the margins of society.

2.3   Provision made by State for SC &ST Education

State commitment to the education of SC/ST children is contained in Articles 15(4), 45 and 46 of the Indian Constitution. Article 15(4) concerns positive discrimination in favour of the socially and educationally backward classes and /or the SC and ST. Article 45 commits the state to providing free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years. Article 46 expresses the specific aim to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of SC/STs.

Special schemes pertaining to school education of SC/ST children currently include:

i)   Free supply of textbooks and stationery at all stages of school education;

ii)   Free uniforms to children in govt. approved hostels and Ashrams schools, and in some states also for children in regular schools;

iii) Free education at all levels;

iv)   Pre-matriculation stipends and scholarships to students at middle and /or high school stage;

v)   Special scheme of pre-matriculation scholarships for children of castes and families engaged in unclean occupations like scavenging, tanning and flaying of animal skin;

vi)   Girls and Boys hostels for SC/ST students and lodging facilities in hostels of backward classes including SC/ST;

vii) Ashram schools for tribal children started with the intention of overcoming the difficulties of provision in remote regions and also rather patronizingly to provide an environment "Educationally more conducive" than the tribal habitat. In addition, several states have instituted attendance scholarships for girls, special school attendance prizes, remedial coaching classes, recommended as an integral element in schooling by the working group on Development and Welfare of the Scheduled Castes;

viii) One of the reasons for poor access to schooling in tribal areas before the 1980s was the high norm on population, number of children and distance for opening new schools. Most of the states have relaxed these norms to enable setting up schools even in small tribal hamlets. This, along with other measures has improved access in tribal areas. For instance, Andhra Pradesh has relaxed norms to set up schools in habitations even with 20 school-age children.

With all these provisions, there is no doubt that the access of marginalized children to school in general and of SC, ST and girls in particular has improved. However, the focus needs to shift to quality of education of now while the efforts at making education more accessible continue.

2.4   The Scheduled Castes

Discrimination against SC children because of their caste status as reflected in school practices and teacher attitudes adversely affects the access and quality of schooling that children receive. These have to be seriously dealt with in individual schools, monitored at the community level and in also addressed at the level of teacher

education. The effort toward building inclusive schools (where teachers understand and are sensitive to issues of social disadvantage) must be an integral part of teacher education and not relegated to add on components in training programmes.

According to the NCERT's (2007) Position Paper (3.1), "Economic exploitation continues to sustain and reinforce the social position of the SCs. Large sections of the SCs experience social discrimination and stigma particularly those located in the tradition-bound and socio-economically 'backward' states/ regions." (p. 4)

Under the post 1990s impact of global processes, the poorest SCs have been the most adversely affected and become more poverty stricken. Studies have pointed out to growing incidence of poverty, rising levels of unemployment, mortality and sickness and wage squeeze as well as declining levels of consumption shares and real wages (Teltumbde, 1996, 2000, 2004; Thorat, 2001, 2002; Nancharaiah, 2002).

While access to schools at the primary stage is now almost universal, there are gaps at the upper primary stage. We need to provide adequate upper primary and higher secondary schools in all areas, including SC areas to promote the retention of older SC children especially SC girls. It is also important to ensure that the schools available in the neighborhood of SC habitations have minimum norms of infrastructure, other facilities and teachers. One of the most appropriate interventions for ensuring better participation of disadvantaged groups is to ensure that local schools are well provided for, especially with required number of teachers and function regularly.

Incentives such as free textbooks and Mid-Day Meals must continue. Stationery, uniforms and transport (for upper primary schools at a distance) would be additional important incentives that could be considered by the States/ UTs. The coverage of existing incentives like scholarships by State Govts., the monthly/ annual amount of those scholarship and the regularity of the payment need to be monitored.

2.5 The Scheduled Tribes

The education of the STs suffers from a variety of external, internal and socio-economic constraints. As already pointed out, tribal groups live in far flung isolated areas which are often inaccessible. Internally, their management if divided between the Tribal Welfare Department and the Ministry of Education. In terms of socio-economic conditions which they share with other marginalized groups, they live under conditions of utter poverty.

Physical access to schooling, especially at the upper primary stage is still an issue in some parts of the country in remote tribal areas. A targeted coverage of all eligible habitations for upper primary school facilities should be a priority in the first two years of the 12th Plan. In some remote, sparsely populated areas, it may be difficult to set up primary schools due to the small number of children. Two options need to be implemented for such areas. One, small schools (with one teacher) need to be set up in such habitations. Such schools should be recognized in the State/ UT's education policy or Code so that these institutions can be sustained after the close of the programme. Two, adequate residential schools need to be provided at locations that can provide access to a group of small habitations. In all such cases, adequate arrangements for transport need to be made.

Hostels are critical for children coming from educationally deprived communities to access middle levels of school education. These facilities need to be expanded. It is recommended that 1000 hostels may be set up during the 12th plan period in the identified ST areas. 500 of these may be funded under SSA and the rest through convergence with the programs of Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Some of the hostels could be provided utilizing the Backward Regions Grant Fund in 200 districts of the country, many of which would include tribal areas. Hostels need to be monitored for the quality of services offered and security provided especially for girls.

Seasonal migration is common in several tribal areas. Facilities like seasonal hostels should be provided in all such blocks with high incidence of migration to help retaining children in the village when the parents migrate.

In some very remote tribal pockets, for example in Andhra Pradesh, places like Utnoor (Adilabad), Venkatapuram, Kunavaram and Chintoor (Khammam), Eturnagaram and Mangapeta (Warangal), Paderu (Visakhapatnam), Sitampeta (Srikakulam), Gummalaxmipuram (Vizianagaram), Srisailam (Kurnool),

Rampachodavaram (East Godavari), teachers posted to schools are unable to get local accommodation on rent.

Teacher absenteeism is a major problem in remote, tribal areas. The shift to selection of local teachers at village, Panchayat and block level has helped to some extent. But there is a need to improve monitoring and supervision in tribal districts and blocks to help improve teacher attendance and school functioning.

Majority of schools in tribal areas have only 2 or 3 teachers. It is therefore important to equip teachers in such areas with skills for conducting multi-grade and multilevel teaching. This would also require modified teaching – learning materials including workbooks etc. However, in the long run we must plan for one class-one teacher policy even at the primary level.

Special emphasis must be placed on teachers who are appropriately qualified and trained to teach in tribal dominated schools. The emphasis must be both on their skills, competencies as well as their understanding on the context of deprivation, discrimination and an appreciation of cultural difference in relation to their students.

In some tribal areas where qualified teachers are not available, there must be a special effort to create a cardre of teachers from among tribal youth who complete class XII and undergo a two year teacher education program as per NCTE norms. (These would be regular, qualified and not para teachers). DIETs in tribal dominated area can offer such a teacher education programme. This link between school and a teaching can encourage retention in schools as parents see teaching as a career for their children.

The policy of providing primary education in the child's mother tongue, as enshrined in the Constitution as well as in the NPE 1986 and the NCF 2005 needs to be implemented. Bilingual / multilingual education programmes that start with education in the child's mother tongue and then transit to the regional/ State language and English need to be implemented on a larger scale, especially in remote tribal areas. Presently, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa are implementing such programmes in 8-10 tribal languages on a pilot basis. The strategy involves intensive work for the creation of curricular materials, training of teachers, academic support, evaluation and community involvement. SSA should provide for such specific interventions.

In general, for tribal areas teaching-learning materials need to incorporate the life-situations of children to which they can relate. This work can be done best by DIETs

in identified districts after receiving specific orientation and human resources for this purpose. BRCs and CRCs in such areas could also contribute to this process. The NCF 2005 strongly recommends the use of local context in the materials and teaching-learning process. The orientation of teachers in such areas would also need to focus on issues of attitude and bias regarding tribal children and knowledge of local sociocultural situation.

Certain tribal groups, e.g. denotified tribes, nomadic tribes that moves from place to place and primitive tribal groups (PTG) would need special attention because of their specific live situations.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is in the process of consolidating schemes for supporting primary education to make a more comprehensive scheme that could complement SSA and fill any gaps, especially those relating to infrastructure in identified tribal dominated districts and blocks. SSA could play an important role in guiding the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the States / UTs in identifying needs in specific districts and blocks and ensuring convergent implementation.

The table in the Appendix provides a macro analysis of drop-out rates among SC and ST boys and Girls in some states in India. It is clear that Andhra Pradesh ranks highest in dropout rates in all categories of SC/ST children, with girls being greater victims in all most of the cases the axe falls on the girl child. *With meager income, many parents with four or five school-going children on an average find it difficult to spend equally for the schooling needs of all children. So the variations of choices emerge, namely educate one child, withdraw the girl child, push the better performing child to another level or let the girls continue in government schools and move the boys to hostels. These are the extra costs among all the factors that deter the poorest from accessing schools even if they are in the same village.*

As Velaskar (2004) points out, girls of marginalized sections of society are indeed the worst sufferers in a patriarchal society. They pay the costs of being daughters, sisters, daughter-in-laws and mothers and manual workers. They are the worst victims of the reproductive (birth, rearing etc.) and the productive (agriculture, mining, construction etc.) cycles. They manage the houses and they are the lowest paid in the labour market.

2.6   School Participation of SC and ST Children

Our examination of recent trends in enrolment, attendance and drop-out for SC/ST children is hampered by absence of relevant and complete statistical data. The main sources is the DISE 2009-2010 data. Examining recent trends in school participation of SC/ST children, the overall picture is of increasing enrolment at all levels of schooling. The sheer number of SC children enrolled at primary (I-V classes) and upper primary (VI-VII classes) is 13,61,967 and 4,49,917 respectively. The corresponding figures for ST children are 7,54,368 and 1,92,004 (DISE, 2009-2010).

The expansion of government schooling has undoubtedly led to mass inclusion. Andhra Pradesh Government pays much more attention to providing educational facilities among SC, ST children. According to DISE reports, enrolment of SC and ST children in Andhra Pradesh has increased. But the dropout rates are still alarming. The dropout rate of boys at Upper Primary level is more than at the primary level. In Mahaboobnagar district, the dropout rate at primary level is 56.64 % but at the Upper Primary level it is 68.66 % and 74.33 percent of girls dropped out at this level. In Medak district dropped out rate of girls at UP level is higher (75.25) than in Mahaboobnagar.

For better quality education, we need easy access, better infrastructure including TLMs and high quality teacher training. Many buildings are dilapidated or badly in need of repair and basic furniture and teaching equipment is non-existent or of pathetic quality. Also, a highly inadequate teaching force has been a most critical element of unequal provisioning. Teacher-pupil ratios in schools frequented by SC/ST have been much higher than those in other schools meant for higher caste villagers. Multigrade teaching often amounts to very limited teaching or no teaching at all! The problem of insufficient number of teachers has been compounded by the problem of unmotivated teachers, which is reflected in the phenomenon of teacher absenteeism. Teachers for SC and ST children primarily belong to non-SC or non tribal backgrounds. They are highly irregular in attending since they live outside the villages. This is a common feature in schools located in remote areas. There are reports of `paper schools' which remain closed during the year and yet others for years on end especially in remote tribal areas. This is the situation particularly in remote tribal areas. At the same time however, poor working conditions which can demotivate and demoralise even the most motivated of the primary school teacher need to be highlighted. Teachers are expected to work in isolation under harsh

conditions. Worse still their teaching function is dislodged by compulsion to perform all kinds of government work. Bureaucrat-teacher relationships undermine the dignity and status of the primary school teacher, which in turn interferes with their teaching role.

2.7   Perspectives for the Future

Education of tribals cannot be left to short-term Plan strategies. It is important that planners take a long-term view which is embedded in a meaningful policy framework. Following are some important points emerging from the review here.

- Emphasis should be on quality and equity rather than quantity as has been the case in the past. The prime focus should be on provision of quality education that make tribal communities economically effective and independent.

- In the tribal context, it is essential that the School Schedule be prepared as per local requirement rather than, following a directive from the state. It has been found that vacations and holidays are planned without taking into consideration local contexts, and thereby, unnecessarily antagonize tribal communities and keep them out of school.

- Though it has been highlighted time and again, no concrete step has been taken to provide locally relevant material to tribal students.

- In order to make education effective and sustainable, building partnership between the community and the government is important. Results from pilot projects in Andhra Pradesh show that community partnership not only augments state expenditure on education but a' guarantees supervision and monitoring, thus addressing an intractable problem for the state.

- Environment building is of immense importance in the context of educational development among tribal communities. Community awareness, and community mobilization, which are its core elements, should receive adequate importance and attention.

- Decentralization of education management is another aspect that needs special consideration in the context of tribal areas. In fact, considering the

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geographical terrain and communication problems in tribal areas, it is crucial to restructure the existing system of educational management.

The recommendations for the SC and ST groups are given at the end with other recommendations.

3. The Girl Child

3.1 Introduction

This position paper argues that gender equity and equality are central for Universalisation of Elementary Education. For a variety of reasons already mentioned, girls, particularly of marginalized parents are left out of the ambit of education in a patriarchal society. The fact that more girls than boys are withdrawn from school reflects basic differences in parental and societal attitude towards the education of their children; girl school dropouts come more from the families who have very limited income and assets, and are low in the occupational hierarchies.

Cultural norms as well as family livelihood strategies place girl's education at a greater risk than that of boys. The making of gender identity begins in the family as children internalize what are seen as culturally appropriate qualities and attitudes associated with being 'masculine' and 'feminine' through socialization. Through girls education is gradually becoming more of a social norm, socialization of girls plays a major role and it is still heavily influenced by considerations of marriage and status rather than the need for economic security for the individual or to make them more self – reliant. Thus when girls are of marriageable age and social taboos to their mobility set in or there is need for extra hands within the home or finances do not permit, it is girls who are pulled out of school than boys. Education is seen as a stop gap arrangement while the girl's parents wait for her marriage, also feeling that higher education in her case will multiply marriage problems because it will be that much more difficult to find a match.

Girls suffer another major threat to their education. They live in a highly insecure environment. They live under constant fear of being assaulted physically and sexually at home, on the road, in the bus and in school. They may be beaten up by their parents, misused by relatives, friends, classmates and teachers. Girls who suffer such trauma find it difficult to come out of it.

3.2 Provision of Girls Education

The constitution of India not only grants equality to women and forbids any discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth but also empowers the sate to practice protective discrimination in favor of women. Under the protective discrimination clause, the state passed several social and labour legislations and has drawn up special programmes and schemes for the protection, welfare, and

development of women and children. Additionally, women have reservations in many educational and training institutions, development schemes, local bodies, and certain categories of government jobs.

Education of Girls in Andhra Pradesh

Education of girls has been high on the state and national agenda since independence. Special commissions and committees were set up from time to time to assess the progress of girls' education. Several strategies were adopted to promote education of girls as an integral part of the planed socio – economic development of the state. A major conceptual shift is noticed in girl and crucial input for state and national development sector are far from having been overcome. This position paper reviews the progress of girls' education in the state of AP during 2009–10. The enrolment rate in general has shown remarkable progress but one is still worried about the dropout rate, quality of education and the absence of girls in higher education.

3.3. Issues in Perspective

The issues and the concerns which emanate from the overall scenario presented in this position paper for Girls Child Education are mentioned hereunder:

a) Demographic

- Declining girl child sex ratio; high MMR and IMR

- Low Female literacy rates particularly among rural female, S.C. female and S.T. female.

- Parental apathy towards girl's education.

- Dowry system, a social evil forcing parents for the early marriage of school age girls in rural areas and socially and economically down trodden communities.

b) Access

- Parental fear of insecurity for out-station schooling of girls.

- Lack of suitable access for schooling of rural at secondary level education.

- Lack of proper access for schooling of S.T. girls at Upper Primary and Secondary levels.

- Lack of proper access for schooling of out of school girls in work situations.

c) Enrolment and Retention

- Low Enrolment Ratios of girls in general and S.C. and S.T girls in particular at upper primary and Secondary levels.

- High dropout rates among ST girls at Primary level.

- High Dropout rate among SC and ST girls at Upper primary level.

d) Child Labour

- Lack of adequate machinery for the effective implementation of prevention of child labour Act and their schooling.

- The subject of child labour is transferred from Labour Department to the School Education Department. Officers of the Education department are designed as enforcement officers however their capacity building towards this new role is not taken care of.

- Inadequate follow up of mainstreaming of the children attending RBCs and NRBCs.

- Lack of needed attention in the effective organization of alternative schooling system for mainstreaming of out of school children.

e) Quality

- Lack of adequate sanitary facilities for girls at Upper Primary and Secondary levels.

- Lack of adequate teacher motivation to provide opportunities for girls in all the programs related to UEE where more physical strain is not involved.

- Lack of proper learning environment in teaching learning situations due to overcrowded classrooms, lack of proper school buildings etc.

- Lack of adequate infrastructural facilities like teaching aids, furniture, equipment, games and sports materials etc.

- Lack of adequate concern for children with special educational needs.

- Lack of special attention to the enrolment, retention and learning achievements of children of focused groups like children of SC, ST, Religious and linguistic minorities, street children etc.

- In adequate involvement of the community in school programs like enrolment, attendance, retention and pupil achievement.

We need to address all these issues and our recommendations may be seen at the end of this paper.

4.   Minority Children

4.1   Introduction

India is a country of multiple minorities. There are linguistic, religious, including Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi and Jain and of course such groups as we have already talked about i.e. SCs, STs, OBCs, denotified tribes, girls. They are all a part of the Indian fabric and most of them are recognized by our constitution. Geographically these minorities are unevenly spread out in different parts or the country.

Minorities are to be treated as an organic part of the territories in which they live. It is therefore in the interest of the country's integrated development that care should be taken to promote balanced development of the minorities. Otherwise an economically backward minority like a backward region can seriously retard harmonious development of a country. In this position paper an attempt has been made to throw light on constitutional status the minorities especially Muslim minority in the Andhra Pradesh as it is prominent among other minorities.

In Andhra Pradesh, highest Muslim population is found in Hyderabad District and the lowest in Srikakulum District. Muslims in the rural areas of the State are basically small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers and in urban areas most of them are wage earners, artisans and small traders. Most of the Muslims are living under abject poverty. They are away from education and have meager representation in employment and economic development. Though, 'Shia's' are substantial in number, still majority are Sunni's. Urdu language is the mother tongue of Muslims in the state. Like women from other communities, Muslim women are differentiated across gender, class, caste and community and are subjected to the interface between gender and community.

Constitutionally Indian Minorities have been provided various assurances and guarantees of fundamental rights under Articles 29 & 30 of the constitution. Every religious Minority has been given full freedom for practicing and preaching their respective religion. The Minorities have been given rights to establish their own educational institutions to import education through their own mother tongue. The

linguistic minorities have been given freedom to promote their own language and culture. (In this regard, in Andhra Pradesh under Sarva Siksha Abhiyan and Rajiv Vidya Mission Text books from class I to V have been developed in Urdu language and implemented in the Urdu medium schools).

As far as education of Muslims is concerned the Government of India launched the following programmes (Choudhary 1996).

i.   Setting up community polytechnics in the areas or predominantly minority concentration for imparting technical skills.

ii. Evaluation of textbooks through the NCERT from the standpoint of national integration.

iii. Organisation of training programmes through the NCERT and SCERTs for principals and teachers or minority managed institutions.

iv. Providing financial assistance to the universities and colleges conducting coaching classes for students belonging to educationally backward minorities.

v.   Setting up of early childhood education centers in the traditional schools and in areas predominantly inhabited by educationally backward minorities.

vi. Promotion of teaching of English, Science and Mathematics in traditional Madarsas and other Mulsim minority schools. On voluntary basis and

vii. Asking the state government to compile statistical information's make textbooks available in minority languages and provide for teacher - training facilities to teachers in the minority languages.

4.2   Education of Muslim Minority Children

Madarsas are the original Muslim schools having a history of more than a thousand years. They are spread over the length and breadth of the country in thousands. These Madarsas are unique in many respects. Most of these Madarsas are run on very meager budget financed by voluntary donations. Running of such a large number of Madarsas is perhaps the largest community effort by any single community in any part of the world in the field of education and that also through small donations. These

Madarsas are playing a unique role of imparting religious education as well as providing social and cultural guidance.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Andhra Pradesh has taken up the initiative under its EGS & AIE programme to bring children attending Madarsa Education in to its fold for providing formal education without interfering to their religious curriculum. There are about 6,000 Madarsas functioning in the state under various Muslim Educational Organizations. As a result of rigorous persuasion in bringing the children of Madrasas in to the fold of formal education, the number of Madarsas accepting support from SSA has increased to 962 covering about 84448 out of school children during the academic year 2009 - 10, compared to only 9 Madarsas supported during 2004 - 05.

S. No	Name of the District	Total No. of Madarasas Identified	Total No. of Madarasas supported as on 30-06-2010	Enrolment (6 – 14 Years)		
				Boys	Girls	Total
1	Adialabad	37	30	1353	1957	3310
2	Medak	57	41	2092	1205	3297
3	Mahaboobnagar	68	39	2093	2036	4129
4	Nalgonda	56	38	1045	1824	2869
5	Nizamabad	140	80	3979	3045	7024
6	Rangareddy	48	27	1770	1569	3339
7	Warangal	54	32	1269	989	2258
8	Karimnagar	38	20	724	352	1076
9	Khammam	15	8	190	355	545
10	Hyderabad	400	229	17545	19488	37033
11	Kurnool	150	86	2262	3131	5393
12	Anathapur	43	30	1544	652	2196
13	Kadapa	50	50	667	1137	1804
14	Prakasham	71	71	1482	1430	2912
15	Nellore	115	77	829	1141	1970
16	Krishna	57	41	1222	1053	2275
17	Guntur	202	123	3041	2367	5408
18	Visakapatnam	12	13	624	636	1260

19	Chittoor	38	10	186	201	387
20	West Godavari	0	3	387	221	608
	Total	**1651**	**1048**	**44304**	**44789**	**89093**

4.3 Problems of Madarasa Education in Andhra Pradesh

- Several efforts have been made to convince Madarasa heads to accept support from SSA and improve the quality of Madarasa Education with inclusion of main stream subjects such as mathematics, social, science, computers and English.

- Madarasas have their own curriculum i.e., "Darse - Nizami". This curriculum was recognized initially by Osmania University and it was de-recognized later on.

- The Madarsas conduct various courses covering the age group of 6 - 20 and above as follows

Tahtania	-	Primary
Wastania	-	Upper Primary
Fauqania	-	High School
Fazil	-	Intermediate
Kamil	-	Graduate Degree

- The big Madarsas with strength more than thousand have taken a conscious decision not to accept any Govt. support.

- Initially there wasn't much response in view of apprehensions of Government involvement in to their educational and religious activities. However there is change and some Madarsa Management approaching SSA, Dept of School Education for possible support in terms of textbooks, TLM, support to Para Teachers etc.

- Opposed to utilization of Audio Visual Equipment in Madarsas i.e., Radio, T.V, VCR, DVD.

- Implementation of corporal punishments and practice of teachers centered, memory oriented teaching learning processes.

- Teachers in Madarsa working for meager salaries.

4.4 Apprehensions

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Following are some of the apprehensions due to which the Madarsa Management is reluctant to take government support.

- Govt. may take over the Madarsas

- Govt. might interfere into their religious activities and day-to-day functioning of Madarsas.

- Madarsas run on charity and they don't want Govt. to scrutinize their accounts and resources.

- Madarsas raise donations with great difficulty from various orgnisations within the country and outside the country. The donors might cut short the aid.

- They fear introduction of mainstream education might dilute their religion based moral education and values.

- Fear of dilution of their dress code and daily religious observations / practices.

- Fear of more curricular load on children if Madarsa based religious curriculum and mainstream curriculum were combined.

The Sachar Report which wrote in detail about the educational status of Muslims in the country has noted that at the all India level, only three percent of all the Muslim children of the school going age are enrolled in Madarsas. It has also noted that "The Muslim parents are not averse to modern or mainstream education" and that "Regular school education that is available to any other child in India is preferred by Muslims also".

Justice Siddiqui draws attention to the fact that nine states, among them West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh. Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Rajasthan, Bihar and Chattisgarh already have state Madrasa boards.

4.5   Progress in Supporting Madarsas in the State

The Sachar Report on *Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India* has produced a compendium of authentic information required by the Government for planning, formulating and implementing specific interventions, policies and programmes to address issues relating to the backwardness of the community.

The National Commission for Minorities has a statutory responsibility, under Section 9(1) (g) of the NCM Act, 1992, to evaluate the progress of the development of the

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minorities and to suggest appropriate measures, to be taken by the Government, in respect of any community. Access to education is critical to benefiting from emerging opportunities that go with economic growth. The right to education is a fundamental right; the Report establishes the extent of educational deprivation experienced by the Muslim community. Muslims are at a double disadvantage with low levels of education combined with low quality education, also often extreme poverty. Their deprivation increases many-folds in higher education. 25 percent of Muslim children in the 6-14 year age group have either never attended school or have dropped out. At the level of higher education, less than 4 percent Muslims are graduates or diploma holders as against the national average of 7 percent for the age group 20 and above. At the post-graduate level, only one out of twenty students is a Muslim. The improvements in educational patterns of SCs and STs suggest that they have benefited from targeted government programmes supporting their educational progress. This underscores the importance of affirmative action. While the nature of affirmative action that is required needs to be assessed, at a minimum the government may consider making available more schools in minority-concentration areas, instituting scholarships and making available free textbooks, and transport facilities etc.

SSA has taken up the initiative under its EGS & AIE Programme to bringing children attending Madrasa Education into its fold for providing formal education without interfering into their religious curriculum. For this purpose, the AP SSA has arranged the services of volunteers for imparting education in formal subjects and Department of School Education has been arranging free textbooks and Mid Day Meals to the children of Madrasas. AP SSA is providing training to identified teachers in handling formal education subjects, besides paying a monthly honorarium of Rs. 1500/- per volunteer per month in addition to TLM Grant of Rs. 500/- per year.

In order to provide quality education to the children of Madrasas, AP SSA has provided the services of about 2200 Vidya Volunteers across the state duly arranging for them training in imparting formal education subjects as per the situation of the Madrasas. The training programmes were organized at State and District Level duly utilizing the expertise of "Center for Professional Development for Urdu Medium Teachers" at Maulana Azad National Foundation, Hyderabad an NGO has tied up with AP SSA through an MOU for playing the role of interlocutor between the Madrasas and the AP SSA. With the support of the said NGO a Resource Group was

formed at State Level comprising of Madrasa Volunteers and Regular Teachers to access the training needs of the volunteers. Based on the feedback received training modules were developed by the Resource Group Members and training is being imparted to the volunteers at State and District Level, so far over 1000 volunteers have been trained in handling formal education subjects by activity based methods, evaluation of children etc. of volunteer's the Nazims (Heads) of the Madrasas were also sensitized in providing formal education to the children attending to their Madrasas, so as to seek their cooperation in implementing the programme.

Further, in order to keep track of the Madrasas supported by AP SSA, the services of Madrasa Mobilizers were provided to the Project Officers of SSA in the State. The Mobilizers so provided are visiting 15 Madrasas per month and providing on the spot academic assistance to the volunteers of Madrasas, besides mapping all the Madrasas in their respective districts to bring them into the fold of formal education. These Mobilizers are also guiding the children to come into mainstream of education by encouraging them to write the Public Examinations organized by various Boards in the Slate or joining them into the regular schools.

In order to address the needs of vocational education of the children of the Madrasas, AP SSA has tied up with the Satyam Foundation, an NGO, who has come forward to donate 500 computers to the Madrasas supported by AP SSA across the state. The first instalment of 100 computers was donated to the Madrasas on 30.06.2008. Since the computers were already distributed to districts M/s Microsoft Academy, an NGO working in Andhra Pradesh for training of teachers has come forward to provide free training to the teachers of Madrasas in MS Office packages and use of Internet with the module. As a further initiative the Project Officers were instructed to identify and support two girl Madrasas in their respective districts for providing vocational education to the children on the lines of NPEGEL module under Innovation. With the above initiatives of AP SSA it is expected that more than 1000 Madrasas will join the "Support to Madrasa Education Programme" 01' AP SSA by the end of ensuing academic year.

Though a lot has been done for the Muslim community children, a lot more needs to be done before we assure that they become a part of the mainstream education and public life.

4.6   Challenges

Following are the challenges to make Madarsa Education equivalent on par with mainstream education and facilitate children for effective transfer between the courses and schools.

- There is no clear cut policy on part of the government to focus on Madarsas Education and make it equivalent on par with mainstream education as was done in case of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

- Awareness building and convincing Madarsa Heads and community members to include mainstream subjects viz., Maths, Science, Computer Education. English without interfering into their religious curriculum.

- To do away with phobia, apprehensions and fear of Gov!. involvement. ,.

- Providing textbooks, midday meal, teachers etc., to the Madarsas as part of Govt. support.

- Developing appropriate curriculum additionally to reach equity on par with mainstream education and facilitate for transition with appropriate adjustments in their existing Madarsa time-table.

- Establishing Madarsa board with consensus and takeup the issues of syllabi, course studies, examinations, certification, academic calendar, providing grants etc.

- Development of appropriate textbooks and TLM.

- Instituting scholarships to the children of Madarsas on par with mainstream children.

- Change and improvise the existing practice or teacher-centered. textbook-based, memory oriented pedagogy to child-centered. activity based, participatory oriented pedagogy.

- To bring change in the existing hard corporal punishment system.

- Addressing training needs or all teachers as per agreed curriculum and pedagogy.

- Working out a good convergence with "Wakf Board", "SSA", "Department of School Education", "Urdu Academy" etc.

5.   Children with Special Needs

5.1   Introduction

We now turn to children with disabilities and children with special needs. They are also a part of our diversity. We do need to understand that we live in a world which has been created in the image of an 'ideal able' person whereas the fact is that each one of us is 'disabled' in some sense. Some because of age, some because of being sick, some because they can't sing or appreciate music, some because they can't paint, some because they can't run fast etc. We therefore need to appreciate that what we call Normal actually does not exist and that so-called 'persons with disability' may do everything anybody else does and often many things better BUT we do need to create an environment which is enabling for ALL and not just some. Thus, we need to build roads and streets where the blind can walk safely, people on wheel chairs can travel without fear, people with hearing problems can get help from signers etc. India has travelled a long distance since the days of special schools and now the entire contemporary education scenario in the country is responding to the call of the hour, i.e., inclusion. Though that MUST be the ultimate aim, we may for the time being need some special schools for children who have a mental deficit or some other serious problem.

"Inclusion", appears to be the latest buzzword in the education circle in India. The meaning of the word is as simple as the word itself i.e., takes in everybody reject nobody on any basis whatsoever. However, the implication of this simple word is not so simple when it comes to taking in children with disability or from different religious community or from SC, ST or any other minority groups and trying to make them adjust to the existing routine of the existing school.

In simple words, inclusion means that approach to education where a child is given administration to a school and then the school tries to adjust to the needs of the children. For example, if the child have problem in writing then the assessment or education is done by verbal means, or if the child have problem in climbing the stairs then the classrooms are relocated on the ground floor, etc. The main idea is to make the changes in the system instead of asking the child to get adjusted to the system, and so when we talk about system in the school it means a lot of things.

5.2   Children with Special Needs

The right of every child to education is proclaimed in the universal declaration of Education for All (1990). They have their own capabilities our society entreat these children. Directive principles of the constitution are guided by recognition that a new

universal system of education should be based on equity, the redressal of past imbalances, and the provision of access to quality education especially for all.

There are children suffering from different disabilities namely visual, hearing, speech, locomotions. In addition to that some children are suffering from neuro-muscular, developmental disorders, including cerebral palsy, autism, mental retardation, multiple disability and learning disabilities etc. Generally children belonging to SC, ST, minorities, urban deprived sections, marginalised section do not get quality education. In particular girls, children with disabilities belonging to these groups do not get education. They are totally neglected by the parents, community and even by government. Some efforts have been made for Children with Special Needs (CWSN) by the government and some NGOs. But they are so bad generally that most parents do not want to send their children to those schools.

In 1970's government launched the centrally sponsored scheme of Integrated education for disabled children. The scheme aimed at providing educational opportunities to learners with disabilities in regular schools and to facilitate their achievement and retention. The objective was to integrate children with disabilities in general community at all levels as equal partners and to prepare them for normal development and establish them to face life with courage and confidence. A cardinal feature of the scheme was the liaison between regular and special schools to reinforce the integration process.

From Kothari commission onwards, it has been suggested that there should be special attention paid to CWSN children education. Under DPEP and SSA Government established schools for these children under Inclusive education. It is postulated that learners with disabilities who can be educated in general schools should be educated in general schools and those studying in special schools should be transformed to general schools once they are ready to make the shift. NCF 2005 also recommended inclusive education.

Table - 1:
Status of CWSN children in Andhra Pradesh

No of CWSN Identified	No of CWSN Enrolled in Schools	No of CWSN Proposed to be covered through school Readiness Programme	No of CWSN Proposed to be Covered through Home Based Education	No of Resource Teachers to be appointed	No of schools proposed for Ramps and Handrails	No of Schools Proposed for Disabled Friendly Toilets	No of Visually impaired children to be Provided with Braille books / Large Print Books
218156	170085	15200	27557	1977	22106	13362	4183

Source: *HHS/VER*

Under CWSN program in SSA, government identified children with different disabilities. Among those children physically handicapped were joined in regular schools. Not all children with disabilities have SEN at the elementary level. They learn along with their peers with the help of aids such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, optical or non-optical aids, educational aids like Taylor frames, the abacus, etc. However, there may be students who may require the following:

- Additional time and a suitable mode for the successful completion of tests.
- Modification, substitution, and reformulation of the curriculum because it presents specific difficulties for them.
- Provision of adapted, modified, or alternative activities in different content areas.
- Accessible texts and materials to suit their ages and levels of learning;
- Appropriate management of classrooms (for example, management of noise, glare, etc.)
- Provision of additional support by using ICT or video.

As mentioned earlier, inclusion is all about providing effective learning opportunities to all students. Therefore, it depends on whether teachers modify the National Curriculum programmes of study whenever necessary in order to provide relevant and challenging work to students. It means being flexibility and choosing content from a lower level or higher level if necessary. There may be students who may perform below the expected level. For these students a greater degree of differentiation may be necessary. On the other hand, students whose performances exceed those of others within one or more subjects may need suitably challenging work. What is important is that no matter how they learn or perform, they should experience success and not failure.

Different domains of knowledge such as language, mathematics, science and social sciences may require different kinds of intervention. There will always be need of different kinds of personnel for different kinds of disability. Visually impaired require very different kinds of approaches and interventions than for example the hearing impaired. Comprehensive accessibility, barrier free environment, Braille, sign language, assistive devices of various kinds have to become an integral part of all school education. Continuous teacher training, diverse systems of evaluation and different perspectives of the role of work in education will also have to become an integral part of school education.

6.   Diversity as a Resource

6.1   New Perspectives on Diversity

Diversity has often been seen has a problem in the classroom and school. Whether one likes it or not, children in any school, in spite of the fact that they may come from the 'same' community, have different backgrounds in terms of socio-economic background, language, rituals, physical and mental abilities and experiences. The education system needs to recognize this diversity and learn to use it as a resource rather than as an obstacle and a problem. It is possible to organize the classroom activities in such a way that minority children, girls, children with disability and those with different languages become a part of the teaching-learning process. Diversity helps children to understand different life styles, costumes and practices in their livelihood. It teaches them to respect other languages and cultures and religions. It makes it possible for local knowledge systems to be discussed and examined carefully in the classroom. Whenever local knowledge enter into curriculum area their local artisans participate in school practices. In this way, community begins to share ownership of the school and local folk songs and festivals find a space in the school curriculum. Children with various disadvantages and disabilities no longer stand on the margins but become an essential part of the classroom processes.

6.2   Diversity Enriches Understanding

Diversity is common characteristic feature of Nature. Everywhere in the world there is some sort of diversity and school is a microcosm of this diversity. Children who belong to different family backgrounds have various experiences. For example, children who come from agricultural background are more familiar with crops, seeding, pests, names of objects like spade etc. This knowledge helps the other

children belonging to other occupations to know about agriculture. In the same way children belonging to minority sections make their group mates understand their festivals and cultural practices. Linguistic diversity is of course a major resource. It is eminently possible to take any grammatical issue like number or subject-verb agreement and involve all children from different linguistic background in it. It is always a source of joy for children and also a great learning experience for the teacher.

Children enter the school not only with thousands of words but also with full control of the rules that govern the complex and rich structure of language at the levels of sounds, words, sentences and discourse. A child knows not only how to understand and speak correctly but also appropriately in her language. She obviously has the cognitive ability to abstract externally complex system of language from the flux of sounds. Language learning helps to developing higher order communicative skills and critical thinking.

6.3   Diversity and Sensitization

Children belonging to SC, ST communities or marginalized sections have rich knowledge of their language, culture, costumes and practices. They can contribute to input rich communicational environments which are a prerequisite for learning. Generally textbooks, library book, journals, newspapers, big books etc are used as input rich material. But the language environment of disadvantaged learners need to be enriched by developing schools into community learning centers. It is only an innovative use of the languages and cultures of minorities that would sensitize all to their existence and value and would make all respect them as equal human beings.

- Children should be encouraged to use the vocabulary they know wherever necessary. All children must be encourages to write in their own languages.

- Where children participate in a diversified environment, they are able to understand others' needs and are ready to help them.

- Diversity helps the children to solve problems in a different manner and it gives them the ability to face problem in future.

- Thinking about a given situation varies from child to child that reflects their background. This helps the children to observe various solutions for one problem leading to divergent thinking.

- When children with special needs are in the group – reading children understand this and help them to reach their goals; at that time normal child understand CWSN children problems and have sensitivity towards them.

- When the curriculum gives priority for girl child sensitivity, all children can learn how to behave with those who are working more than boys at home.

7.   Recommendations

There is a general recommendation that MUST cut across all the groups this Position Paper talks about including SC, ST, OBC, girl child, children with special needs and all kinds of minorities. They are all an integral part of our cultural and linguistic diversity and they must be respected like anybody else. They are entitled to the same quality of education as anybody else. We therefore strongly recommend (**many of these recommendations converge with NCF 2005 and are in many cases quoted as such from there**):

1.   All schools must become barrier free in the widest sense of the term and they must ensure free and compulsory quality education to ALL children in an inclusive way. The security of girls, minorities and children with disability at home, on the street, in the buses and schools must be ensured.

2.   We strongly reiterate the need for equitable provision in terms of quality of schooling at different levels, educational infrastructure and other facilities, qualified teachers, teaching learning materials, texts and others. It is crucial to enhance the autonomy and working conditions of teachers, and teacher self-esteem. All nonteaching work load must be taken off the teacher. The educational environment of substandard dysfunctional schools must change for any meaningful and effective curricular reform.

3.   There is an urgent need for higher levels of positive discrimination and higher levels of financial investments into education.

4.   There is need for flexibility in school structures and cultures. School timings, calendars and holidays must keep in mind local contexts.

5.   Curricular goals must emphasise critical thinking and critical evaluation and appreciation of Indian society and culture. Equal opportunity for intellectual growth, cognitive, social and emotional development of underprivileged children including minorities, girls, SC, ST and others must be sought. Curriculum must aim at promotion of creative talents, productive skills, dignity of labour, underlined by values of equality, democracy, secularism, social and gender justice.

6.   An approach rooted in critical theory and critical multiculturalism is essential to critique the unjust social order, to indigenize and incorporate diverse

cultures and prevent loss of valuable cultural heritage. We must make a commitment to the preservation of all languages as a matter of communities' cultural rights as well as of national pride.

7. There is need to develop alternative pedagogic practices that aim at improving self esteem and identity of SC/ST, girl child, minorities and children with special needs. The use of the home languages of these children in the classroom is essential for this self-esteem.

8. There is a great need to strengthen teacher education. Teachers must be thoroughly equipped with subject knowledge and critical pedagogy skills. There is need to incorporate a foundational base of strong critical social science and humanities knowledge which is governed by democratic egalitarian perspectives in teacher education curricula. Special attention needs to be paid to social sciences and humanities including new emergent areas of dalit / feminist critical theory, tribal studies, cultural studies etc. We need to shift from narrow behaviouristic perspectives, and question archaic psychological concepts and constructs, for e.g., the IQ theory.

9. Teacher education curriculum needs to incorporate an understanding and appreciation of cultural diversities in particular the history of rich cultures and traditions of marginalized communities, histories of their protest and struggles and their constructive contribution to nation.

10. The pedagogic context within an increasingly segregated system of school requires that teachers be professionally equipped to address diverse educational needs of children, in particular of first generation learners.

11. It needs to be emphasized that gender is not just a woman issue but a societal issue concerning ALL. Gender should not be a "mere add on"; it is a cross-cutting issue that requires both specific attention as well as integration into all areas of reconceptualisation. *Gender must not be introduced as yet another subject*; that will only serve to marginalise gender issues and further increase the heavy curricular burden on learners; rather, it must inform every area of education in all its stages and aspects. *Gender has to be recognised as a critical marker of transformation, and must become an important organising*

principle of the national and state curricular framework as well as every aspect of the actual curricula.

12. The SCERT should draw upon the expertise of gender sensitive psychologists and counselors to prepare material, and design curricular practices and pedagogic strategies, that provide information and can facilitate frank and healthy discussions on adolescence and sexuality for girls as well as boys. Since adolescence is a critical formative period and sexuality is central to a person's sense of identity, self-esteem and confidence, it is important to make the young aware of the diversity which exists in expressions of sexuality and gender, and come to terms with the role of sexuality in their lives; to encourage them to experience freedom from shame; to enable them to make *informed choices* that equip them to negotiate danger from those who seek to violate them; and to help them to develop the confidence to express what they see as right or wrong.

13. There is also a strong need to examine how gender gets encoded in different domains of knowledge systems, particularly language.

14. More schools for girls should be set up in localities of Muslim concentration, particularly for the 9-12 standards. This would facilitate higher participation of girls in school education. Induction of more female teachers, provision of hostels for girls and transport facilities would be helpful.

15. Institution of more scholarships for professional and technical courses would encourage students to avail in greater measure of opportunities in higher education.

16. Skill development initiatives for those who have not completed school education may also be particularly relevant for some section of Muslims given their occupational structure. The pre-entry qualifications for admission to ITI courses should be reduced to Class VIII. The scope of ITI courses should be expanded to focus on emerging market needs. The eligibility of such programmes should also be extended to Madrasa educated children. There must be a substantial increase in increase in stipends and scholarships on means cum merit basis.

17. Recruitment of Urdu-speaking teachers and filling up of vacancies of Urdu teaching posts in schools. Urdu must be available as an optional subject in all government and government-aided schools in areas with substantial Urdu-speaking population. Good quality textbooks in Urdu must be provided.

18. Efforts should be made to introduce and encourage scientific and job oriented education in Madarsas. In some states like West Bengal, general syllabus is also taught in Madarsas and certificates and degrees awarded by Madarsas are recognized. This enables easy migration from Madarsas to general education institutions. This model may be tried in other states also.

19. Special programmes should be undertaken to establish vocational training institutes, polytechnics and colleges in Muslim-dominated areas.

The following are the major recommendations of this Focus Group.

- Make all early education and care programmes (from 0–6 years) sensitive and responsive to the special needs of children, including training of Anganwadi workers in identification of needs of the children with disabilities, use of age-appropriate play and learning materials and the counselling of parents.

- Make all schools inclusive by:
  - Enforcing without exception the neighbourhood school policy
  - Removing physical barriers
  - Reviewing barriers created by admission procedures (screening, identification, parental interaction, selection and evaluation), this should include private schools
  - Building the capacity of teachers to function in an inclusive setting
  - Making the curriculum flexible and appropriate to accommodate the diversity of school children including those with disability in both cognitive and noncognitive areas
  - Making support services available in the form of technology (including ICT), teaching–learning materials and specialists
  - Involving parents, family, and the community at all stages of education
- Gear all teacher education programmes (both pre-service and in-service) to developing the pedagogical skills required in inclusive classrooms.

- Correlate the style of teaching to the learning styles of all children.

- Mobilise special schools as resource centres that provide support to inclusive schools.

- Develop partnerships with institutions of higher learning, governmental organisations, and NGOs to promote participation of children with disabilities in all aspects of education.

- Reduce class size to a maximum of 30 students and a maximum of 20 in case the class includes children with SEN.

- Make the class teacher responsible for all the children in the class. In case special support is required on account of SEN, this should be in the form of assistance to the class teacher.

- Regard all special teachers in a given school as full-fledged members of the school community.

- Make all curriculum-related policies and programmes inclusive in nature to effectively address issues related to the education of children with SEN.

- Develop perspective and skills in all administrators, including school principals, for planning and executing programmes based on the philosophy of inclusion.

- Develop strengths and abilities of all children rather than highlighting limitations.

- Recognising diversity among learners, the medium of instruction should include sign language for children with hearing impairment, and Braille for children with visual impairment. At the same time as an optional subject/third language, learning of sign language, Braille, finger Braille, etc. should be introduced for all children.

- To promote self-reliance and enable children to acquire coping skills, the emphasis of inclusive education must be on inculcating independent living skills, critical thinking, decision making and problem-solving skills, and articulation of their concerns.

- To facilitate the acquisition of integrated knowledge in children the single teacher class system up to Class V should be adopted.

- For effective delivery of education in the inclusive mode, all teacher education (in service and pre-service) must be restructured.

- Education must aim at developing a system by which abstract concepts are effectively communicated to children with varying learning styles, including those using sign language, Braille, etc.

- To inculcate respect for diversity and the concept of an inclusive society the teacher education programmes and the curriculum framework should incorporate a component of human rights education.

- To nurture all aspects of the personality, viz., cognitive, affective, and connotative-games, dance, drama, music, and art and craft must be given equal importance and value.

- Admission, retention, and full participation of children in all aspects of education, must not be subject to any criteria based on assessment tests and judgment by professionals and experts, including psycho-medical certificates.

- No child with disabilities should be asked to produce certificates either for admission, examination, getting support facilities/ scholarships, etc.

- Reject the policy of failing students vis-à-vis enabling each child to overcome perceived difficulties.

- Make sign language the medium of instruction for the hearing impaired and Braille for the visually impaired in view of the diversities.

- Introduce sign language, Braille, and finger Braille as a third language for all children.

- Inculcate among students with SEN, critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving and other coping or life skills in order to promote their self-reliance and independent living capabilities.

- Interpret SEN more broadly and do not restrict its interpretation to the definitions given in the PWD Act.

- Incorporate a component of human rights education in teacher education programmes to inculcate respect for diversity and the concept of an inclusive society.

- Do not subject the admission, retention, getting support facilities, scholarships, and full participation of children in all aspects of education, to any criteria based on assessment tests, judgment by professionals and experts, including psycho-medical certificates.

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Appendix I

Table 1

Drop-out Rates among SC and ST Boys and Girls in some States (2006)

(Percentage)

Categories	AP	Karnataka	Maharashtra	Orissa	Rajasthan
Dropout SC Boys I - V	44.09	6.12	17.02	44.99	53.07
Dropout SC Girls I – V	44.12	14.03	18.21	42.36	36.29
Dropout SC Boys VI – VIII	63.41	27.19	30.03	63.73	69.29
Dropout SC Girls VI – VIII	68.41	51.61	38.22	67.17	80.07
Dropout ST Boys I – V	63.29	4.88	34.22	59.58	52.19
Dropout ST Girl I – V	68.47	4.96	42.82	63.19	38.31
Dropout ST Boys VI – VIII	76.80	53.81	59.12	76.49	70.42
Dropout ST Girls VI - VIII	82.49	56.80	65.14	76.56	79.63

Source: Select Education Statistics (2006), Government of India, New Delhi.