NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY
SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY

1. UNESCO views inclusion as "a dynamic approach of responding positively to pupil diversity and of seeing individual differences not as problems, but as opportunities for enriching learning." The Social Inclusion Policy of Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU) has been set in the Indian context adapting the spirits of various international declarations.

2. Inclusion refers to values based on equity, community, participation, respect for diversity and social justice. It implies reduction of inequality, both economic and social, and providing equality of opportunities. While inclusion commonly restricted to concern for marginalized and differently abled learners or those categorized as having special educational needs, in reality it is about reducing barriers to learning and participation for all types of learners. Inclusion implies reducing discrimination on the basis of gender, class, disability, economic background, gender orientation, ethnicity and family background.

3. Diversity is welcomed and viewed as a rich resource. It is related to a fundamental aim of education of contributing to the development of sustainable ways of life in sustainable environments. It is about schools and communities acting in a mutually supportive relationship. Inclusion is taken as the provision of services to learners with disabilities, including those with severe impairments to participate as a full and contributing member of the society.

4. Inclusive education is based on the philosophy of inclusion, which in turn is based upon empathy. The 'inclusion', with its notions of equality rather than compassion, is subverted rather than rejected. Indian philosophy of inclusive education thus, is deeply ingrained in India's inherent culture of 'karma' and religions of love and equality.

5. From practical point of view, social inclusion can provide improvement for the quality of education and social life for all with diverge needs in the socio-cultural perspectives. The central precept of socio-cultural theory is the co-construction of knowledge, between the individual and social processes.

6. Social Inclusion has a deep-seated sociological basis. The social stratification tends to fix people in the social structure that leads to differentiations, inequities and exclusion. Social exclusion that constitutes the basis of conceptualization of social inclusion, to be perceived in relation to - (i) social isolation subjected to social discrimination and deprivation, (ii) social rights as barriers to full exercise of human rights, (iii) social marginalization as denial of opportunities and dignity under the pretext of religion, caste, ethnicity etc. Thus, Social inclusion seeks to address these issues in order to bring about equity and maintain basic human dignity and human rights. Education is perceived as an effective means of achieving inclusion in society.

7.Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU),established by the State Act of Govt. of W.B. in 1997, has been continuously striving to build an inclusive knowledge society through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode of education.

8. According to the national policy of access in higher education, NSOU has been trying to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education involving all sections of the society for providing and developing the high quality of knowledge base through ODLmode.

9. The vision of the NSOU, the only State Level University and Resource Centre for ODL with national recognition and presence, is to provide seamless access to sustainable and learner-centric quality education, skill upgradation and training to all learners by using innovative methodologies and technologies ensuring convergence of existing systems for massive human resource development in the State for promoting integrated national development along with global understanding.

10.Section 4 of the NSOU Act, 1997 has stated the Objectives of the University,some of which relevant to the social inclusion policy are –
(b) to provide opportunities for higher education to men and women: (i) being deprived of the benefit of higher education in the normal course owing to socio-economic conditions or other limitations or (ii) being drop-outs or (iii) being brought under the scheme of adult education or (iv) working in homes or engaged in cultivations or employed in factories, offices or schools or engaged in any profession or vocation;
(c) to organize certificate courses, diploma courses, degree courses, post-graduate courses and research courses for the benefit of the working population in various fields and for the benefit of those who wish to enrich their lives by studying cultural and aesthetic subjects;
(d) to design and develop distance education programme relevant to the specific needs of the people;
(e) to design and develop education and training packages to meet the demand for technical and vocational manpower needed for the economic development;
(f) to establish mechanism through network and other arrangement to share programmes, services, technologies and other resources to ensure cost-effectiveness of education and training;
(g) to make provision for research for innovative course development and for advancement and dissemination of knowledge;
(h) to collaborate with the Indira Gandhi National Open University established under the Indira Gandhi National Open University Act, 1985, and other open universities in the country in extending educational opportunities to the people, and/or to recognize, or collaborate with, other research institutions in the country for promotion of research activities.

11.The thrust areas of the University are to:

- provide the scope of access to higher education to the learners from all segments of the society;
- offer high-quality innovative and need based academic programmes to those who require;
- reach the socially, economically, geographically, educationally or otherwise disadvantaged and marginalised learners;
- promote, coordinate and regulate the standard of education offered through ODL mode;
- provide continual professional, vocational or skill development through proper training and employability;
- adapt a variety of media and latest digital technologies in imparting education;
- develop the Open Education Resource (OER) Centre and repertoire for the benefit of learners.

12.Following policies has been adapted by the NSOU to promote social inclusion:

- *Reaching the Unreached:* NSOU with its diverse low-cost programmes of education has already reached a significant group of learners among the disadvantaged population of the society. However, a significant cross-section of people still remains outside its reach. The focus of the University is mandated to reach out to them. Still further specific efforts shall be made for providing access to education and equity in opportunities to women, SCs, STs, minorities, rural population, remote areas, people with special disability and socially-economically weaker section of the society building a greater flexibility in the University system.
- *Widening the scope of subjects of study*:Inclusion of the B.Ed. Special Education in VI, HI, ID, LD and other academic programmes for Inclusion in Education;
- *Strengthening the faculty and attracting the talent pool:* To maintain the high academic standard to compete the fast-changing global environment of educational services, newer programmes have been introducing. The University is constantly keeping up its academic offerings at the cutting edge of quality and societal needs.
- *Providing effective Student-Support Services*: It is designed on the basis of students' Feed-backs;
- *Establishing Open Education Resources (OER)*:A Repertoire on OER has been developed with its policy framework for all students, teachers, officers and research scholars of the University;
- *Providing scope of using electronic media and digital learning:*The University is now providing the facility of using electronic media and digital learning for learners as a policy of learning equity;
- *Extension Education:* Extending education by the University to the grass-root level of the society to establish University-Society linkage;
- *Research Activities:* The University has framed a policy for exploring the scope of extensive Research activities, especially on social inclusionstrategies and its management in the University System;
- *Total Quality Management (TQM):* Implementing TQMwith a special focus on disadvantaged learners is the focussed policy of the University.
- Providing the scope of lifelong learning.