Part E

Creating a Supportive Ecosystem





The NCF for School Education is applicable to all types of schools and all modes of schooling, including open schools, distance learning, alternative schools, non-formal schools, and virtual schools.

For the NCF to be a real transformational force for Indian school education, it will need to be appropriately complemented by other elements of the education system.

This section briefly describes the kind of ecosystem needed for the implementation of the NCF. Chapter 1 discusses ***capacity building*** *for NCF implementation. Chapter 2 details the* ***infrastructure and learning resources support*** *required to implement this NCF. Chapter 3 is about the* ***empowerment of Teachers*** *on various dimensions in line with NEP 2020. Chapter 4 enumerates the importance of* ***parents and the community*** *in supporting the learning of students. These matters require significant elaboration, which would be done with associated documents.*

Chapter 1

Capacity Building for Implementation

Implementation of the NCF will have many steps. Including the development of State Curriculum Frameworks (SCFs) and other Curriculum Frameworks that may be based on the NCF, appropriate syllabi, textbooks, and other materials. Hence, hereon, Curriculum Framework (CF) will be used to denote the relevant frameworks.

Curricular literacy among all stakeholders, whether associated with public or private schools, academic support structures, or Teacher education institutions, is critical for the implementation of the NCF.



Section 1.1
Curriculum Framework Literacy for All Stakeholders

a. Stakeholders involved in the implementation of Curriculum Frameworks

Teachers, Head Teachers, Principals, and syllabus and TLM developers are the key persons involved in the implementation of the relevant CFs. In addition, all the stakeholders in the ecosystem within which they work must be able to interpret the CFs in the context of their roles and support them. This will include personnel in academic and administrative support structures, as well as Teacher Education institutions. Parents and community members must also be CF literate; as key stakeholders in schooling, they must be able to understand changes in curriculum and processes and the expected learning.

It must be noted that the duration of the capacity development programmes, the modes, and the bodies that should conduct them, as mentioned in this chapter, are only indicative. The important matter is to ensure that high-quality and relevant capacity development of all stakeholders happens with speed and that relevant handbooks and other materials are made available. This would be relevant for all Grades.

b. Components of Curriculum Framework Literacy

The components of CF literacy are a deep understanding of:

i. The approaches and principles of the CF to achieve the Aims of Education

ii. Key curricular changes and transitions in pedagogy, content, and assessment in each Curricular Area to achieve these aims

iii. Roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder to execute the changes

iv. The importance of the above components

This understanding is necessary especially for Teachers to exercise their autonomy, and to take decisions best suited to the needs and context of their students.

c. Orientation to the relevant Curriculum Framework

An overall orientation to the relevant CF must be planned for all stakeholders at the earliest.

i. SCERT (or the relevant body) will anchor the design and module development for this programme. It will be implemented by the DIETs (and relevant bodies) using well-trained, high-capacity Resource Persons.

ii. A 2-3 day intensive orientation/programme must be designed separately for each set of stakeholders. This is necessary because, in addition to common areas, some aspects of the relevant CF will require a deeper focus based on specific roles and responsibilities.

1) All stakeholders must be oriented to the broad curricular, pedagogical, and assessment approach of the CF, as well as school restructuring. They must understand the key transitions and why they are necessary. They must also understand the expectations from schools regarding culture and processes.

2) All stakeholders must also receive a broad orientation to the Learning Standards and their implications for schools and classrooms.

3) Focus areas for Teachers must include, illustratively, details of the Learning Standards, Curricular Areas, experiential learning, a competency-based approach, formative assessments, and connecting to students' context.

4) Focus areas for Head Teachers and Principals must include, illustratively, expectations from them regarding school culture and processes, school restructuring, as well as approaches to curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment.

5) Focus areas for academic functionaries must include, illustratively, the key transitions they must support Teachers make, particularly in pedagogy and assessment. They must also receive an orientation on maintaining an empowering culture for Teachers.

6) Focus areas for administrative functionaries must include, illustratively, resourcing requirements for implementation of the relevant CF and monitoring and review informed by key transitions. They must also receive an orientation on maintaining an empowering culture for Teachers.

7) Parents and community members must be oriented to the Learning Standards so that they can follow the progress of students in the family. They must be aware of the ways in which they can support schools, whether as Resource Persons or by ensuring enrolment and attendance. Online modules for NCF literacy can also be available for interested members of the community.

d. Academic functionaries identified as per their specialisation must also undergo a more intensive face-to-face programme for building capacity in Art Education, Vocational Education, Physical Education and Well-being, and Education in Interdisciplinary Areas. This programme should be conducted annually in blended mode for 2-3 years after implementation of the CF, with at least six days of face-to-face interaction followed by pre-scheduled online sessions.

Section 1.2
Capacity Building of Teachers

Capacity building of Teachers to implement the CF must be comprehensively done across Stages of schooling, with a focus on the following.

a. Overall Approach to Capacity Building

i. The preferred mode is face-to-face, followed by frequent interactions and continuing on-site support. The programmes must be supplemented with digital material, relevant handbooks, and other training materials. Capacity building may be organised by DIETs or other bodies, and continued support will be provided by block-level and cluster-level functionaries. Modules and materials will be collaboratively developed by relevant stakeholders brought together by the SCERT.

ii. As far as possible, private schools could be part of these processes; otherwise, they must develop their own plans.

iii. Broadly, the modules for capacity building will address CF literacy, Learning Standards, Competency-based approach, Stage-wise pedagogy and assessment, textbooks and materials, and experiential learning. Also, Teachers must be oriented on how to leverage local resources, particularly for Vocational Education, Physical Education and Well-being, and Art Education.

b. Capacity building for Mathematics, Languages, Science, Social Science, and other subjects in the Secondary Stage

i. Capacity building of Teachers related to these Curricular Areas is necessary for them to understand and fully utilise the empowerment from the CF.

ii. This can be in the form of intensive face-to-face programmes to be conducted for about 10 days. This must be supplemented by single-day interactions at the block and cluster levels spread over the year, preferably face-to-face — the total of these single-day interactions should add up to about 15 days over the year. This must be continued for at least 2-3 years after the implementation of the relevant CF.

iii. For Secondary Stage Teachers, the capacity development will have to be aligned with the subjects being offered and their design.

c. Capacity building in The World Around Us, Art Education, Vocational Education, Physical Education and Well-being, and Education in Interdisciplinary Areas

i. The capacity building of Teachers related to these Curricular Areas must take into consideration the existing realities. For the first few years after the implementation of the relevant CF, Teachers who are not necessarily qualified to teach these subjects will have to help students attain Curricular Goals adequately, as per the design of the curriculum. For example, a Teacher of Social Science may have to teach Individuals in Society in Grade 9, and a Teacher of The World Around Us may have to teach Art Education in the Preparatory Stage. Teachers will undergo special orientation for these areas and will also require more intense ongoing support compared to other areas.

ii. For these Teachers, intensive face-to-face programmes must be conducted for 10 days twice in the first year after implementation of the relevant CF, totalling 20 days. A calendar of five follow-up on-site visits by Resource Persons for at least one day must be prepared between the two sets of face-to-face interactions. As above, this must be supplemented by single-day interactions at the block and cluster level spread over the year, preferably face-to-face — the total of these single-day interactions should add up to about 15 days over the year.

iii. In the second year after the implementation of the CF, a single face-to-face programme of 10 days duration with single-day interactions can be planned. This must be continued for at least 2-3 years after the implementation of the relevant CF.

Chapter 2

Ensuring an Appropriate Environment for Learning

All students must look forward to coming to school every day. A safe and stimulating physical environment can help make school a positive experience for all. Studies have also shown that when physical spaces are carefully designed to address the needs of students, they can have a positive impact on their overall well-being and learning.

Since most students spend close to six hours (or more) a day in school where they are engaged in a variety of activities, it is important to design school infrastructure in a way that addresses learning requirements and allows for play, gatherings, and interaction with others and with nature. All these aspects contribute to learning and support the smooth functioning of school processes.

Quality, completeness, and maintenance of infrastructure are key differentiators between a good school and a not-so-good one, especially in the eyes of parents and the community.

Safe, barrier-free, and adequate physical infrastructure must be available as per prescribed norms. Buildings and equipment must meet safety standards as per the law. Adequate budgets and utilisation for infrastructure development, infrastructure maintenance, and TLM must be available.

While the importance of safe and adequate infrastructure is well recognised, many schools across the country still struggle to meet the basic requirements for a conducive learning environment. However, many schools are taking several initiatives to improve their infrastructure and ensure a better learning environment for their students through strong School Management Committees (SMCs) and with the help of local communities. These schools have applied many creative ideas to overcome space and resource limitations to achieve learning goals. Collaboration among school administrations, local authorities, and the local community can play a critical role in finding solutions to the infrastructural challenges that many schools face. Some basic requirements that all schools should aim to address are detailed in the following sub-sections.



Section 2.1
Outdoor Infrastructure

Schools exist in varied environments across the country — from being on a busy main street with heavy traffic to being amidst an idyllic landscape bordering a forest. Setting up a school with the right infrastructure and safety measures can be a challenge in many locations across the country.

All schools must ensure that basic standards for infrastructure and safety are met to ensure learning for all students.

2.1.1 Basic Structure and Compound Wall

School buildings should be permanent structures constructed with appropriate materials that ensure structural stability and the long-term safety of all individuals who use the space. The school boundaries and grounds need to be protected from various external elements that could threaten the safe movement of students, so a compound wall and a secure gate can ensure that the entry and exit of visitors to the school are properly organised and monitored.

2.1.2 Open Space for Play and Safe Assembly

An outdoor open space in schools can be a space for students to play (outdoor games and sports) as well as a place for large gatherings, meditation, or a dedicated assembly point in the case of any emergency (e.g., fire, natural disaster). Schools could opt to install play equipment such as swings, climbing frames, slides, jungle gyms, and so on for young students.

2.1.3 Trees, Plants, and Nature

Nature is a great teacher. The presence of trees (including local fruit-bearing trees) and plants where students can find shade, explore, invent their own games, and observe birds, small animals, insects, and butterflies has a positive impact on learning. In addition to local flora and fauna, schools could have a dedicated kitchen garden where students participate in growing and nurturing plants, and a composting pit to process organic waste from the kitchen.

2.1.4 Accessibility and Inclusion

Schools must take measures to make the physical environment accessible for people and students with disabilities. At the least, ramps must be provided for wheelchair access, and lifts can be provided in schools that need them. Both ramps and stairs should have handrails. Tactile pavers to guide people and students with disabilities must be placed judiciously, particularly in toilets and in areas near drinking water units. Appropriate signage with text and pictograms, and in Braille if possible, can help people and students with disabilities move independently (e.g., directions to the ramp, accessible toilets if available).

While the entire school could have anti-skid flooring for ease of movement (including for wheelchairs), the toilet and area around drinking water units, where there is a danger of slipping, must have slip-resistant flooring.

Devices using assistive technology can be kept in the library for students with disabilities to use whenever required, e.g., magnifiers, text-to-speech software, books with large prints, Braille books and displays, personal amplification systems, speech output software, and specialised apps.

Simpler actions must also be taken after due care and thought are given to requirements, e.g., ensuring unobstructed corridors and classrooms, moving classrooms to the ground floor from upper floors to cater to specific students, and planning laboratories and libraries on the ground floor.

Section 2.2
Indoor Infrastructure

2.2.1 Classrooms

Classrooms are where Teachers and students spend most of their time in schools. Schools must have sufficient classrooms to accommodate all students comfortably and ensure that the dignity of every student and the learning process is respected.

Classrooms must be well-ventilated and well-lit spaces. Depending on the climatic conditions and school requirements, basic lights, fans, and electric power outlets with safe electrification would also need to be provided in classrooms.

The design of classrooms must take into consideration accessibility for all students and people with disabilities, the nature of different subjects and the recommended pedagogy, movement for a variety of learning activities, furniture for flexible seating arrangements, blackboards for Teachers and students, and facilities for storage and display.

Classroom organisation could be flexible, giving students the opportunity to move to other rooms. For example, a room dedicated for language learning could be designed to offer an immersive, print-rich environment with easily accessible resources for different learning levels across Grades. Similarly, dedicated rooms for the Art could be planned for conducting Art activities, with the provision of sufficient space for movement and storage of materials, props, stationery, and instruments. Wherever possible, schools could consider making provisions for using digital technologies and equipment to support learning practices (TV/projector/ interactive board, either in the classrooms or as a commonly shared multipurpose media room).

2.2.2 Libraries

Depending on the space available in the school, three types of libraries can be set up.

a. School Library

This is a separate room dedicated for use as a library with adequate furniture to store a wide range of books arranged and catalogued systematically, for students and Teachers.

Books could be categorised according to reading level, language, subject, and so on. Systematic labelling could help students navigate through the collection, and maintain entries in a library record book.

Storybooks for early readers are usually light and full of colourful pictures. These can be hung on the wall at a lower level using a string to draw the attention of younger readers, provide easy access for them to choose different books to browse through or spend time reading, or help them decide which books they want to read.

Such a library could also include multimedia and audio-visual learning resources with computers, projectors, and other relevant devices.

There should be sufficient space and appropriate furniture for students to sit comfortably and spend time reading, researching, and accessing resources in the library.

b. Classroom Library Corner

If a school has limited space, libraries can be set up in classrooms with appropriate material available for that particular Grade.

A corner library could also be set up in one part of a particular classroom. Here too, bookshelves, tables, or cupboards can be used to place the books.

c. Community Library

A school could also choose to make its library more open by extending it for the use of the local community after school hours. It could set up a part of the library outside the school premises, in a place that gives access not only to its students but also to students of other schools or other children and adults in the community. Such initiatives can become lively and enriching centres, especially when different people contribute books, periodicals, and magazines towards the library collection.

School alumni, youth, and adults could volunteer to help early readers by reading to them, organising storytelling activities, or managing the library's resources. A community library could also serve as a space for students to study after school hours, get together, and help one another with their homework.

2.2.3 Laboratories

Although laboratories are commonly associated only with science, schools must aim to expand the idea of a laboratory to other subjects as well. Laboratories must be kept open and accessible to students during their learning hours. They must be perceived as spaces for 'doing' — extending to a variety of learning experiments across disciplines where students explore, discover, and verify knowledge.

For example, students can access instruments required for measurement and geometry alongside raw materials such as wood to create their own measuring instruments. A laboratory can also have a stock of natural clay that can be used for visualising and creating 3D models, seals, toys, and other resources that can aid learning. The concept of a laboratory could be extended to workshops for woodwork/carpentry, electronics, mechanics, pottery, textiles, and sewing in schools for Middle and Secondary Stages.

2.2.4 Dining Area and Drinking Water

The area for eating meals must be shaded, clean, spacious, and hygienic. It should be welcoming to all people to sit comfortably and eat together. The dining area must also have sufficient space and an adequate number of taps for washing dishes and utensils after meals. Easily accessible and hygienic drinking water facilities should be provided in all schools. Timely maintenance of these facilities must be followed.

2.2.5 Toilets

Well-lit, clean toilets with safe and well-maintained plumbing and an uninterrupted supply of water are a basic requirement. Separate toilets for different genders and people with disabilities must be provided. Girls' toilets should stock sanitary pads and provide covered dustbins for the safe disposal of used sanitary pads.

2.2.6 Semi-open/ Partially Shaded Areas

Schools could also have semi-open areas, such as partially shaded corridors or verandas, where students can move safely, sit, play indoor games, or seek shelter from the rain. These areas could also accommodate display facilities where charts, poem cards, story cards, students' art works, and writings are presented and changed periodically. Schools could also think of creating interactive spaces in these areas where students find opportunities for sensorial exploration, e.g., interactive materials such as walls/surfaces with a variety of textures and objects that produce different sounds that students can play, such as musical instruments or wind chimes.

2.2.7 Uninterrupted Supply of Water and Electricity

Regular and uninterrupted supplies of water and electricity are essential for the smooth functioning of any school. Disruption in the water supply can impact the hygiene and cleanliness of toilets and the kitchen. Electricity is essential to power many devices that are used not only for learning, but also to operate computers and other electric and electronic devices that are integrated into school routines.

Schools could work closely with the local administrative authorities to ensure that the supply of water and electricity is prioritised for the school. At the same time, steps can be taken to educate all members of the school staff and students to use water and electricity judiciously and report any misuse.

Section 2.3
Infrastructure that Ensures Safety

a. Choice of building material: Physical safety in a school begins with the choice of materials used in the construction of the school building. Schools must avoid using easily flammable materials such as straw and ensure that the construction quality meets all school safety regulation standards. School buildings need to be secure, permanent structures with long-term stability.

b. Electrification and plumbing in the building must be standardised and concealed.

c. Doors, windows, and gates: Toilets for all genders must ensure safety and privacy by installing proper doors with latches that can be used by students of all age groups comfortably. Windows must be installed in all classrooms to ensure proper ventilation and light. The main entry and exit points of the school premises should have gates that can be closed and opened smoothly and locked after school hours.

d. Safety during emergencies: Multiple entry and exit points could be provided to avoid stampedes during emergency evacuations. Schools must have fire safety mechanisms and fire extinguishers in proper working condition. They could conduct regular fire drills involving all members of the school to orient students, Teachers, and other staff on how to evacuate the building safely and help those in need. Open spaces that could serve as safe assembly areas during natural disasters also need to be demarcated and clearly communicated to all members of the school. Helpline and Emergency numbers should be displayed in multiple locations on the school premises. Safety and first-aid kits must be easily accessible and available for use.

Other aspects of safety and its operationalisation are provided in the chapter on School Processes. The Ministry of Education's Guidelines on School Safety and Security clearly define the measures that schools and other relevant stakeholders must take to create a safe and secure environment for all students. They are an excellent resource for all educational institutions and settings.

Section 2.4
Infrastructure that Ensures Inclusion

All common spaces and property on the school campus meant for students and Teachers should be made accessible to all students and Teachers.

This includes barrier-free access to all parts of the school for people and students with disabilities, e.g., entry, exit, corridors, classrooms, library, laboratories, dining areas, play areas, toilets, use of furniture, and use of learning material.

Particular issues related to inadequate infrastructure or inadequately maintained infrastructure can create barriers for particular groups of students. For example, one important reason why many adolescent girls have poor school attendance is the lack of proper toilet and sanitation facilities in schools suitable for all students, including those with disabilities.

Chapter 3

Enabling and Empowering Teachers

Section 3.1
Ensuring an Enabling Environment for Teachers

A culture that encourages people to learn and work together characterised by trust and respect for all, is critical to a good school — this is possible in an environment that is open and caring and where dialogue, collaboration, inquiry, and reflection are embedded practices.

NEP 2020 places Teachers at the 'centre of the fundamental reforms in the education system'. It states that:

> *Education Policy must help re-establish teachers, at all levels, as the most respected and essential members of our society, because they truly shape our next generation of citizens. It must do everything to empower Teachers and help them to do their job as effectively as possible*
>
> *[NEP 2020, Introduction]*



Teachers need resource-rich, motivating environments, and continuous opportunities for professional learning and interaction. Teachers must feel a sense of pride in belonging to a well-qualified, close-knit, and vibrant professional group.

This includes ensuring adequate and safe physical infrastructure, facilities, and learning resources with safe drinking water, functioning toilets with running water, and basic hand washing facilities, as well as the infrastructure and teaching materials necessary to teach students effectively.

While these enablers are critical, they are not sufficient in themselves. Teachers are best placed to know what their students need and can find creative ways of addressing these needs. Hence, giving Teachers autonomy is necessary for change in our schools and classrooms.

Section 3.2
Teacher Autonomy and Accountability

Teachers are responsible for student learning and must be held accountable for it. But Teacher empowerment and autonomy are preconditions for accountability. Accountability is critical, but so is autonomy — an empowering culture based on autonomy is a necessary condition for accountability.

It must also be recognised that 'accountability' is a complex matter in education; it must not mean a mechanistic linking of student test scores (or progress on those) to Teachers as a measure of accountability. A simplistic understanding of accountability and actions on that basis do more harm than good to the education system. A far more nuanced understanding is required.

Competent and committed Teachers are critical to improving the quality of learning. Supportive environments within schools and the ecosystem improve Teacher effectiveness. Teachers are unique individuals with their own set of beliefs and personal theories about learners, learning, and education. To a creative and discerning Teacher, every learning episode presents unanticipated opportunities — the opportunity to spontaneously stimulate and support the learning of what was not planned, and the opportunity to omit learning of what was originally planned for in that particular session. Competent Teachers, when autonomous, make the most of these opportunities through sound educational judgements.

Teachers must have the pedagogic autonomy to plan and organise content, decide the sequence and methods of teaching students as the situation demands, along with ways of assessing their learning. All this must be based on the prescribed Curricular Goals, Competencies, Learning Outcomes, and pedagogical approaches and principles.

Teacher autonomy and accountability are consequences of Teacher capacity and the environment in which they work. For example, if Teachers do not have a strong knowledge base, they will not be able to exercise autonomy. At the same time, if Teacher practice is affected by a lack of infrastructure or Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR), the Teacher can be held accountable only for what is within their capacity. Hence, Teacher autonomy cannot be viewed as independent of the larger systemic accountability.

Section 3.3
Pupil-Teacher Ratio

It is widely understood and accepted that the right PTR enables individual attention by Teachers, and therefore can increase student engagement and achievement.

It is important to look at the PTR as not just a number, but as a measure that would lead to better Learning Outcomes. Many crucial classroom processes can be better implemented if the Teacher could operate in an environment of favourable PTR.

Pedagogy specialists argue that a lower PTR has a larger impact during the early years of schooling. It is found that students who attend schools with a lower PTR have a greater likelihood of continuing schooling for a greater number of years.

One important caveat is that reducing PTR does not imply filling schools with underqualified or temporary Teachers. PTR must be improved through the appointment and professional development of appropriately qualified Teachers.

Also, the PTR must account for resources available to students at home. A lower PTR may be warranted in classes where students have relatively fewer resources and support at home because of economic conditions.

Along with improved PTR, issues of infrastructure and the academic and pedagogic capability of Teachers must also be taken care of to take full advantage of lower PTR. There must be a full complement of Teachers for all students across all school Stages.

Section 3.4
Career and Professional Development Opportunities

NEP 2020, Para 5.18 speaks of equal career growth opportunities across all Stages of school education. All Stages of school education are critical and will require Teachers who are competent and committed.

This can happen only when pay and service conditions of Teachers are improved as soon as possible to be commensurate with their professional responsibilities and must be set to attract and retain talented Teachers in the profession. The long-term impact of this will be improved overall quality of the profession and people's view of growth opportunities in it.

All Teachers, from Foundational Stage Teachers to Secondary Stage Teachers, will be recruited with standard service conditions as per their work requirements and with the same salary structure.

All Teachers must have the opportunity to progress in their career (in terms of salary and promotions) while continuing to serve as Teachers in the same Stage of education (i.e., Foundational, Preparatory, Middle, or Secondary).

Teachers can also make a career shift to becoming Teacher educators, or academic and administrative functionaries, on the fulfilment of specified criteria, including additional certification.

The approach will be to ensure that growth in one's career (salary and promotion) is available to Teachers within a single school Stage and that there is no career progression-related incentive to move from being Teachers in early Stages to later Stages (though such career moves across Stages will be allowed, provided the Teacher has the desire and qualifications for such a move).

Section 3.5
In-Service Teacher Education, Mentoring, and Support

Teacher professional development is a journey, and Teachers progress through it at their own individual pace.

Different Teachers will be at different phases of their developmental journey and will have different developmental needs. Within each phase, the learning experience needs to be holistic and complete to a point that it can help Teachers bring about sustained change in their practice and move on to the next phase.

In the current context, and for at least the next 5-10 years until the pre-service programme makes the transitions outlined in NEP 2020, the role of in-service Teacher education is particularly important. Teachers must be able to implement relevant CF with care and understanding. Therefore, the professional development of Teachers must be such that they become competent and reflective individuals with the ability to drive educational improvement. Teachers must engage continuously with their professional development through a variety of means. Platforms for peer learning with mentoring and coaching support must be made available.

A school-based mechanism for the continuous professional development of Teachers is essential. These could be in the form of institutionalised meetings of subject group members, Class Teachers, Teachers teaching in a particular Stage, and the whole school plan and review meeting. To help Teachers, grow, Head Teachers and School Principals need to observe and assist them as they go about their tasks and hold individual meetings with them as well.

A well-thought-out school-based induction for the new Teachers, in which they get to learn about the vision and practices of the school, the expectations from them, and the nature of the support available, is essential. Senior Teachers can also be identified and groomed to become mentor Teachers for the new Teachers.

Journal writing, documenting one's teaching experiences, and writing articles for various education periodicals is yet another way for Teacher development, as writing helps an individual systematise their thoughts and experiences. This also enables Teachers to reach beyond the school audience and connect to the wider community of education professionals.

Teachers also need to engage in wholesome learning activities for their own growth. As students are taken on excursion tours and film screenings, and sports day or club activities are organised for students, similar efforts are needed for the group of Teachers.

Additionally, NCERT, SCERTs, DIETs, BITEs, BRCs, and CRCs provide academic mentoring and support to schools and Teachers through the development of support material, capacity-building sessions, on-site visits, and quality monitoring and supervision. These academic resource institutions must continue to play a key part in ensuring that Teacher Professional Development opportunities are continuously available.

Section 3.6
Pre-Service Teacher Education

Pre-service Teacher education must prepare Teachers with a sound knowledge base and a strong professional identity. This will be best done through an interdisciplinary curriculum that reflects the NCF, and through a graded exposure to practicum over a period. The four-year programme outlined in NEP 2020, which is to be detailed in National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCF-TE), will provide sufficient opportunities for Student Teachers to observe and experience school and classroom practices. Opportunities for dialogue with peers, Teacher educators, and practising Teachers will help them connect their theoretical understanding with practice. Sufficient time and space must be given to Student Teachers to develop this understanding — this will be enabled through the longer duration of the four-year programme. Once they complete the Teacher Education programme, Teachers will be able to continue their learning as practising Teachers, given sufficiently enabling conditions.

To ensure that Teachers are available for the restructured school Stages as soon as possible, the first step must be to estimate Teacher demand and supply. This must be undertaken by NCTE on priority, building on existing studies related to the demand and supply of Teachers for specific Stages of school education.

This will help ensure that the right number and type of universities offer the four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) with specialisations in subjects and Stages of education: Foundational, Preparatory, Middle, and Secondary. The curriculum for the specialisations within the ITEP must be based on the curriculum and pedagogy of NCF. It must also ensure adequate practice opportunities for Student Teachers in all kinds of school environments.

The Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) should also be extended to all Teachers of the Foundational and Secondary Stages once the re-structuring of school Stages is complete, as envisaged in NEP 2020.

This certification of suitability to teach will cover Teachers across all kinds of schools. Recruitment of Teachers must be through rigorous process comprising not only a written test but also an interview and classroom demonstration, as stated in NEP 2020.

Section 3.7
Head Teachers and School Principals

The Head Teacher or School Principal must create a supportive and empowering culture for Teachers so that they teach well (among other things), helping them in planning classes, providing access to appropriate resources, observing classes, providing constructive feedback, and creating an ethos where conversations centre around student's learning. Another critical role that Head Teachers and School Principals play is that of building relationships with parents and the community.

Head Teachers and school Principals need to constantly work towards ensuring dialogue with Teachers, support staff, and other key stakeholders on larger issues as well as their individual roles through formal meetings and need-based individual engagement. The effort should be to align the entire staff to a shared vision and to create a learning community.

It follows that Head Teachers and school Principals must keep working towards improving their own capacities to enable the functioning of Teachers. They must particularly work on their own biases, find time to know students and Teachers personally and professionally, and ensure transparent communication.

Section 3.8
Role of Academic and Administrative Functionaries

Academic Functionaries have important roles to play in leading the school education system towards improvement and transformation. They will play a key role in the implementation of this NCF as well.

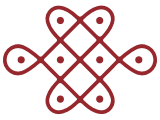
They are involved with schools, school visits and on-site support, continuous professional development at cluster-level meetings, in the development of innovative learning materials, as well as the development of a pool of academic resource persons to support Teachers.

Functionaries at the cluster and block levels need to support Teachers through classroom observation and demonstration of pedagogy. DIETs must develop extensive material for students and Teachers in the local language. In addition, DIETs must also create plans to support Teachers in the use of these materials. At the level of SCERT, the focus should be to develop the State curriculum, syllabus, textbooks, and other material. The SCERT should also take responsibility for sourcing, contextualising, and anchoring translations of materials wherever necessary.

Administrative Functionaries have a critical role in ensuring appropriate budgetary allocations for all aspects of resourcing, including the availability of Teachers, timely supply of TLM, with regular monitoring and review of progress. Appropriate collection and use of data would be necessary to ensure access to SEDGs. The integration of technology for this purpose would reduce effort while ensuring that data-based decision-making becomes possible very quickly.

An indicator of the quality of education will be the attainment of Competencies and Learning Outcomes. The National Achievement Survey (NAS) makes this tracking possible. In addition to NAS, States may plan State Learning Achievement Surveys (SLAS) with this focus.

Large-scale advocacy through public service messages and media campaigns, direct communication with parents, and wide-scale dissemination of simple methods and materials required for enabling parents to actively support their children's learning needs could also be designed.



Chapter 4

Community and Family Engagement

For more holistic learning and upbringing of children, parental and community participation is necessary. Children spend more time with their families and local community than at school, so schools need to engage with parents and communities to ensure a conducive learning environment for them beyond school hours.

Parents and family must be co-partners with the school in their children's learning and development. Communication with parents needs to be frequent and ongoing, with parents being treated as indispensable partners in the process of the child's education.

The local community is defined as parents, family, residents of the neighbourhood, youth groups, community leaders, and local governance institutions. The community must be involved in and support the school in as many ways as possible.

Apart from benefits at the level of individual students, the collaboration of school, family, and community results in the strengthening of not only schools but other institutions as well. It helps build local oversight and accountability in the education system.



Section 4.1
Enabling the Involvement of Parents and Families and Community

4.1.1 Inviting Parents/Families and Community to School

Parents and families must be invited to school functions and celebrations. Schools must find ways to engage them actively in such events as opposed to being mere audience/spectators. Therefore, the design of such functions and celebrations should aim for the active engagement of parents. Parents or families could also be asked to visit the school on working days to observe regular school functioning. They can, without disrupting the learning process of students, join the morning assembly and later spend some time in the classes. During intervals, they can interact with students and Teachers. This will give them first-hand experience of what goes on in the school on a normal day.

The school's relationship should not be limited to the current group of parents and families. The larger community from where students come to school should also be involved systematically in school processes to whatever extent possible. For example, they could help ensure enrolment and regular attendance, mobilise funds for infrastructure and learning materials, organise ingredients for more nutritious meals locally, and so on. One simple way to reach out to them is to invite them to events, functions, and celebrations where it is easier to accommodate larger groups. Exhibitions of work by students, Bal Melas, book fairs, film festivals, health camps, cleanliness drives, and campaigning for other social awareness causes are opportunities to engage with the larger community. If the school publishes any newsletter or magazine, it can also be distributed to a larger audience. Community-based events and services by student clubs (e.g., sports clubs, art and culture clubs, health and wellness clubs) can be organised. Schools should have an active alumni group; with their help, building and sustaining this connection would be easier.

The unutilised capacity of school infrastructure could be used to promote social, intellectual, and volunteer activities for the community to promote social cohesion during non-teaching / schooling hours. This will help schools to function as a platform to bring the community together (e.g., *Samajik Chetna Kendras)*.

4.1.2 Orientation Meetings

At the very beginning, when parents and families come for admission of their children, an orientation on what the school stands for, its teaching-learning processes, and expectations from parents and families is necessary. This could be done in several forms — one-to-one meetings where individual queries can be taken up; meeting with a group of parents where a presentation on the school can be given; and sharing a written document about what parents should know. A tour of the school premises led by students would be a more creative and effective way of orienting parents and families. By interacting with students, they would get a good feel of what they are learning in the school.

When members from the larger community visit school, a short session, a tour, or an exhibition about school can be organised to orient them on various aspects of school functioning.

4.1.3 Parent Teachers Meetings

Parents and families must be treated as indispensable partners in the process, not as people who are availing of a service or people who need to be given only progress reports to. This must be reflected in the school's culture, in the way it welcomes and engages with parents and families, the community, and other visitors. Irrespective of the parental and familial backgrounds, attitudes, and dispositions, schools need to make them comfortable. There should be clear communication with parents and families on when they can visit schools. They should be properly welcomed and attended to.

While Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs) are a forum through which larger parent bodies engage with and contributes to school processes, communication with parents and families need to be frequent and ongoing.

Parents and families need regular updates on how their children are progressing in various learning domains, like in different subjects and socio-emotional aspects. At the same time, Teachers also need to know the home and community context of students to provide the requisite support at school. This enables dialogue between parents and families and Teachers on the kind of support students need at home. They could be invited to school regularly for discussions about their child's learning, and also be given updates by the Teacher conducting home visits. Holding meetings at regular intervals is necessary to facilitate mutual sharing, trust building, and ownership. They may also solicit meetings with Teachers as and when required.

These meetings should not primarily be about telling parents and families about the issues and challenges being faced with their children, but about what their children are learning, and the details of efforts being made by the school. Maintaining an updated student progress portfolio will be a huge help in this sharing, and parents and families will be happy to see how the school is keeping a proper record of student progress. On PTM days, schools could organise fun activities that parents and families could participate in. This will help build camaraderie between them and Teachers.

Teachers should also visit parents and families periodically, as knowing the home environment and the larger socio-cultural context of students is a prerequisite for providing more customised support to students.

4.1.4 Building Perspectives among Parents and Families and Community

One important aspect of the school's dialogue with parents and families and the community would be around those aspects of education and school processes where the school needs to build their understanding and perspective. These could be issues such as attendance, on establishing relationships based on love and care rather than fear and punishment, home assignment, tutorial support, the inclusion of local language and context in the teaching process, health and hygiene issues, and behavioural norms where discussions with parents and families

will help this partnership. For example, in early grades, a shared understanding of the importance of child development in the early years, different domains of development and learning, the need for stimulation and engagement in a conducive and safe home environment, and the importance of basic health and nutrition will go a long way in ensuring students all-round development. Similarly, when students reach adolescence, conversations with parents and families about the changes that occur at this age are necessary. The kind of understanding and approach required for engaging with adolescent children would be integral to this dialogue.

A critical area of communication between schools and parents and families is about expected behavioural norms and consequences. Learning has to be joyful on the whole and it requires seriousness, perseverance, and a lot of hard work. In a school, all this is achieved through teamwork, so students must learn to be socially sensitive and responsible. These expectations must be communicated to and discussed with students and parents and families at the time of admission and at regular intervals. These behavioural expectations should largely be defined in positive terms, and if there is a student diary, then school rules should also find space there. They should also be displayed on the general notice board of the school. The consequences of not abiding by the rules should also be clear and well communicated.

4.1.5 Parents and Families and the Community as Resource Persons

Some parents and families, and members of the community could also be seen as important resource persons who through a well thought-out plan, can also contribute academically. Bagless Day is one such window where such engagement can be planned. Identified individuals/ volunteers can help with organising and supervising small local field trips; share their knowledge and experiences when particular topics are being studied (e.g., growing plants and controlling for pests, how to perform first aid for basic injuries, cooking a simple healthy meal, demonstrating basic woodwork, talking about animals or vehicles); help the Teacher align aspects of school practices to the local context (e.g., local festivals, local food, local art forms); and be part of the classroom on designated days as an observer or co-teacher. They could also provide learning opportunities to students through visits to their place of work. Parents and families and community workers could also support Teachers in teaching and learning in areas such as Art, Physical Education and Well-being, and Vocational Education, as per their expertise and the requirements of the school. Schools need to build a database of such parents and community members.

Efforts must be made to involve the community and alumni in volunteer efforts for addressing learning gaps by providing tutoring help. Databases of literate and willing individuals (retired scientists/government/semi government employees, alumni, and educators) will help achieve this purpose.

Section 4.2
School Management Committees

There was a time in the past when schools were established, owned, and run by the village and local communities. But modern schools are either run by the State or certain societies and trusts. In this scenario, the onus of initiating and sustaining the participation of parents and families and the community lies with the school staff and its governing bodies. School Management Committees (SMCs) are the official mechanism through which community participation is ensured. Mothers, school alumni, local people with expertise in relevant areas of school functioning, and those with exemplary public spirit should be included as SMC members. This will substantially increase the engagement of the SMC with the school.

In public schools having SMCs, School Development Plans (SDPs) are prepared by this committee. It is an important document that manifests the priorities of the school in alignment with the vision of the school as well as its current status. The plan should have clear short-term and long-term goals and steps to move in that direction. The plan must also have mechanisms to review the progress of work done in the school.

SMC meetings should be held regularly to review school progress and to take necessary steps wherever required. These meetings can also be used to orient committee members on various educational matters so that they also grow in their understanding of the educational process and can play a more active and supportive role in ensuring all enabling supports for student learning.

The school-community partnership has great potential for ensuring better learning for students and community development. The relationship should not be limited to only sharing updates on student progress, resource mobilisation, or participation as an audience in school functions. Schools need to build quality relationships with parents and families and the community for enabling the learning process at the school and fulfil the larger role a school is expected to play in the life of the community they serve. A school necessarily brings different community members together for the education of their children and also has the potential for achieving greater social cohesion among these members through its educational endeavour.