

Salient Features

Inclusive Education for Children and Youth with Special Needs in Mauritius

Concept to Reality

Policy Framework and Strategy Document



The Policy Framework and Strategy Document on “Inclusive Education for Children and Youth with SEN in Mauritius: Concept to Reality” is also directly in line with the policy directions of the Sustainable Development Goals and the National Curriculum for Nine Years of Continuous Basic Education through the six E’s of the philosophy of Inclusion viz., Equity, Equal access; Equal opportunity; Equal dignity, Effective communication and Embrace Culture. The three R’s of inclusion viz., Reach, Respect and Relationship, are embedded in the document.

Vision:

“Inclusionary and empowering measures/practices for all persons with diverse learning needs today for an inclusive society tomorrow”.

Mission:

To achieve inclusion by creating and providing a conducive environment to ALL learners that ensures equal access to relevant and quality education and training.

Goal:

Maximize and optimize inclusive practices to facilitate and achieve inclusion of ALL learners with Special Education Needs (SEN), in the Republic of Mauritius, by 2030.

Objectives:

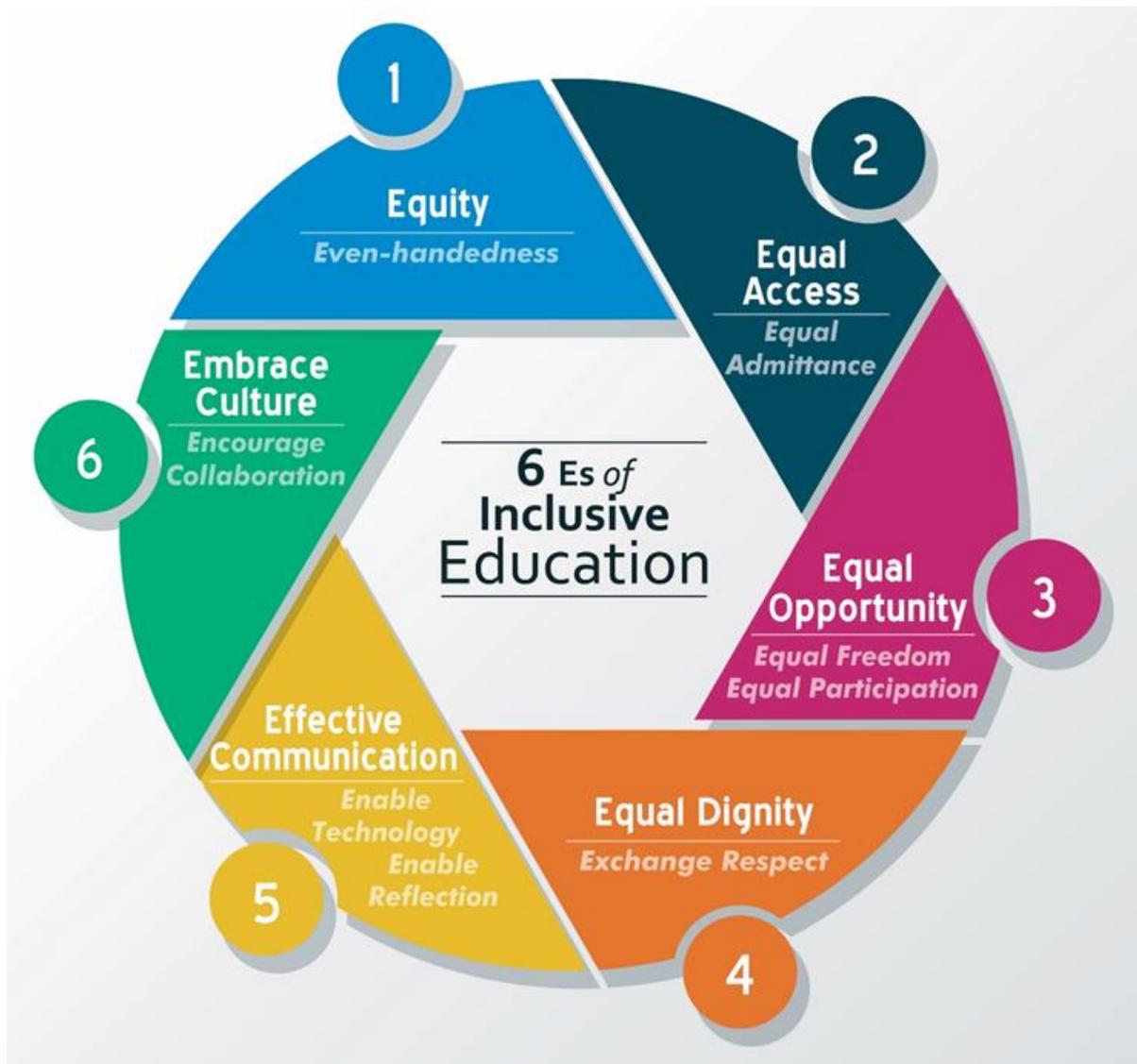
1. Identify and classify the learning needs of children with disabilities.
2. Provide for appropriate placement to learners with special needs either in inclusive or special settings
3. Promote the culture of inclusiveness in All schools by providing an environment free from physical, psycho-social, attitudinal barriers
4. Develop a unified system of inclusive education for learners in formal and non- formal settings
5. Establish a reciprocal relationship between access and quality of inclusive education and training for children with special needs
6. Provide holistic education as a Right to all learners with special needs.
7. Introduce flexibility, elasticity in curriculum through adaptation, modification, substitution, accommodation and acceleration to address the diverse needs of learners including talented and gifted.
8. Enrich and strengthen all training programs for professionals involved in inclusion of children with special learning needs.

Inclusion:

The Policy on Inclusive Education ensures that all learners are educated in the education settings that are commensurate with their learning needs and facilitate realisation of their potential to the extent possible. The focus is on the holistic development of learners and is based on a philosophy that:

- (a) education is a fundamental right of every individual;
- (b) every learner has an inherent right to fully participate in society.
- (c) diversity is respected, differences celebrated and non-discrimination promoted.

The new vision of the sector captures the 6 E's of Inclusion, namely: Equity, Equal Access, Equal Opportunity, Equal Dignity, Effective Communication and Embracing Culture.



Shift from the Social Model to a Rights-based Model

The Strategy Document advocates a shift from the **Social Model** to a **Rights-based model** of disability for learners with SEN that will indeed pave the way for an inclusive education system. This model views inclusive education for every learner across the entire spectrum of abilities as a right and not a privilege.

Social model:

- (a) Entitlements to rights are differentiated according to judgments of individual incapacity.
- (b) Extent to which a person is perceived to be independent enough to exercise his/her rights.
- (c) A child's right to access education is not an obligation of the school system.

Rights model

Affirms that all human beings are born with certain rights, which are inalienable, premised on the following values:

- (a) Diversity
- (b) Breaking Down Barriers
- (c) Equality & Non- Discrimination
- (d) Reasonable Accommodation
- (e) Accessibility
- (f) Equal Participation & Inclusion
- (g) Private & Public Freedom

Classification of CWD according to Learning Needs

<i>Category</i>	<i>Learning Needs</i>
<i>Category I Mild/Moderate</i>	<i>Includes children with mild/moderate learning needs including the gifted and talented who can study in a <u>general mainstream class</u> with some special inputs. [45% of CWD belong to this category]</i>
<i>Category II Moderate</i>	<i>Children with mild and moderate disabilities who need counselling services from time to time can study in <u>general mainstream class</u>. [30% CWD come in this category]</i>
<i>Category III Severe</i>	<i>Children with moderate/ severe disabilities, needing resource assistance including corrective aids and periodical help in academic areas will study in <u>Special Schools</u> [15% CWD can be classified in this category]</i>
<i>Category IV Severe/Profound</i>	<i>Children with severe/ profound disabilities who require direct attention from special teachers can be placed in <u>Special schools</u> [10% of disabled children come under this category]</i>
<i>Children from the non- formal sector who remained unidentified would be included in the system through identification, assessment and appropriate placement.</i>	

Strategy Goals

Strategy Goal 1: Legal Framework and Human Rights

1. Prepare a legal framework based on human rights for inclusive education as a guiding principle
2. Develop a framework which is aligned with the philosophy of inclusion as incorporated in National Curriculum Framework for Nine Year Continuous Basic Education
3. Regulations, norms and standards to be formulated in view of the NYS.
4. Ensure effective implementation of the regulations.
5. Conduct periodical supervision and monitoring of the practices.
6. Ensure effective implementation of the framework as per the SGD Goals
7. Make all early education and care programmes (from 0–5 years) sensitive and responsive to the special needs of children
8. Make all learning institutions inclusive. This will be achieved by:
 - Removing physical barriers
 - 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 non-cognitive 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

Strategy Goal 2: Establish Regulatory, Advisory, Monitoring and Research Bodies

1. Establishing an Authority to regulate, monitor and facilitate quality implementation of the policy, support services and empowerment of Children and Youth with Special needs in the Republic of Mauritius

Functions of the Advisory, Regulatory, Monitoring and Facilitating Body

(a) Quality Assurance

- i. Developing quality parameters & indicators for each of the aspects of Service Delivery system to promote and facilitate quality practices.

(b) Curriculum Development

- i. Guiding, supervising, monitoring curriculum adaptation & modification
- ii. Promotion and implementation of inclusive practices

(c) Identification & Assessment

- i. Planning & execution of the process of identification and assessment,
- ii. Selection and procurement of age and level appropriate assessment tools

(d) Networking, Communication, Collaboration and Coordination

- i. Establishing Inter- Ministerial Communication, Collaboration and coordination,
- ii. Networking and collaboration among the stakeholders,
- iii. Implementation and optimal utilization of collaborative efforts

(e) Finance and Accounts

- i. Generation, mobilization, disbursement and appropriate utilization of funds
- ii. Maintaining financial records, audit of accounts
- iii. Capacity Building & Resource Support

- (f) Identifying the need and nature of support required by various stakeholders and making provisions as per the need
 - i. Conducting a need assessment exercise to identify the gap areas in teaching- learning, therapeutics, advocacy
 - ii. Organising/ conducting capacity building programs for different professionals, removal of infrastructural barriers in all schools,
 - iii. Conducting need based programs to address the issues of psycho-social and attitudinal barriers
- (g) Provision of Technology and Devices including Assistive Devices
 - i. Procure, distribute and encourage the utilization of appropriate technological tools/ instruments and devices including assistive devices
- (h) Facilitation and Monitoring
 - i. Responsible for initiating awareness drives about inclusion/ inclusive education at a larger level,
 - ii. Facilitation and monitoring of educational programmes, clinical/ psychological support, therapeutic interventions and all types of services

2. Setting up of a Research Coordination Committee comprising members from Teacher Education Institution and other Institutions of higher learning, hospitals and the resource centres.

The role of the Committee would be to:

- (a) strengthen the Special Needs Education system through research and innovations
- (b) Ensure quality in research, materials, equipment developed for the purpose.
- (c) Develop and standardize tools for assessment of learning needs

Strategy Goal 3: Screening, Identification and Assessment of Learning Needs

- (a) Promote Child Referral practices.
 - i. Child referral from the parents, hospitals, pre-schools and other institutions to be made to the Monitoring body;
 - ii. Arriving at an appropriate criterion for determining the eligibility of students who would be tested for identification;
 - iii. Establishing eligibility for assessment of learning needs through school records;
 - iv. Monitoring and facilitating placement and admission process.
- (b) Conducting assessment in the following two areas:
 - (i) Psychological

Psychological assessment will be done by Educational psychologists. If necessary, for further diagnosis, the services of clinical psychologists would be sought.
 - (ii) Educational

Educational assessment will be done by the class teacher.
- (c) Creating a database of ALL children who are observed to be 'At Risk' for Learning difficulties for appropriate placement.
 - i. Confidentiality of data is imperative.
 - ii. Selection, procurement and utilization of need based appropriate assessment tools. In due course of time, through Research Coordination Committee, age and level appropriate assessment tools will be developed.
 - iii. Conducting Need- based capacity building programs
 - iv. Setting up a nodal centre for guiding, supervising and monitoring the process of identification and assessment at the MIE

Strategy Goal 4: Curriculum, Assessment, Evaluation and Placement

- (a) Interconnectivity to be ensured in all curricular practices across the levels and subjects. Differentiation in curriculum and curricular practices to be adopted both in general and special schools.
- (b) Adaptation and modification of curriculum according to the learning needs by making it flexible, elastic and accelerated for learners in Category I & II.
- (c) Profiling learning needs of all learners and adjusting curricular practices
- (d) Development and implementation of Individualised Education Program (IEP) for learners in Category III & IV.
- (e) Adopting Differentiated Assessment procedures that would entail Assessment AS learning, Assessment FOR learning and Assessment OF learning.
- (f) Ensuring evaluation to reflect progression of ALL learners in all aspects of schooling; interconnectivity in evaluation and consistency in report preparation and presentation across the levels.
- (g) Certification after ascertaining optimum level of achievement in scholastic and vocational areas as per the potential. Develop strengths and abilities of all learners rather than highlighting limitations.
- (h) To recognize diversity among learners, the medium of instruction should include sign language for learners with hearing impairment, and Braille for learners with visual impairment.
- (i) Promote self-reliance and enable learners 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.
- (j) Make the class/subject teacher responsible for all learners in the

class. In case special support is required because of SEN, this should be in the form of assistance to the class/ subject teacher.

- (k) Education must aim at developing a system by which abstract concepts are effectively communicated to learners with varying learning styles, including those using sign language, Braille, etc.
- (l) Develop partnerships with institutions of higher learning, governmental organisations, and NGOs to promote participation of learners with disabilities in all educational activities.

Strategy Goal 5: Capacity Building of Professionals

- (a) Gear all teacher education programmes (both pre-service and in-service) to developing the pedagogical skills required in inclusive classrooms.
- (b) 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
- (c) Correlate the style of teaching to the learning styles of all learners.
- (d) Orientation and training in Inclusive Education for All teachers, administrators, managers, inspectors at pre-service and in-service levels from general and special schools as well as the faculty in institutions of higher education.
- (e) Hands-on training in adaptations and modifications in Curriculum, Classroom environment, teaching–learning process, teaching–learning materials including technology and devices, assessment and evaluation
- (f) Building a community of teachers through collaborations between general and special school teachers, resource support staff and volunteers

- (g) Empowering special teachers to do the follow-up of therapeutic interventions designed and implemented by various therapists such as Speech, Physio-and Occupational Therapists, with children in her class
- (h) Training and involving general school teachers in the process of screening, identification and assessment. Providing training in writing reports and profiling of learners in her class in general schools
- (i) Training of teachers at all levels in specific areas such as preparation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), Behaviour modification, Universal Design of Learning (UDL)⁸, differentiated instructions and differentiated assessment
- (j) Building Home-School Partnership through appropriate training of the parents. Empowering and involving parents in the teaching-learning process and facilitating creation of congenial environment for learning both in school/ college/ institution and at home.
- (k) Capacity building of Para-medical professionals (Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapist and Physio Therapist). Special emphasis may be given to role clarification and assignments.
- (l) Develop perspective and skills in all administrators, including heads of schools, for planning and executing programmes based on the philosophy of inclusion.

Strategy Goal 6: Creation, Provision and Strengthening of Support Services

- (a) Formation and activation of multi- disciplinary teams in SENRDC- to strengthen coordinated efforts. (The size and number of the clusters may vary according to the no. of general schools in a region).
- (b) Empowering existing resource centres and establishing Resource Support groups of professionals for providing well

- planned resource support to the inclusive schools.
- (c) Setting up multi-disciplinary teams in SENRDC.
 - (d) Forming Cluster of neighbouring schools in all regions of the island
 - (e) The Special school teachers working in schools managed by the NGOs should be entrusted with the responsibility of providing resource support to the inclusive schools as and when required.
 - (f) Digitization of learning resources by making necessary learning resources available online or through any other medium
 - (g) Resource support to be provided in the areas of assessment, diagnosis and prognosis, counselling, therapeutic interventions, social skills and add-on training as a preparation for vocational education
 - (h) The Resource Centres would be made responsible for preparing and maintaining records for documentation and creation of database of services provided
 - (i) Ensure the suitability, feasibility and quality of resource support provided
 - (j) Ascertain availability of age- and level- appropriate tools, especially the psychological tests, equipment and devices in each Resource Centre
 - (k) Educational support units as 'Enabling Units' may be established in secondary and tertiary education institutions to facilitate progression of students with SEN
 - (l) Special Service Units may be set up and operationalized to address severe and profound individual needs including of those who are home bound.
 - (m) The quality of resource support would be regulated, monitored and facilitated by the Monitoring Authority. A system for resource generation, mobilization, utilization and quality assurance will be developed and implemented.

Strategy Goal 7: Preparation for Life through Holistic Education

- (a) Providing need, interests and ability based education and skill training as an enabling strategy for life to learners with SEN through the resource centres.
- (b) Involvement of parents and the community in teaching-learning process and skill training.
- (c) Focused education and training to be provided in view of the IEP Goals.
- (d) The education and training to be geared towards addressing the abilities, competencies, skills for future planning and placement of learners with SEN.
- (e) To nurture all aspects of the personality, viz., cognitive, affective, and conative- games, dance, drama, music and art and craft must be given equal importance and value

Strategy Goal 8: Advocacy, Partnership and Empowerment

- (a) Create awareness about inclusive education for children and youth with SEN in society through various media- print, audio-visual, social media as well as face to face.
- (b) Create a platform to provide and share knowledge about Rights of the children / persons with special needs.
- (c) Prepare and partner with the stakeholders – peers, teachers, parents and professionals for Right Based Advocacy, shared responsibility and removal of attitudinal barriers.
- (d) Prepare children with special needs for self-advocacy from early years of schooling.
- (e) Develop ability in stakeholders to build relationships – personal, public and institutional for advocacy. Reciprocity, responsiveness and responsibility strengthen, build and sustain partnerships.

Advocacy for inclusive education of children with SEN requires:

- (a) A “can do” attitude from staff;
- (b) An inclusive ethos that values learners and parents;
- (c) Respect for differences and encouragement of peer support;
- (d) Identification of barriers and finding practical solutions;
- (e) Recognition that good teaching is inclusive teaching;
- (f) Strong leadership;
- (g) Equity in resource allocation

Concluding Note

The implementation of the identified goals that are at the heart of the Policy Framework and Strategy Document places the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research on track for the setting up of an inclusive education system and paving the way for Mauritius to become truly inclusive society.

Moving forward, the successful implementation of the strategy will rest on the active and enabling collaboration with the Ministry’s partners and relevant stakeholders so that the formulations in the to-be elaborated action plan can be executed in a phased manner.