

## Integrating Inclusion:

One of the goals of the institution as guided by its vision is to bring about social equity to create a just and caring society. The faculty members have been conscious of the fact that the general B. Ed. course falls short in addressing inclusion especially for classroom teaching and learning. This gap was evident for the faculty when they visited inclusive schools and the idea of integrating inclusive strategies in planning and preparation of lessons originated.



Pedagogy related inclusive practices were the focus of the initiative. The college has integrated key questions on inclusion for special needs in the lesson plan that forces student teachers to think about inclusion and accommodations for the needs of the differently abled. Before we embarked on lesson integration for all student teachers a small scale pilot study was conducted.

The pilot study was conducted with a cohort of student teachers for two years. The institution collaborated with the special Education dept of SNTD for co-teaching for an inclusion program. The student teachers of both institutions were paired to plan an inclusive lesson and co-teach. The co-teachers developed common inclusion oriented lesson plans to actually implement in schools. They were guided by the faculty from both institutions and also an international expert who shared ideas. The pay backs were useful: exemplars were developed; co-teaching lesson plans for inclusion were developed and video filming of the co-teaching lessons was done. This experiment was modeled for two years. In the second year, more teacher educators from the institution were involved to enhance capacities in this area. This gave the institution the confidence to declare our intent to take on more in terms of inclusion.

The faculty decided to upscale this learning to all 100 student teachers and create readiness to address inclusion and make inclusion not an option but a non-negotiable part of our lesson planning. Hence, in the third year it was decided to include two questions on inclusion. They were simple questions but student teachers were forced to think about accommodations they would make in the lesson plan for the children with different needs both in teaching and evaluation stage. An expert was invited to train faculty and student teachers to the intricacies of inclusion, learning disabilities and strategies to deal with them. More important was how to address those questions.

The benefits of this exercise were immense. Student teacher feedback indicates that a large majority think the idea of introducing questions on inclusion in the lesson plan is much required. They now realized that their lesson plan cannot ignore diverse learners. Overall the findings of the study indicate a positive reception to the idea of inclusion. Nearly 50% did not find the questions on inclusion easy to attempt. It also indicated that more training for teacher educators and more time for student teachers to internalize the idea is required.

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The belief that teachers can design a classroom to naturally facilitate the active involvement of all children with and without disabilities has strengthened both for teacher educators & student teachers.



Co teaching for inclusion – KKCE student teacher with SNTD student teachers at Guru Harikishan High school, Santacruz (W), Mumbai

*The co-teaching experience was an eye opener to another world of differentiated teaching. It was a good experience and worthwhile in the long run.*

*Charu Singh (student teacher)*

*Workshop and training for inclusion along with the process of planning lessons for inclusion was very challenging. The journey was tough but the outcomes were fulfilling.*

*Blessy George (student teacher)*

