

# MODULES ON STUDENT DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**Editors: Nidhi S. Sabharwal and C.M. Malish**



**Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education**  
**National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration**

(Deemed to be University)

17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi - 110016 (INDIA)



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## Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches

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### MODULE

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# PREFACE

The Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE) is a specialised centre established at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA). The centre promotes and carries out research in higher education policy and planning, and aims to contribute to evidence-based policy-making in higher education. The thrust areas of research include access and equity, quality, teaching and learning, governance and management, financing, and graduate employability in higher education. The centre is currently implementing research studies in selected institutions in several states of India.

Equity and inclusion in higher education are significant research areas at the CPRHE/NIEPA. Related to this theme, the CPRHE/NIEPA completed a large-scale study titled “Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: A Study of Institutions in the Selected States of India,” with funding support from the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). The study was carried out, by Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr C. M. Malish, in institutions located in six states, namely Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. A detailed questionnaire-based survey among 3,200 students was administered, close to 200 interviews were conducted with faculty and administrators, about 70 focus group discussions with students were held, and 50 students’ diaries were completed. The study helped understand unique challenges faced by students from the socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and assess institutional response to the changing nature of student diversity.

As a follow-up to the study, the CPRHE/NIEPA was requested by the ICSSR to prepare modules related to student diversity and social inclusion in higher education. An Expert Group was constituted to advise and guide the modules’ preparation. The expert group consisted of renowned academics, institutional leaders, and representatives of the Ministry of Education (MoE), ICSSR, and NITI Ayog.

Seven modules have been prepared as a part of this study. These are Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches (Module 1); Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education (Module 2); Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses (Module 3); Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education (Module 4); Social Inclusion in a Higher Education Campus (Module 5); Institutional Mechanism for Managing Student Diversity (Module 6); and Student Diversity and Civic Learning (Module 7). These modules are primarily meant to support and facilitate the CPRHE/NIEPA's efforts towards institutional-level capacity development, in improving the student experience in social and academic domains and academic performance of students from the SEDGs, and in creating a more inclusive campus environment.

We are grateful to the ICSSR for the funding support and to Professor Sukhadeo Thorat, former Chairperson of the ICSSR, for his sustained advice and encouragement. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Professor N. V. Varghese, Vice-Chancellor, NIEPA, for his untiring guidance in preparing the modules. Thanks are also due to Professor R. Govinda and Professor J. B. G. Tilak, former Vice-Chancellors of NIEPA, for their support and advice at various stages of the preparation of the modules. We express our gratitude to all authors who have contributed to the modules. Finally, we appreciate the efforts put in by our colleagues, Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr C.M. Malish, for preparing and finalising the modules.

**Professor Pradeep Kumar Misra**  
Director, CPRHE



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We received valuable help and support from various sources about and during the preparation of these modules on student diversity in higher education. The CPRHE/NIEPA's proposal to develop the modules was supported and funded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). We are grateful to the ICSSR for its help and support. We would like to thank Professor Sukhdeo Thorat, former Chairman of the ICSSR, for his sustained advice and encouragement. He showed keen interest at every stage of preparation of the modules. We would like to thank Professor R. Govinda, former Vice-Chancellor of NIEPA, who provided his guidance and advice.

We would like to thank Professor J. B. G. Tilak, former Vice-Chancellor of NIEPA, for his support and advice at various stages of preparation of the modules. We are grateful to Mr Basavaraj Swamy, former Registrar, NIEPA, and Dr. Sandeep Chatterjee, current Registrar, and his team including staff in department of finance and accounts of the NIEPA for extending administrative support in the preparation of the modules.

We acknowledge with deep respect the contribution by Professor N. V. Varghese, both as an institutional leader such as founding Director of the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education and former Vice-Chancellor of NIEPA, and as academic mentor. We have heavily relied and learnt from the Modules on District Planning in Education prepared at NIEPA 1997 led by Professor Varghese. We express our gratitude for his guidance at different stages of the implementation of the modules and his meticulous efforts in providing comments and suggestions on the draft modules.

We are also grateful to all colleagues in the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education, viz Professor Mona Khare, Dr. Garima Malik, Dr. Anupam Pachauri, Dr. Jinusha Panigrahi and Dr. Sayantan Mandal, for their valuable inputs in the meetings held for preparation of the modules.

The development of the modules was undertaken as a collaborative activity. The CPRHE/NIEPA organised an expert group meeting to discuss the modules. We are

thankful to the guidance extended by the members of the experts committee: Professor Meenakshi Thapan, Professor Meenakshi Gopinath, Professor Sivanandan, Professor Sudhanshu Bhushan, Professor Siba Prasad Adhikary, Professor Mehtab Manzar, Professor Bakshi, and representatives of the ICSSR, NITI Ayog and Ministry of Education. Their close scrutiny and expert opinion helped in developing the approach and in the revision of the modules. All co-authors who have contributed to the modules were very active and involved from the very beginning. They willingly revised the modules after the discussions in the authors meet.

We express our sincere thanks to Monica Joshi, Mayank Rajput, Chetna, Aqsa and Sumit who helped in organisation of the meetings and preparing documents for reproduction. We are grateful to each one of them for their contribution.

**Nidhi S. Sabharwal**

**C. M. Malish**

CPRHE/NIEPA

# INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the higher education sector in India has grown considerably. Higher education in India has shifted from an elite stage of development to a massification stage. Accompanying this massification in higher education is the increasing diversity among the student population. The student population on college campuses, relatively homogenous and elite previously, is now represented by non-traditional social group learners. These learners from the non-traditional groups belong to diverse social, economic, linguistic and regional backgrounds. While the presence of diverse groups on campuses reflects the advancement of equity in access, recent research raises concerns about the challenges faced by students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, such as the scheduled castes, other backward classes and scheduled tribes. These challenges are related to low academic outcomes, social tensions and its associated practices, prejudices and biases. For institutions to address the challenges facing students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups, it is essential that educational administrators and faculty members must be sensitive to these students' concerns.

The purpose of the modules is to sensitise the institution-level stakeholders, such as students, teachers and administrators in higher education, on issues related to student diversity, specific challenges facing students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and the role of higher education in promoting civic learning. Developing modules on student diversity in higher education is an extension of the study carried out by the centre and, thus, a mechanism of research-based engagement with institutional-level stakeholders.

The study titled "Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: A Study of Institutions in Selected States of India" was coordinated by Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr. C. M. Malish, and it was carried out in institutions which were located in six states, namely, Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. In order to develop an understanding of the challenges faced by students from the socially excluded groups and institutional response to the changing nature of student diversity, the methodology followed was the following. A detailed questionnaire-based survey among 3,200 students was administered, close to 200 interviews were conducted

with faculty and administrators, close to 70 focus group discussions with students were undertaken and 50 diaries were completed by students. As part of this project, the research outputs prepared and submitted include: 6 state team reports and 1 synthesis report; 2 CPRHE Research Papers; 1 CPRHE Seminar Report; 3 Policy Briefs in English with translations in Hindi; and more than 10 published journal articles and chapters in books (CPRHE Annual Report, 2022). In the policy research cycle, CPRHE-NIEPA organised two major events based on the research findings of the CPRHE study. A national seminar was organised and it brought together academics and policy makers concerned with institutional response to the changing nature of social diversity of student population. A policy dialogue webinar was organised and it was successful in bringing together academics, policy makers and institutional leaders and emphasised significance of institutional reforms for making campuses inclusive by valuing and promoting diversity. Policy briefs prepared by the CPRHE were the basis for the dialogue with various stakeholders of higher education.

On the successful completion of the research project, the CPRHE/NIEPA was requested by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) to prepare modules related to student diversity and social inclusion in higher education. These modules are primarily meant to support and facilitate the CPRHE/NIEPA's efforts toward institutional-level capacity building so as to improve the academic performance of students from the SEDGs and create more inclusive institutional environments. The modules are envisaged to be made available to the public as a public good.

The modules have been written in a simple style. However, they are not meant to be self-learning modules. The primary target group for the modules includes the faculty members, administrators and practitioners who are directly responsible for extending support to students from socially and economically disadvantaged social groups. In other words, these modules can form the essential teaching-learning material to organise training courses at the institutional level. Hence, an effort is made to explain the concepts and elaborate the steps are taken to discuss the challenges faced by students from the SEDGs in detail, with examples of strategies of consideration. Most of the modules contain module-specific reflective questions at the end.

The logic of the sequence of the modules is as follows: Module 1 contains a discussion on the concept and approaches to achieving student diversity, equity and social

inclusion in higher education. Module 2 includes a discussion on the three stages of student diversity for a systematic assessment of the status of student diversity in higher education. The three stages of student diversity are like this: Stage I of social diversity, which is measurable and represents diversity in the nation's population. Stage II is of academic diversity present in the classrooms. In Stage III, diversity is a condition of social inclusion on campus. As noted, these stages are developed on the basis of empirical evidence generated through the CPRHE study and elaborate the indicators to measure the three dimensions of diversity.

Module 3 includes the dimensions of academic diversity found in student composition. It discusses the relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics of the student body with the latter's varying levels of academic preparation to pursue higher education and challenges associated with achieving Stage II diversity, that is, academic integration. The module will highlight promising practices to achieve academic integration in higher education institutions.

Module 4 discusses the concept and the practice of discrimination in higher education in terms of social group identity, such as caste, ethnicity, gender and religion of students and its intersectionalities. Module 5 discusses the concept and approach to social inclusion in higher education institutions and attempts to develop a nuanced understanding of student experiences from admission to exit from college to inform points at which interventions are required. Module 6 elaborates on the approaches and strategies to be adopted by higher education institutions for the efficient management of student diversity. The final module, 7, introduces the concept of civic learning in higher education and attempts to provide clarity on the link between student diversity and civic learning.

The modules were prepared on the basis of several rounds of discussions that we had at the NIEPA. First, the CPRHE identified themes for the modules based on their completed research study and analysis related to student diversity, social inclusion and civic learning in higher education. The themes of the modules were presented, discussed and approved by members of the research advisory group for the research project. The areas identified for the modules included:

Module 1: Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches;

Module 2: Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education;

Module 3: Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses;  
Module 4: Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education;  
Module 5: Social Inclusion in the Higher Education Campus;  
Module 6: Institutional Mechanism for Managing Student Diversity;  
Module 7: Student Diversity and Civic Learning.

A detailed framework was further developed for the modules by the CPRHE faculty members, after which this framework was subjected to close scrutiny by a group of experts in a meeting organised by the CPRHE/NIEPA. An Expert Group Committee was formed for the purpose of advice and guidance on the overall approach towards the modules, and, to discuss structure and content of each module. The framework of the modules, the outline and content of each module were presented to the group. The members of the expert group consisted of academics, intuitional leaders (Vice-Chancellor and Principal of College), and representatives of ICSSR, NITI Ayog and Ministry of Education (MoE).

After the discussions with the experts, the framework of the modules was further revised with general guidelines, comments and suggestions made by the experts before presenting it in the Authors' meet. Academics who are experts in areas of diversity and inclusion in higher education were invited to be co-authors of the modules by the CPRHE/NIEPA. An authors' meet to discuss the structure and contents of the modules was held for developing a shared understanding on the framework to the modules and improving the modules. Based on the discussions, the framework was further modified, after which all the individual modules were developed by the CPRHE faculty members and co-authors of the modules.

These modules were further subjected to a close review in the workshop organised with the members from the Expert Group Committee and the authors of the modules, organised by the CPRHE/NIEPA. The drafts of the modules were shared with all the expert members for their review prior to the organisation of the workshop. The modules have been revised and finalised based on the comments and suggestions of the experts. We hope this module will be useful towards advancing equity and inclusion in higher education in India.

April, 2023

**Nidhi S. Sabharwal**  
**C. M. Malish**  
CPRHE/NIEPA

## MODULE 1

# Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches

This module has been prepared with certain specific objectives.

### **THEY ARE:**

To discuss the concept of student diversity, equity and social inclusion in higher education.

To discuss the approaches to achieving student diversity, equity and social inclusion in higher education.

To discuss the existing programmes to address student diversity, equity and social inclusion in higher education.

## Introduction to Module 1: The Context of Changing Scenario of Higher Education in India

Higher education is now increasingly considered relevant to individuals' productivity, prosperity and economic growth. The role of higher education is immense in developing collective capacities, advancing social cohesion and promoting a democratic public sphere. The global spread of COVID-19 reminds us of the critical significance of higher education and the resulting research outcomes for the common good and sustainable development. Access to higher education and completion is widely acknowledged as contributing incrementally to improving individual earnings by providing better career opportunities and access to subsequent economic opportunities. In other words, unequal distribution of opportunities to access higher education can be an important source of inequalities in the current context.

Over the last few decades, India's higher education (HE) has witnessed a massive expansion. Between 2002 to 2021, the enrolments in higher education nearly quadrupled. By 2021, the number of students in higher education in India has grown to 38.5 million. Today India is the world's second largest higher education system (Varghese, 2015).

India entered a stage of massification of higher education in this century. The term 'massification' means mass enrolments of students in the HE system. It is one of three stages of development of higher education according to Martin Trow's classification of stages of higher education development (Trow, 2006). According to this classification of stages of higher education development, a country is at an elite stage of higher education when the gross enrolment ratio (GER) is less than 15 per cent. That is, the HE system is in an elite stage of development when less than 15 per cent of the population, corresponding to the college-going group of 18-23 years, participate in HE. The HE system is at a stage of massification when the GER is between 15 per cent and 50 per cent, which means that up to 50 per cent of the population, corresponding to the college-going age cohort of 18-23 years, participate in HE. The HE system is at a stage of universalisation when the GER is over the 50 per cent mark; that is, over 50 per cent of the population that corresponds to the college-going age cohort of 18 to 23 years old participate in higher education.



A rise in social demand has driven the scale of expansion of HE in India. This social demand is linked to the pressure from a larger cohort of eligible higher secondary school graduates to pursue higher education. Beyond demographic pressures, the growth of the knowledge economy demanded highly trained human resources, which necessitated improving the supply of higher education institutions (HEIs) and expanding the higher education system.

It is notable that the changes in higher education in India reflected the expanding enrolment and widened access to HE to previously under-represented population groups. This social agenda of access is the impact of constitutional mandates and concerted affirmation action policies efforts to reduce barriers to entry and narrow differences in opportunity structures to make HE more accessible to students from the socially and economically disadvantaged population groups (SEDGs). One of the implications of the increase in student enrolment and equity initiatives is that the campuses become more 'diverse' regarding students' socio-economic, religious and gender backgrounds.

Thus, the expansion of the higher education sector has been accompanied by a widening of the student body to include a rise in the enrolment of students from the socially and economically disadvantaged social groups in higher education in India. Students from social backgrounds such as women, the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes previously under-represented in higher education have gained entry in large numbers in HE in India.

## **The Concept of Equity in Higher Education**

Knowledge and skills acquired in higher education are considered seminal for the prosperity of individuals and nations in an increasingly knowledge-based economy. Since knowledge has become essential in economic development, the demand increases for an educated workforce. The empirical evidence shows that one of the critical factors contributing to economic growth in recent decades is human capital (people's ability).

The human capital theory postulates that investment in people has an economic benefit for individuals and society. Along with land and equipment, it is widely

acknowledged that people's ability (human capital) is considered helpful to the economy's production process (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964). Health, nutrition, training and education are the essential forms of human capital investment. Investment in *education* and *training* is known to grow human capital, increase future productivity and positively influence all forms of human capital (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1981).

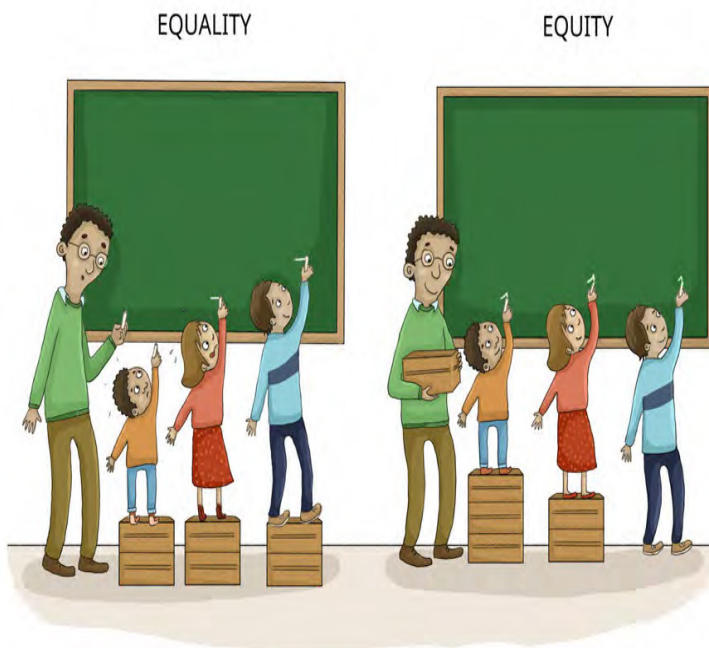
A well-educated workforce, especially a university degree, has become necessary in knowledge-based economies. The channel through which education boosts individual earnings and well-being is through improving learning and skills acquired while in educational institutions. For individuals, access to HE and its successful completion is known to enhance their economic competitiveness. HE graduates are more likely to be employed, receive higher wages and have higher chances of accessing subsequent job opportunities.

Given the critical role of higher education in increasing the earnings, education has the potential to break the cycle of transmission of economic disadvantage from one generation to the next. This also means that disparities in access to higher educational opportunities can adversely affect the ability of young people to acquire relevant skills for the labour market and can limit the chance of attaining a higher economic status than their parents. Inequality in access to educational opportunities reinforces inequities across generations, restricts progress amongst the disadvantaged and constrains a country's economic potential. Unequal distribution of educational opportunities becomes an effective mechanism of widening and persistence of inter-group economic inequalities.

For these reasons, promoting equity in access to higher education opportunities is necessary for disrupting the transmission of economic disadvantage to the next generation and reducing social inequalities. Equity is an inclusive notion. It reflects a process which entails providing unequal inputs in favour of the disadvantaged groups to make conditions to access HE opportunities more equal and provide them with a basic minimum standard of education. The notion of equity in HE relates to realising equality in outcomes (results).

It is essential to distinguish between equity and equality in order to understand the process of achieving equitable education. In Panel 1 (UNESCO, 2020), labelled equality, all children are shown to get the same inputs and resources in the form of equal-sized boxes. However, in this panel, the shortest one struggles to write on the blackboard. In equity Panel 1, everyone gets what they need to succeed – unequal-size boxes that enable equality in outcomes that all can write comfortably. Therefore, equity is the process required to achieve equality in outcome (results).

## Panel 1



Source: UNESCO, 2020

Equitable access to HE opportunities entails individuals' circumstances outside their control do not influence their access and learning outcomes. Such circumstances are related to their gender, location of their place of birth, ethnicity, religion, language, income, wealth or disability. Given the role of higher education in influencing individuals' life chances to do well, promoting equitable access to HE

opportunities has the potential of achieving a fairer society, when one may reach one's career potential. Thus, an equitable education system means that regardless of background, everybody gets adequate chances to access and succeed through HE.

Achieving equitable access requires promoting interventions which provide additional resources to disadvantaged population groups to equalise conditions (which the privileged groups enjoy) to compete for opportunities to access HE and succeed in HE. Equity in HE is realised when students from disadvantaged groups are supported with interventions to overcome the barriers of entry and admission to access the HE opportunities. Beyond access, equity in HE means that students from disadvantaged groups are supported with institutional actions to facilitate their academic success.

Thus, equity can be seen as a process of how equality in outcomes is ensured through equalising the conditions of opportunities to access HE and succeed in HE. Furthermore, equity in education has been an important goal in various educational policies and has been one of the primary sources of student diversity on the HE campuses in India. Equity initiatives have become significant channels for making student composition more diverse on HE campuses and making the higher education system more representative of the larger society.

We will discuss the concept of student diversity in higher education next.

## **The Concept of Student Diversity in HE**

Diversity in the HE student body is a broad term to include multiple characteristics related to students' backgrounds. Today student composition in HE is socially diverse, encompassing a range of attributes more representative of the diversity present in the society. It is essential to recognise the following aspects of characteristics that make up student diversity in HE to provide targeted support to enable diverse groups of students to succeed.

*Students from the socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs):* As a result of equity efforts, HE access to students from the SEDGs such as women, the SCs, STs, OBCs, from low-income families and those from the rural areas has improved over the recent years. The student body on HE campuses today is diverse, representing

students who are women, belong to different castes and minority religions, from low-income families who share higher education campuses with students who are men, reside in urban areas, and from high caste and wealthy families. Social diversity, however, reflects only one aspect of diversity in higher education. Another aspect of student diversity is diversity in academic challenges, academic preparedness and in learning needs. Diversity in learning needs is closely related to social diversity and students' prior educational experiences from the SEDGs (Sabharwal and Malish, 2016a).

While we know that Indian society is characterised by the richness in social diversity, which is seen across economic class, caste, ethnicity, religion, race and gender. Social diversity in India, however, is accompanied by inter-social group disparities. Inter-group disparities are associated with group identities such as gender, caste, ethnicity and religion. Among these diverse social groups, the SEDGs, such as the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward classes, suffer from a high incidence of poverty than the others. In addition to poverty, these groups experience social exclusion due to their social identity. Social exclusion is a process of denial of equal opportunities to access resources and rights, which in turn can lead to the reproduction of poverty and inequalities across generations.

Likewise, in HE, the diversity of students is reflected as unique challenges faced by the SEDGs such as the SCs, STs, OBCs and women. These challenges are reflected in the disadvantaged life process experienced in their journey to higher education institutions (HEIs). Along with experiencing a high incidence of poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, and poor health outcomes, students from the SEDGs are more likely to have experienced poor secondary education, speak minority languages and are likely to be the first in their family to attend higher education as compared to the rest of the population.

Students from SEDGs belong to families where most of the parents did not have access to higher education. As a result, they have limited insight and knowledge of HE and the ways to get through their studies and achieve success in higher education. This also means that the only avenue of support and advice for these students is those provided by HEIs. HEIs must recognise these challenges facing

students from the SEDGs and provide support to overcome these challenges, so these students get relatively equal opportunities to succeed through HE.

*Students from non-elite and non-traditional social & income group learners:* Student diversity in HE means the presence of a more significant number of non-elite and non-traditional social and income group learners. The term non-traditional learner attempts to capture a range of attributes that helps in distinguishing from those students who are considered traditional learners. Traditional learners are continuing-generation learners belonging to the middle and upper-class groups in society who have been the dominant group in the higher education system. While the term non-traditional learner is used to describe lower socio-economic, minority groups, socially disadvantaged castes groups (such as the SCs, STs and OBCs), women and disabled students.

Furthermore, the expansion of higher education has benefitted women. India achieved gender parity in access, with an equal number of male and female students in higher education at the national level. Gender parity in HE access has been made possible due to a faster increase in participation compared to males. However, the pattern of involvement is complex, with gender-subject stratification remaining entrenched. Women are poorly represented in STEM areas of study (science, technology, engineering and management) but highly represented in education and health. While women outperform men in completion rates and are more likely to experience academic success in higher education as compared to men, however, women often face issues of safety and sexual violence on campuses as well as undertake the role of carer, which is a time-consuming activity that competes with study demands. The overall impact is the systemic denial of equal learning opportunities for women to realise their potential fully.

Thus, many students who arrive at the gates of higher education institutions come with the vulnerabilities mentioned above, associated with their disadvantaged social belonging. The impact of multiple disadvantages can result in academic failure leading to higher dropout among the SEDGs. HEIs must be aware of multiple vulnerabilities faced by students from the disadvantaged socio-economic groups on their campuses and make efforts to design, develop and implement the required support entitlements.

To summarise, student diversity in HE means

- a) Student composition becomes diverse, representing multiple social/ethnic/religious groups; economic groups; males/females that reflect the social composition present in the society;
- b) The student body becomes diverse with a host of other characteristics such as representing students with multi-faceted school experiences, who have studied in many regional languages; first-generation higher education learners; and reside in under-served rural locations;
- c) HE administrators need to be aware of academic challenges that shape students' experiences from disadvantaged socio-economic groups so that targeted academic support is designed and implemented for their progress.

Beyond vulnerabilities associated with student diversity on campuses, one of the positive implications of student diversity is that it has the possibility of creating conditions where students from diverse socio-economic, ethnicity, race and gender backgrounds interact and learn about each other. There is increasing recognition of the social benefits of having a more diverse student body on HE campuses. Student diversity on campuses provides students with opportunities to engage in diverse interactions. It is known to improve cultural understanding, help eliminate prejudice, develop skills to engage with others in a non-violent manner and consider other people's points of view with respect. Benefits of student diversity will be discussed in detail in Module 7, titled 'Student Diversity and Civic Learning' included in this set of modules titled 'Student Diversity in HE in India'.

Diversity in student compositions on HE campuses also implies that the issue of inclusion becomes of utmost importance. The concept of social inclusion will be discussed next.

## **Concept of Social Inclusion in Higher Education in India**

Social inclusion is a process of ensuring active participation of students from diverse backgrounds in the socio-cultural life of the campus, which makes every student feel welcomed, accepted and treated with respect.

Student experience in colleges and universities can be classified into socio-cultural and academic domains. These two domains are interconnected, and experience in one domain can influence the other. As informed by the vast literature on equity in higher education, student experience in the academic and socio-cultural domains would have lasting implications on student career trajectory.

Classification of campus experience into academic and socio-cultural domains thus helps us to understand better how individual factors and institutional factors shape student experiences. Individual factors include family backgrounds, parental education, schooling background, social group origin and income group. Policies of institutions, peer groups, teachers, administrative staff and campus-level organisations such as clubs and student-led organisations are examples of institutional factors.

Experience in the socio-cultural domain is important in determining student decisions to continue or discontinue studies. Notably, students' experience in the socio-cultural life of campus during the first weeks of college and university is more crucial. If an institution is residential and students have to live in hostels and other student accommodations, a lack of social inclusion harms students. Staying away from family for the first time worsens the situation.

As far as the academic domain is concerned, the institution's central role is to enable students with diverse academic preparedness levels to integrate with the academic core of their respective disciplines and the academic value system of the institution. Academic integration refers to the process of ensuring all students possess basic knowledge and skills in disciplines and subjects chosen as elective and core courses. Integration, in principle, does not support variation in possession of basic knowledge and skill in given disciplines (refer to Module 3 on Academic Integration). Integration in academic domains is primarily students' responsibility if adequate opportunities are made available by higher education institutions.

The idea of integration in the socio-cultural sphere of campus appears to be less sensitive to students from underprivileged and minority backgrounds. Demand for integration by default valorises existing hierarchies that exist in society. Since the socio-cultural milieu of campus tends to follow the socio-cultural ethos of the



dominant group, integration means every other to follow the dominant cultural value system. As a result, integration is less problematic for students from dominant socio-economic groups. This is not the case for students from underprivileged and under-represented groups. Demand for integration put heavy pressure on them to detach from their past communities and acquire dominant cultural practices. This scenario has been highlighted as one of the primary sources of students experiencing exclusion and dissatisfaction in campus life.

These are invisible forces that push out students from the system. Therefore, contrary to integration in the academic domain, where everyone is expected to possess similar basic academic competencies, the socio-cultural domain demands social inclusion. Unlike integration, where the onus is placed on individual students, social inclusion requires institutions, teachers and students from privileged backgrounds to change their beliefs and value system toward students from other identities. Identity groups include castes and communities considered “lower,” people of aboriginal backgrounds, women, students with diverse sexual orientations such as transgender people, and people with physical challenges and poor, to list a few. In principle, the onus of social inclusion lies not on students from underprivileged backgrounds.

One of the significant indications of a socially inclusive campus is the feeling that they are part of the campus and can form peer groups and actively and peacefully engage in the campus’s socio-cultural life. It is the responsibility of the institution, teachers and administrators to ensure that the campus is socially inclusive in its day-to-day functioning.

### **Questions for consideration and discussion?**

What is the concept of equity in higher education?

What is the concept of student diversity in higher education?

What is the concept of social inclusion in higher education in India?

## Approaches to Promoting Equity, Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education

There is a broad consensus that an expanding HE system helps increase access to higher education for all. However, it is also recognised that the expansion will benefit the less privileged only if affirmative action measures accompany it. Darity (2013:2) defines affirmative action as a set of positive anti-discrimination measures aimed at “providing access to members of stigmatised groups to preferred positions in society. It is predicated on the unfair or unjust exclusion of individuals based upon their identity as members of a stigmatised group in the absence of affirmative action. Affirmative action thus targets groups subjected to discrimination, ridicule and abuse for special support in their pursuit of preferred positions.” It is the affirmative action measures that have the potential to ensure equality of access to HE opportunities and can help HE grow with equity.

HE systems which expand and grow equitably reflect the impact of concerted government social policies which focus on improving access of disadvantaged socio-economic groups to HE opportunities. The access policy in higher education has been dominated by three principles, namely, inherited merit, equality of rights, and equality of opportunity (Clancy and Goastellec, 2007).

The concept of ‘inherited merit’ is related to when admission to higher education is merit-based, which is inherited dependent on circumstances of birth, that is, being born in privileged families. Historically and across the HE systems in many countries, access to higher education has been the preserve of elite social groups, which means being male, being from the upper economic class, and living in urban areas. The policies favouring excellence to constrain expansion are rooted in the merit argument. Merit is the function of class and inherited privilege. During this era, there was limited access to the non-privileged groups, and the higher education sector remained small.

Progressively in democratic societies, inherited merit through privilege by birth or social origin has been replaced by norms of a rights-based approach and being sensitive to the variations in the sources of opportunities. The notion of a rights-based approach recognises formal barriers to access faced by women, ethnic/

racial and social groups and minorities of entry to higher education. It attempts to minimise the effect of obstacles. During the 20th century, increasingly, the notion of equality in access to the right to pursue HE opportunities (for those with the required academic qualifications) helped expand higher education access to students regardless of their social origin and made higher education more diverse.

The notion of equality of opportunity looks more closely into the differences in the opportunity structure faced by various social groups. It places a responsibility on higher education institutions to provide equal opportunities to access HE. The commitment takes the form of proactive measures through which HEIs use strategies to widen their net to reach and select talented individuals from all social groups.

Importantly, it is recognised that to promote intergroup (inter-caste or inter-ethnic or inter-gender) equality, merit-based admission needs to be augmented by some form of affirmative action measures. When deployed effectively, they are a valuable instrument for desegregating elites and ensuring that national elites are drawn from all social classes. Many countries across the globe follow affirmative actions in the policy of access in their student admissions to higher education institutions to advance equality of educational opportunity for those students who face socio-economic disadvantages as obstacles to acquiring HE knowledge and skills.

## **Approaches to Promote Access and Inclusion in HE**

Approaches to achieving access and social inclusion can be discussed at the level of admission and post-admission phases. At the admission phase, the focus is to ensure that higher education opportunities are available for all and conditions are created to overcome entry-level barriers. The post-admission phase focusses on creating facilities and conditions within the higher education institutions, which can lead students to feel welcome, accepted and treated with respect in the academic and socio-cultural domain of their campus.

*Admission Phase:* A primary prerequisite for advancing access and social inclusion is the availability of opportunities for students from various backgrounds to access higher education of their preferred choice. Affirmative action policies are a significant source of equalising access to higher education. The reservation policy

is a primary affirmative action strategy followed in India. Unlike affirmative action policies in other countries, constitutional support makes reservation policy in India a unique case. Constitutionally guaranteed reservation policy in India has no parallels elsewhere. The reservation policy adopted by the Constitution reflects values of democracy, equality and social justice. Along with political democracy, the conviction that social democracy and political democracy need to be built into the core of constitutionalism culminated in a reservation policy in higher education.

According to the reservation policy, a certain share of seats in colleges and universities funded by the government are earmarked for historically marginalised social groups such as the scheduled castes (SCs), Scheduled tribes (STs) and other backward classes (OBC). Reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs in centrally funded institutions are 15 per cent, 7.5 per cent and 27 per cent respectively. Recently, through the 124th amendment to the Constitution, 10 per cent of reservation was introduced for the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) population among the forward castes. Currently, the total reservation in centrally funded institutions is 59.5 per cent. Reservation in states substantially varies according to the population share of each social group in the respective State (Sabharwal and Malish, 2016b) and the policy followed within the individual states.

Reservation policy ensures a certain share of seats is occupied by students belonging to under-represented groups. Reservation policy thus provides diversity in the student population in each higher education institution. The homogeneity of the student population in private higher education institutions that do not follow the reservation policy endorses the significance of reservation policies in enhancing student diversity.

*Incentive Schemes to Facilitate Access:* Incentive schemes are the schemes which help students to overcome entry-level barriers at the stage of admission. There are different kinds of incentive schemes. Scholarship schemes are major incentive schemes. Scholarship schemes aim to address financial barriers faced by students. For instance, the post-matric scholarship scheme funded by the Government of India is one of the significant sources for students from underprivileged groups. Many state governments and public sector organisations provide scholarship schemes.

Distance and difficulty in commuting are significant hurdles for students from disadvantaged social groups residing in underdeveloped regions and remote villages to be admitted to colleges. Although measures exist to establish institutions in the under-served areas, urban bias in establishing higher education institutions is a problem to be resolved. Lack of adequate infrastructure and a conducive environment at home also disable students from continuing higher studies. Post-matric hostels in major cities provide free accommodation for students. State government funds hostel schemes in respective states.

As discussed, post-matric hostels are constructed outside the colleges and universities. There are also hostel schemes for colleges and universities. Special hostels are built on campuses using earmarked funds for the SCs and STs. In general, special hostel schemes are available for the SCs and STs. However, the common hostels where an adequate number of seats are reserved for SCs and STs are found to be more appropriate strategies to make campuses more inclusive.

*Institutional policies to promote diversity and social inclusion:* Along with the reservation policy, many institution level efforts exist to enhance student diversity. Diversity-oriented admission policies followed by Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi, and the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) are good examples of institutional initiatives to promote diversity. In addition to reservation policy, deprivation points followed in JNU consider the locational background of the aspiring candidates. Additional points are given to students from under-developed districts while preparing the admission rank list. Literacy rate and agricultural productivity are among the factors considered for determining the backwardness of districts. Deprivation points thus improve the regional diversity of the student body in JNU. It indirectly contributes to enhancing linguistic diversity in the student body.

Gender diversity initiative by IIMs provides additional points for women candidates while preparing admission rank lists. This policy has resulted in the enrolment of a higher share of women students in IIMs. The gender diversity policy has been in operation since 2012. IIM Kozhikode is considered to be the first IIM to introduce this scheme.

In highly selective institutions, admissions are based on entrance tests and group discussions. It requires serious preparation. It is one of the reasons for a smaller number of students from underprivileged backgrounds in such selective institutions. Pre-admission orientation programmes organised by some institutions provide free of cost orientation to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. These courses teach students how to prepare for written tests, interviews, or group discussions. SC/ST Cell of the Tata Institute of Social Science organises this sort of orientation programme every year.

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) have a special preparatory course programme. According to the preparatory scheme, an institute provides admission to SC and ST students whose scores are below the last cut-off marks in Joint Engineering Entrance (JEE). These students are admitted to preparatory courses for one year (two semesters). Upon completing this course, students are eligible to take admission in first-year under-graduate or integrated programmes. Similarly, the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore has been offering N S Ramaswamy Pre-PhD fellowship to the marginalised social groups and women since 2018. The objective is to equip students to undertake doctoral research and thereby improve social diversity on campus.

*Post-admission phase:* Access to higher education is only a part of the equity in higher education. It is essential to ensure that students are admitted to higher education, irrespective of background, and can fully benefit from the socio-cultural and academic experience of higher education campuses. Many hurdles prevent students from deprived backgrounds from fully participating in college or university life.

*Financial support schemes:* Financial challenges are a significant source of difficulty for students to persist in higher studies. Financial support schemes aim to address economic challenges faced by students. There are different kinds of financial support programmes. Some of them are tuition fee waivers, stipends, book bank facilities, opportunities to earn during study programmes and provision for a monthly stipend.

Tuition fee waiver schemes exempt eligible students from paying their tuition fees. However, many other costs may pull back students from poorer families. A monthly

stipend scheme helps students meet the additional expenses, such as books, stationery, uniforms and other day-to-day expenses. Other such schemes as book banks and book grants also address financial challenges. In some higher education institutions, “earn while learn” schemes are in operation. This scheme provides part-time employment on campus. Employment includes assistance to administrative staff and library management.

## Strategies and Programmes to Improve Equity, Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education

Progressive state policies have played a significant role in promoting equity in access to higher education. Over time, many countries in the world have designed multiple types of strategies to address unequal distribution of educational opportunities and advance equality of opportunities to promote equitable HE systems. Many equity measures are common across countries. Varghese (2011) provides a clear analytical way of understanding the types of strategies followed across countries to improve equity in HE and make the HE system more diverse.

### Panel 2: Strategies to Promote Equity

Strategy	Immediate Beneficiaries	Countries
Affirmative admission policies	Groups	Many countries, especially Brazil, India, USA
Diversification of HEIs	Programmes	A most common strategy in several countries
Sponsored/budget students based on merit and means	Institutions	Countries in Africa and CIS countries
Additional funding to HEIs to admit students from disadvantaged groups	Institution	Australia, Belgium, Croatia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Russia, UK
Special grants/support to students through HEIs	Students	Australia, Chile, China, C Croatia, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Russia

Strategy	Immediate Beneficiaries	Countries
Funds to develop an environment that favours the disadvantaged	Institution	Australia, Estonia, Finland, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, UK
Extra funds for institutions located in disadvantaged regions	Institution	Korea, Poland,
Special institutions for ethnic minorities	Groups	Australia, Mexico, New Zealand

Source: Varghese (2011: 10)

Panel 2 shows that the strategies, in general, include

- strong affirmative action or a quota system,
- supporting institutions to enrol students from disadvantaged groups,
- supporting institutions in creating an environment conducive for them to continue their studies, and
- establishing specialised institutions.

*Strategies to promote equity in access:* Many countries have used affirmative action measures or positive steps taken to favour the less advantaged groups so that students from these groups are attracted to enrol in HEIs and continue and complete their HE studies. Important affirmative action measures include:

- The quota system or reservation of seats in higher education institutions for students belonging to different underprivileged groups: quota system has been followed in Brazil and India.
- The strategy of 'preferential boosts;' that is awarding additional points, which increases the scores of the students from the disadvantaged social groups for them to compete for HE seats. This form of the system has been followed in the United States and South Africa.



- Relaxing of admissions criteria for students from the underprivileged groups.
- Extending financial support to these students to continue their studies
- Special incentive programmes for those admitted from disadvantaged groups.

Furthermore, Panel 2 shows that some countries follow a policy of establishing special institutions to admit and train students from disadvantaged groups. For example, Australia, Mexico, and New Zealand have set up specialised institutions for selected disadvantaged groups. Diversification of higher education institutions is another strategy adopted by countries to channel students from different social backgrounds into different streams. Furthermore, some countries have also taken positive measures at the school level to address the achievement disparities of children from minority ethnic groups.

## **Strategies and Programmes to Improve Access and Success of Students from the Excluded Groups in India**

In India, specifically, measures that facilitate greater opportunities for participation in higher education range from:

- Constitutionally mandated affirmative action policies in admission, such as reservation of seats in higher education institutions,
- Relaxation in the admission criteria,
- Financial support, including free ships and scholarships,
- Provision of free lodging and boarding facilities to students from the socially disadvantaged groups who take admission to colleges.

India has followed a firm affirmative action policy to promote equity in all spheres, including education. The reservation policy in admissions to public HEIs for the SC/ST/OBC groups is an example of affirmative action. As noted, the Constitution of India guarantees 15 per cent reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes, 7.5 per cent for the Scheduled Tribes, and 27 per cent for other backward classes in government and government-aided higher education institutions. At the state level, the reservation policy followed by the HEIs is based on the population share of each social group.

Besides reserving seats, minimum qualifying marks for admission are also relaxed for SC/ST candidates.

Financial support has been extended to students from poor backgrounds to boost enrolment of students from the SEDGs, including women. Such financial support measures have taken the form of subsidised tuition fees in public institutions and philanthropic private-aided institutions, scholarships and free ships, and the provision of affordable hostels. More recently, an attempt has been made to universalise student loans with government guarantees to make admission to higher education need-blind and remove financial barriers to access to higher education opportunities.

For retaining students from the SEDGs, HEIs are often provided special grants. These grants are meant to be utilised for these students' remedial teaching, preparatory training and special coaching, and counselling services to facilitate the proper selection of subjects at the time of entry.

Diversification of the higher education institutions has been another strategy adopted by India to channel students from disadvantaged social groups into various streams and specialisations. Special institutions offering employment-oriented technical and vocational education (for example, in craft, trade and agricultural operations) have been set up for the scheduled castes and in tribal-dominated rural areas. In addition, distance education has been an important strategy to improve equity in access to higher education and the need for continuing education. Distance education has been promoted by providing a network of facilities in the form of open universities, evening colleges, correspondence courses, and part-time education. Diversification of study programmes and institutional differentiation have been suitable measures to attract many students and students from disadvantaged groups.

The Constitution of India provides equal rights and privileges for women and special provisions for their development. To improve higher education access, reduce gender access gaps and raise the status of women, a range of gender-sensitive measures have been initiated. For women students establishing special universities and colleges; providing alternative admission pathways (in terms of flexibility for re-entry of women students at the stage that they left for them to complete the level

of study), introducing courses of special interest for women (home science, music, drawing, painting, nursing) and encouraging institutions offering STEM subjects to practice affirmative action in admission policies have been important equity measures to attract women students to higher education. Moreover, strategies have also considered compounded access barriers for women from disadvantaged social groups and residing in rural areas. Provisions of hostels and boarding facilities have been an important strategy to improve access for women from disadvantaged social groups and those living in rural areas (Sabharwal, 2021).

To promote regional equity and encourage students from under-served disadvantaged regions in India, strategies of opening new higher education institutions in rural areas and educationally backward districts (with enrolment rates lower than the national average), provision of additional funds to educational institutions located in rural, hilly, remote, tribal, border areas and educationally backward areas, and, giving preference to districts with a cluster of a minority population – mainly Muslims – have been common strategies of targeting students from diverse social groups residing in dispersed settlements. In addition, financial support has been extended to distance education activities and open universities to increase access to north-eastern and backward areas.

## **Strategies to Promote Social Inclusion: Institutional Mechanisms**

There are many on-campus mechanisms to support and monitor social inclusion on campuses. These mechanisms are operationalised by providing guidelines and funds to institutions to develop an environment that favours disadvantaged social groups. In India, some of the guidelines are mandatory according to regulatory agencies such as University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). In this sub-section, existing available mechanisms are mentioned. Module 6 will provide further elaborations on the institutional mechanisms to promote inclusion. SC-ST cell, Anti-Ragging cell, Equal Opportunity Office and Internal Complaint Committee are institution-based mechanisms to ensure social inclusion. In addition to mechanisms that regulatory agencies mandate, there are campus-level committees and cells, for instance, the discipline

committee and gender sensitisation committee. Faculty members head these cells and committees.

Activities of the cells and committees are three-fold. One is to create awareness about the issue of social inclusion. The second is to provide a platform for students to raise their grievances and seek remedies. The third is to develop policies and promote practices that can contribute to social inclusion on campus. One of the prerequisites for creating a socially inclusive campus is to have teachers, staff and administrators who respect diversity as a value. Institutional leaders such as vice chancellors in the case of universities and Principals in the case of colleges have a significant role to play in developing socially inclusive campuses. Institutional leaders are expected to monitor the working of the cells and committees and provide guidance and resources to function effectively and efficiently.

### **Questions for consideration and discussion**

Discuss the approaches to achieve Equity in HE.

Discuss the approaches to social inclusion in Higher Education.

Discuss existing equity programmes in India to improve access to HE and success through HE for students from underprivileged groups.

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# MODULES ON STUDENT DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Editors: Nidhi S. Sabharwal and C.M. Malish

## Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education

**Nidhi S. Sabharwal**

MODULE

2



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**National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration**

(Deemed to be University)

17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi - 110016 (INDIA)





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(Deemed to be University)  
17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi - 110016 (INDIA)

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## PREFACE

The Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE) is a specialised centre established at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA). The centre promotes and carries out research in higher education policy and planning, and aims to contribute to evidence-based policy-making in higher education. The thrust areas of research include access and equity, quality, teaching and learning, governance and management, financing, and graduate employability in higher education. The centre is currently implementing research studies in selected institutions in several states of India.

Equity and inclusion in higher education are significant research areas at the CPRHE/NIEPA. Related to this theme, the CPRHE/NIEPA completed a large-scale study titled “Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: A Study of Institutions in the Selected States of India,” with funding support from the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). The study was carried out, by Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr C. M. Malish, in institutions located in six states, namely Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. A detailed questionnaire-based survey among 3,200 students was administered, close to 200 interviews were conducted with faculty and administrators, about 70 focus group discussions with students were held, and 50 students’ diaries were completed. The study helped understand unique challenges faced by students from the socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and assess institutional response to the changing nature of student diversity.

As a follow-up to the study, the CPRHE/NIEPA was requested by the ICSSR to prepare modules related to student diversity and social inclusion in higher education. An Expert Group was constituted to advise and guide the modules’ preparation. The expert group consisted of renowned academics, institutional leaders, and representatives of the Ministry of Education (MoE), ICSSR, and NITI Ayog.

Seven modules have been prepared as a part of this study. These are Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches (Module 1); Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education (Module 2); Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses (Module 3); Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education (Module 4); Social Inclusion in a Higher Education Campus (Module 5); Institutional Mechanism for Managing Student Diversity (Module 6); and Student Diversity and Civic Learning (Module 7). These modules are primarily meant to support and facilitate the CPRHE/NIEPA's efforts towards institutional-level capacity development, in improving the student experience in social and academic domains and academic performance of students from the SEDGs, and in creating a more inclusive campus environment.

We are grateful to the ICSSR for the funding support and to Professor Sukhadeo Thorat, former Chairperson of the ICSSR, for his sustained advice and encouragement. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Professor N. V. Varghese, Vice-Chancellor, NIEPA, for his untiring guidance in preparing the modules. Thanks are also due to Professor R. Govinda and Professor J. B. G. Tilak, former Vice-Chancellors of NIEPA, for their support and advice at various stages of the preparation of the modules. We express our gratitude to all authors who have contributed to the modules. Finally, we appreciate the efforts put in by our colleagues, Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr C.M. Malish, for preparing and finalising the modules.

**Professor Pradeep Kumar Misra**  
Director, CPRHE

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We would like to thank Professor J. B. G. Tilak, former Vice-Chancellor of NIEPA, for his support and advice at various stages of preparation of the modules. We are grateful to Mr Basavaraj Swamy, former Registrar, NIEPA, and Dr. Sandeep Chatterjee, current Registrar, and his team including staff in department of finance and accounts of the NIEPA for extending administrative support in the preparation of the modules.

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The development of the modules was undertaken as a collaborative activity. The CPRHE/NIEPA organised an expert group meeting to discuss the modules. We are

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**Nidhi S. Sabharwal**

**C. M. Malish**

CPRHE/NIEPA

# INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the higher education sector in India has grown considerably. Higher education in India has shifted from an elite stage of development to a massification stage. Accompanying this massification in higher education is the increasing diversity among the student population. The student population on college campuses, relatively homogenous and elite previously, is now represented by non-traditional social group learners. These learners from the non-traditional groups belong to diverse social, economic, linguistic and regional backgrounds. While the presence of diverse groups on campuses reflects the advancement of equity in access, recent research raises concerns about the challenges faced by students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, such as the scheduled castes, other backward classes and scheduled tribes. These challenges are related to low academic outcomes, social tensions and its associated practices, prejudices and biases. For institutions to address the challenges facing students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups, it is essential that educational administrators and faculty members must be sensitive to these students' concerns.

The purpose of the modules is to sensitise the institution-level stakeholders, such as students, teachers and administrators in higher education, on issues related to student diversity, specific challenges facing students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and the role of higher education in promoting civic learning. Developing modules on student diversity in higher education is an extension of the study carried out by the centre and, thus, a mechanism of research-based engagement with institutional-level stakeholders.

The study titled "Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: A Study of Institutions in Selected States of India" was coordinated by Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr. C. M. Malish, and it was carried out in institutions which were located in six states, namely, Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. In order to develop an understanding of the challenges faced by students from the socially excluded groups and institutional response to the changing nature of student diversity, the methodology followed was the following. A detailed questionnaire-based survey among 3,200 students was administered, close to 200 interviews were conducted

with faculty and administrators, close to 70 focus group discussions with students were undertaken and 50 diaries were completed by students. As part of this project, the research outputs prepared and submitted include: 6 state team reports and 1 synthesis report; 2 CPRHE Research Papers; 1 CPRHE Seminar Report; 3 Policy Briefs in English with translations in Hindi; and more than 10 published journal articles and chapters in books (CPRHE Annual Report, 2022). In the policy research cycle, CPRHE-NIEPA organised two major events based on the research findings of the CPRHE study. A national seminar was organised and it brought together academics and policy makers concerned with institutional response to the changing nature of social diversity of student population. A policy dialogue webinar was organised and it was successful in bringing together academics, policy makers and institutional leaders and emphasised significance of institutional reforms for making campuses inclusive by valuing and promoting diversity. Policy briefs prepared by the CPRHE were the basis for the dialogue with various stakeholders of higher education.

On the successful completion of the research project, the CPRHE/NIEPA was requested by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) to prepare modules related to student diversity and social inclusion in higher education. These modules are primarily meant to support and facilitate the CPRHE/NIEPA's efforts toward institutional-level capacity building so as to improve the academic performance of students from the SEDGs and create more inclusive institutional environments. The modules are envisaged to be made available to the public as a public good.

The modules have been written in a simple style. However, they are not meant to be self-learning modules. The primary target group for the modules includes the faculty members, administrators and practitioners who are directly responsible for extending support to students from socially and economically disadvantaged social groups. In other words, these modules can form the essential teaching-learning material to organise training courses at the institutional level. Hence, an effort is made to explain the concepts and elaborate the steps are taken to discuss the challenges faced by students from the SEDGs in detail, with examples of strategies of consideration. Most of the modules contain module-specific reflective questions at the end.

The logic of the sequence of the modules is as follows: Module 1 contains a discussion on the concept and approaches to achieving student diversity, equity and social



inclusion in higher education. Module 2 includes a discussion on the three stages of student diversity for a systematic assessment of the status of student diversity in higher education. The three stages of student diversity are like this: Stage I of social diversity, which is measurable and represents diversity in the nation's population. Stage II is of academic diversity present in the classrooms. In Stage III, diversity is a condition of social inclusion on campus. As noted, these stages are developed on the basis of empirical evidence generated through the CPRHE study and elaborate the indicators to measure the three dimensions of diversity.

Module 3 includes the dimensions of academic diversity found in student composition. It discusses the relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics of the student body with the latter's varying levels of academic preparation to pursue higher education and challenges associated with achieving Stage II diversity, that is, academic integration. The module will highlight promising practices to achieve academic integration in higher education institutions.

Module 4 discusses the concept and the practice of discrimination in higher education in terms of social group identity, such as caste, ethnicity, gender and religion of students and its intersectionalities. Module 5 discusses the concept and approach to social inclusion in higher education institutions and attempts to develop a nuanced understanding of student experiences from admission to exit from college to inform points at which interventions are required. Module 6 elaborates on the approaches and strategies to be adopted by higher education institutions for the efficient management of student diversity. The final module, 7, introduces the concept of civic learning in higher education and attempts to provide clarity on the link between student diversity and civic learning.

The modules were prepared on the basis of several rounds of discussions that we had at the NIEPA. First, the CPRHE identified themes for the modules based on their completed research study and analysis related to student diversity, social inclusion and civic learning in higher education. The themes of the modules were presented, discussed and approved by members of the research advisory group for the research project. The areas identified for the modules included:

Module 1: Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches;

Module 2: Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education;

Module 3: Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses;  
Module 4: Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education;  
Module 5: Social Inclusion in the Higher Education Campus;  
Module 6: Institutional Mechanism for Managing Student Diversity;  
Module 7: Student Diversity and Civic Learning.

A detailed framework was further developed for the modules by the CPRHE faculty members, after which this framework was subjected to close scrutiny by a group of experts in a meeting organised by the CPRHE/NIEPA. An Expert Group Committee was formed for the purpose of advice and guidance on the overall approach towards the modules, and, to discuss structure and content of each module. The framework of the modules, the outline and content of each module were presented to the group. The members of the expert group consisted of academics, intuitional leaders (Vice-Chancellor and Principal of College), and representatives of ICSSR, NITI Ayog and Ministry of Education (MoE).

After the discussions with the experts, the framework of the modules was further revised with general guidelines, comments and suggestions made by the experts before presenting it in the Authors' meet. Academics who are experts in areas of diversity and inclusion in higher education were invited to be co-authors of the modules by the CPRHE/NIEPA. An authors' meet to discuss the structure and contents of the modules was held for developing a shared understanding on the framework to the modules and improving the modules. Based on the discussions, the framework was further modified, after which all the individual modules were developed by the CPRHE faculty members and co-authors of the modules.

These modules were further subjected to a close review in the workshop organised with the members from the Expert Group Committee and the authors of the modules, organised by the CPRHE/NIEPA. The drafts of the modules were shared with all the expert members for their review prior to the organisation of the workshop. The modules have been revised and finalised based on the comments and suggestions of the experts. We hope this module will be useful towards advancing equity and inclusion in higher education in India.

April, 2023

**Nidhi S. Sabharwal**  
**C. M. Malish**  
CPRHE/NIEPA

## MODULE 2

# Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education

This module has been prepared with particular specific objectives.

### **THEY ARE:**

To introduce the classification of stages of student diversity in higher education

To discuss the stages of student diversity in higher education

To introduce the method to assess student diversity in higher education institutions

## Introduction to Module 2

Along with an unprecedented expansion of the higher education (HE) sector in India, the sector has experienced diversification in institutions, programmes of study offered, sources of financing and students' backgrounds. An increase in student diversity is an important aspect of the expansion of higher education in India. A policy focus on widening access to include students who had traditionally been under-represented in higher education has contributed to improving diversity in the student population on HE campuses.

Diversity in the student body includes the presence of students from the socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), such as women, first-generation students in their families to enter higher education, those belonging to low-income families, 'lower' castes, rural areas and those who have studied in a regional language as their medium of instruction. Today, higher education institutions (HEIs) serve a student body with diversity in their learning needs and challenges. This means that to improve the educational experience and enable success for a diverse student body, higher education institutions must undertake a systematic assessment of managing and dealing with student diversity.

It is required that HEIs develop a coherent framework to guide their thinking on the spheres and types of targeted actions that institutions can take, especially for increasing the retention and graduation of students from diverse socio-economic groups. Based on the analysis of empirical evidence, the CPRHE study by Sabharwal and Malish (2016) made a classification of the stages of dealing with student diversity on HE campuses in India. In the process of engagement with student diversity, this classification of stages of diversity can help HEIs identify the spheres where institutional action is required to address and plan for increasing student diversity and integrating and advancing inclusion on HE campuses.

In essence, this classification can be seen as a framework for institutional action for managing student diversity in HEIs in India. The details of the stages of dealing with student diversity will be discussed in the next section.

## The Classification of Stages of Student Diversity: An Overview

The classification of stages of student diversity is a framework which HEIs can employ to systematically assess and plan in a structured way in order to manage student diversity in higher education. This classification includes three dimensions of student diversity that HEIs need to consider in the process or stages of planning and addressing student diversity.

- Stage I is at the entry-level and refers to social diversity in students' backgrounds seen on HE campuses. Social diversity on HE campuses is quantifiable and measurable and is the visible aspect of diversity in the nation's population. To achieve Stage I diversity, HEIs should be concerned with planning for facilitating the access and admission of diverse learners from the SEDGs.
- Stage II focuses on dealing with diversity in the academic background of students from SEDGs and planning for the academic integration of diverse student groups in classrooms. Academic integration refers to the greater involvement of diverse students in the teaching-learning classroom processes, bridging the knowledge gap, and better participation across a range of learning activities in order to improve their academic performance. In engaging with academic diversity in the classrooms, the teachers are best placed to achieve the stage of academic integration. Academic integration is also critical for laying the foundation on which academic success and persistence (Reason *et al.*, 2006) rest and the stage of social inclusion is realised.
- Stage III is that of developing a culture of inclusion in interpersonal relationships and social interactions amongst diverse peers, staff and faculty members on HE campuses. Inclusion is a feeling that one is respected and welcomed to participate in socio-cultural domains. Inclusion is also a state where all students feel welcome to initiate activities related to the social and cultural life of the student body. This helps in increasing a sense of belonging to the campuses. Stage III is thus concerned with taking actions to maintain a non-discriminatory and multi-cultural environment at the institutional level.

The identified three stages of student diversity offer new ways of gaining an understanding of the following:

- a) Challenges that diverse learners face at the port of entry, after entry --- inside classrooms, and in social spheres, outside classrooms.
- b) Areas of intervention and types of actions an institution can take to establish conditions of academic integration and social inclusion on their campus that promote student success.

It is important to remember that while features and challenges at each stage are distinct, their dimensions are connected. And features of Stage I contribute to some of the inner dynamics of Stages II and III. For example, how compositional diversity in the student body will influence classroom and co-curricular practices, and ultimately student learning, as well as developing socially inclusive HE campuses. Such connections across features will be elaborated on in subsequent sections.

Let us discuss in detail the features of each stage of student diversity.

## Features of Stages of Student Diversity

### *Stage I Diversity: Social Diversity in Student Population*

The critical feature of Stage I at the entry level is the presence of students from historically underrepresented groups on HE campuses. The historically underrepresented students primarily belong to the socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs). The SEDGs comprise women, first-generation students in their families to enter higher education, those belonging to low-income families and from socially excluded castes, from rural areas and those who have studied in a regional language as their medium of instruction. As such, this stage is concerned with understanding the level of access that students from the SEDGs have achieved to higher education opportunities. In the process of engagement with diversity, HEIs have achieved Stage I of student diversity when the composition of students on their campuses reflects their socio-economic backgrounds, seen in the social composition of the population in the society. Planning for diversity at this stage enables HEIs to:

- evaluate the level of access achieved by historically underrepresented students on their campuses,
- making diversity a goal in admission decisions, and
- finding institutional ways of meeting diversity goals.

### ***Focus on Students from the SEDGs***

A focus on students from the SEDGs by campus administrators and admission officers is of importance as literature informs us that decision to pursue higher education, the college choice process, and the choice of subjects are closely related to the students' socio-economic statuses, parents' level of education and students' pre-college academic characteristics. Specifically, for campus administrators, gaining insights into students' socio-economic backgrounds and parental levels of education is essential. Awareness of these aspects is crucial as it can generate sensitivities on substantial barriers students from the SEDGs would have experienced in their journey to HEIs and place student support mechanisms for their academic success.

It is well known that socioeconomic status (SES) and parents' education influence the chances of gaining access to HE, and also progression and degree completion. Students from high SES backgrounds with parents with HE qualifications, inherit social advantages and privileges. These advantages reflect in parents' abilities to guide their children's aspirations, discuss college plans, provide financial support, assist in the application process and prepare them for the college experience. Students' social status and parents' educational level influence the basis of the college-going and decision-making process.

Students from high SES backgrounds and with parents who have HE qualifications are more likely to have better access to basic knowledge of the college-going process, college counselling and planning (including college choice and subjects to study), procedural admission requirements, and academic preparation for college work. In contrast, parents from low SES status with no history of HE in the family may not even be aware of such a process.

Significantly, for students from SEDGs, financial barriers early in their educational pathway in middle and secondary school impede their academic preparation and

block their access to college. Moreover, lower access to private tutoring, which is considered to boost school performance and prepare students to increase their chances of qualifying competitive tests for admissions to selective HEIs offering science and engineering subjects, places students at a disadvantage from low SES families vis-à-vis their peers from high SES families.

Families' economic resources significantly determine the kind of schools that students may access. Students from low SES families, as compared to their peers from high SES families, are more likely to access under-resourced high schools with an absence of supportive structures (such as the availability of school counsellors) to provide early and consistent guidance for preparing students for college and assisting students through every step to college entry.

More recently, the research has explored the intersection of socio-economic disadvantages with rurality and its effect on HE access, choice and aspirations. It is acknowledged that barriers facing students from rural areas in post-secondary education, especially from SEDGs compared to their counterparts in urban areas, are: distance to HEIs, cost of transportation, parental income and parental education.

It is recognised that students residing in rural locations are at substantial risk of facing lower parental educational expectations and lower college-going aspirations, as they are more likely to be impoverished than their urban peers. The impoverishment of students residing in rural areas is reflected in the challenges associated with their low SES family background (lower economic status, lower parental education and first-generation status), poverty and limited employment opportunities encountered in the rural environment. Moreover, in rural areas, geographic isolation and low SES family background are combined with fewer school resources for academic college preparation, lower levels of teacher expectations and weak curriculum offered in a medium of instruction misaligned with HE. In addition, more inadequate access to out-of-school preparatory activities and lower academic achievements pose substantial barriers to pathways to college access.

As mentioned, the share of students from SEDGs in total enrolment represents the extent of social diversity in the student composition of HEIs. The realisation of Stage I diversity is governed by both internal structures of the HEIs and external



factors which attempt to diversify the student population in an institution, provide opportunities for access to students from the SEDGs, and address barriers to entry and admissions to HEIs.

External factors in the form of legislative measures and public policies influence student diversity as this help to make higher education more accessible and affordable. Diversity initiatives supported by legislative means to make students' composition more diverse include implementing affirmative action policies and supportive measures at the time of admission. These affirmative actions include the reservation of seats in HEIs for disadvantaged social groups, provision of financial aid, freeships and relaxation in admission criteria.

Equally important are institutional commitments and internal structures in the institutions that provide acceptance and consistency of adherence to diversity-oriented policy rules and regulations. Internal systems include offices established in HEIs to monitor the implementation of affirmative action measures to improve HE access of students from the SEDGs.

Campus administrators and admission officers in HEIs can play an important role in increasing diversity in the student population on campuses by helping students from the SEDGs to gain access to their institutions. First and foremost, diversity has to be made a goal in admissions decisions. Admission decisions that follow reservation policy can help meet the goal of increasing diversity on HE campuses.

Equally important are supportive admission processes that campus administrators can initiate, as many students whose first experience with a campus are college admission officers. These first contacts are crucial avenues for offering students from the SEDGs appropriate information on the application process, college admission requirements, choice of subjects, and how to apply for financial support.

Moreover, through outreach efforts with secondary schools, HEIs can intervene and play a role in preparing students for and entering higher education. To maximise the chances for entry, outreach activities at the pre-entry stage include collaboration with schools and colleges to raise college-going aspirations and improve information, advice and guidance to students to make the right subject choices and achieve their full academic potential.

Thus, increasing HE access to the socially disadvantaged group is the first step in achieving student diversity in the HE system. Realising Stage I diversity, where traditionally under-represented students are represented in HEIs, however, offers challenges and opportunities for the HE system in India. Stage I impacts the nature and ways in which institutions will need to engage with student diversity in Stages II and III.

### ***Stage II Diversity: Academic Integration of Students from the SEDGs***

Stage II, after access and admission, deals with academic diversity, diversity in students' prior knowledge and planning for academic integration. Academic integration refers to the greater involvement of students from the SEDGs in the teaching-learning processes and participation across a range of learning activities to improve their academic performance. To reach the academic integration stage, academic differences have to be addressed to enhance academic integration through increased participation of students from the SEDGs in the classrooms and improve their academic performance.

A primary concern today for HEIs is supporting students from the SEDGs on their path to programme completion and degree attainment. Existing empirical evidence suggests that students from SEDGs are more likely to have pending back-papers, lower academic scores, and high repeat and dropout rates. Such academic outcomes reflect the lack of academic integration of students from the SEDGs.

Higher education institutions at Stage II deal with academic diversity in the classroom, which is reflected as variations in the pre-college academic attributes of students and the level of their preparedness to undertake college-level coursework. Stage II also provides HEIs with the space to explore and examine the challenges faced by students from SEDGs that impede their academic integration and negatively impact their educational outcomes. At the institutional level, faculty members are the ones who first see students from SEDGs encounter these challenges and are also best placed to initiate mechanisms designed to overcome combined disadvantages faced by students from the SEDGs.

Characteristics of student diversity, as they relate to their socio-economic status and the type of school students have attended, influence the levels of academic

integration in the classrooms. Students from the SEDGs face challenges of academic integration that stem from their low socio-economic status (SES) family background and their pre-college educational experiences gained at school. As a result of their economic circumstances and the type of schools they attend, students from SEDGs are less likely to be academically prepared for college compared to their peers from high SES backgrounds to persist and successfully graduate from college.

Academic college preparation begins in secondary schooling (particularly by the 9th grade) and sets the course for a student's educational success. For students from the SEDGs, the level of academic preparation required for HE is directly influenced by unequal prior academic experiences, especially concerning the types of schools they attend. Research informs us that students from the SEDGs are more likely to attend high schools lacking the resources that aid in college preparation, are exposed to the outdated syllabus and have studied in regional language as their medium of instruction, which negatively influences their abilities for the transition to English as a medium of instruction in higher education (Varghese, 2018). Since students from SEDGs are less likely to participate in rigorous curricular programmes in their high schools, they are less likely to be prepared for college-level work.

Moreover, for students from SEDGs, financial barriers early in their educational pathway at a middle or secondary school impede their academic preparation and hamper their academic integration into college classrooms. Financial barriers take the form of a lack of resources to take college preparatory course work and opportunities to engage in out-of-school activities geared towards preparing students with particular skills (such as motivation, time management, and multi-tasking) needed for preparation for access and success in college.

Further, research suggests that the parenting style that promotes academic achievements is also influenced by the SES of families and is more associated with middle-class orientation. The parenting style of low SES families is more oriented towards authoritarian and traditional ways, characterised by high levels of discipline and restrictions and where parents may tend to withhold expressions of affection. This parenting style has negative consequences on academic achievements as adolescents are unable to develop a positive academic self-concept (self-perception of academic abilities), and lack communication skills, intrinsic motivation and

independent problem-solving skills. Research shows that the authoritarian parenting style may not prepare students as effectively to socially adjust and academically compete with more privileged peers in HE classrooms with parents who have practised a more authoritative parenting style (characterised by firm expectations yet warm relationships). It is argued that an authoritarian parenting style of low SES parents is a result of adaption to socio-cultural circumstances and living in higher-risk neighbourhood environments.

Thus, students from the SEDGs face academic challenges in HE classrooms, which take the form of a lack of participation in the teaching-learning processes from the very beginning of their entry into college classrooms to the completion of their courses. Challenges of the involvement in the teaching-learning process faced by students from SEDGs range from lack of understanding of basic concepts related to their subjects, hesitation in asking questions to clarify their doubts in the classroom, lack of study habits and time-management skills, lack of note-taking skills, writing skills and communication skills, and problems with the English language.

Students with the vernacular medium of instruction find it challenging to understand the lecture and actively participate in classroom discussions. While technical vocabulary in English makes key concepts difficult to understand, the unavailability of books in vernacular language further adds to the difficulty in academic integration. Furthermore, difficulty in coping with reading material and lack of awareness about library resources and methods of using it also obstruct their opportunities for participation in the teaching-learning processes.

Learning environments in HEIs, such as large classes, and dominant teaching styles, such as the lecture method, mostly one-directional and one with fewer interactions with the teacher, further result in minimal active participation from students. For academically underprepared students or with low entry grades, reduced contact time with their teachers can affect their academic confidence, especially if they struggle to understand the course content.

To recall, Stage II diversity is concerned with academic diversity that is seen inside classrooms and with recognising the diversity in students' prior knowledge; these influence students' participation levels from the SEDGs in the teaching-learning

processes and of academic integration for college outcomes of students from the SEDGs. Higher education institutions that are required to diversify their student body by adhering to legislative measures and expanding the range and grade of entry qualifications must be prepared with strategies that support students from the SEDGs in the academic realm. The institutional response at this stage is to consider ways of providing academic support to students from the SEDGs that level the playing field for students with varying pre-college academic credentials.

In the process of engagement with academic diversity in the classrooms, the teachers are mainly responsible for achieving Stage II of student diversity. The teachers' role is paramount for attaining academic integration in classroom interactions. Creating conducive and supportive learning conditions is at the heart of meeting the educational needs of diverse students in the classroom. It is also essential that existing academic support programmes, such as *remedial programmes*, are effectively managed and implemented. The presence of positive in-class interactions, feedback on assignments and well-coordinated remedial programmes will influence the degree to which teachers can academically integrate students from the SEDGs into their classrooms. Academic infra-structural facilities such as the well-equipped library, audio-video learning aids and language labs all contribute to the academic integration of students from the SEDGs. Thus, academic support by teachers at this stage is essential for academic integration, which is critical not only but also for laying the foundation on which academic success and persistence rest and social inclusion are realised.

### ***Stage III Diversity: Social Inclusion of Students from the SEDGs***

Stage III diversity is of social inclusion of students from diverse groups in interpersonal relations, and outside classroom activities carried out on higher education campuses. Students' integration into the social milieu of campus is known to facilitate students' advancement to college completion and promote the full inclusion of students from the SEDGs. This dimension of diversity allows for reflection on attitudes and behaviour that influence campus culture and shapes the experiences of students, faculty and staff. It also presents a way to analyse the way people within the institution act and its consequences on how inclusion is practised on HE campuses.

Inclusion is understood as a process of actions and practices that embrace diversity, encourage engagement and build a sense of belonging (a sense of family) in the college experience of students from the SEDGs. Engagement and developing a sense of belonging can be realised through supportive peer relations and meaningful and confidence-building interactions with teachers and staff. A feeling of belonging to the campus community is essential for student retention and success.

This feeling – a sense of belonging – is reported to be missing from the college experience of students from the SEDGs. Research shows that students from the SEDGs feel unwelcomed, out of place and isolated on HE campuses. The process of social inclusion is hindered by forms of discrimination experienced by students from SEDGs, which alienates them and results in social exclusion.

The social group identity, unequal prior academic experiences, and low performance becomes a source of discrimination and results in social exclusion of students from the SEDGs, constraining their abilities to equally access or fully participate in out-of-class campus activities. Manifestations of insensitive campus culture and discrimination include identity-based peer groups, limited informal interactions with teachers, hostels based on castes and ethnicity, unsupportive administrative structures, and exclusionary behaviour from the administration.

Research shows that identity-based peer group formations on campuses are not uncommon. For students from the SEDGs, especially the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the absence of friendship with other castes is due to their concerns of insults, caste-based harassment and fear of discrimination. In the case of students from the higher castes, interactions amongst themselves are influenced by their perceived higher social positions and preference to maintain their social status. Research also points towards maintaining separate hostels based on caste and ethnicity and social segregation in access to shared spaces like mess halls and participation in extra-curricular activities.

Extra-curricular activities with the active participation of students from the SEDGs are also stigmatised, with students from higher castes shunning participation in such activities. A consequence of identity-based friendships and segregated living spaces is low levels of inter-mingling, cooperation and social cohesion among diverse social

groups. Moreover, women across social groups face gender-based stereotypes, exclusion, harassment and a lack of feeling of being safe on HE campuses.

In the process of engagement with student diversity, Stage III is of developing social support mechanisms (including non-academic support such as encouragement of leadership skills and preparation for the world of work) and advancing a culture of inclusion through non-discriminatory and inclusive interpersonal relationships amongst diverse peers, staff and faculty members. Such interpersonal relationships should be rooted in the belief that every person has value and potential and is respected. Advancing a culture of inclusion requires prohibiting discrimination and its adverse effects through taking positive measures, such as policies of affirmative action, special allocation of resources, and legislative and regulatory measures.

Internationally, the prohibition of discrimination in education is found in all treaties on human rights law. For example, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the core UN Human Rights treaty, emphasises the right to non-discrimination in access *to* education and *within* education as a human right. This treaty prohibits discrimination based on “race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or another status” (ICESCR, Article 2.2). Similarly, Article 1(d) of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education reinforces that education should be a tool for generating dignity and self-esteem for students, and under no circumstances should individuals or groups be denigrated because of their identity.

India has ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). This means that the state is a party to the provisions of the ICESCR human rights treaty. The state and its actors are the primary duty bearer with obligations to fulfil the right to non-discrimination education for all. The responsibilities of the state actors include ensuring that no third party interferes with the enjoyment of the right to non-discrimination in education or causes human rights violations. For example, the state should ensure that no pupil is harassed at educational institutions by their peers, faculty members or administrative staff.

Moreover, India already has anti-discrimination regulations for HEIs. Examples of regulatory measures prohibiting discrimination include the UGC’s ‘Promotion of

Equity in Higher Educational Institutions Regulation', 2012 (UGC, 2012) and UGC regulations on 'Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Education Institutions, 2009 (UGC, 2009).' For example, the 3rd Amendment in UGC regulations on 'Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Education Institutions, 2009,' dated June 2016, defines thus ragging:

Any act of physical and mental abuse, including bullying and exclusion targeted at another students (fresher or otherwise) on the grounds of colour, race, religion, caste, ethnicity, gender (including transgender), sexual orientation, appearance, nationality, regional origins, linguistic identity, place of birth, place of residence or economic background.

These regulations provide safeguards against harassment and exclusion of students from socially excluded groups such as women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and develop inclusive HE campuses in India. These safeguards include setting up an equal opportunity office, anti-ragging cells, constituting anti-ragging committees and appointing anti-discrimination officers to monitor the implementation of various provisions in the regulations.

The availability of such campus support structures is known to facilitate better participation of students from SEDGs in extracurricular and other campus activities, such as orientation programmes, clubs and societies. The availability of such mechanisms are ways to reduce marginalisation, protect students from discrimination and promote social inclusion on HE campuses.

However, to fully support students to successfully integrate into campus life and develop an inclusive campus environment, effective implementation of institutional mechanisms, such as special cells or equal opportunity offices, is crucial. The effective functioning of cells means that:

- students are aware that these cells exist,
- functionaries of the cells have regular interactions with students to detect signs of harassment and,



- preventive measures are taken against discrimination and exclusion.

Preventive measures include the assessment of social experiences of students from the SEDGs, including an assessment of their level of participation in extracurricular activities; establishing mixed social group hostels and promoting mixed identity peer groups, and organising training for sensitising educational administrators and faculty members on various aspects of diversity to advance social inclusion on campuses.

To summarise, HEIs have achieved Stage I of student diversity when the composition of students reflects the socio-economic background of the social composition of the population in the society. Stage II diversity is academic integration and is accomplished when students' social gaps in academic disparities are narrowed. Stage III is institutionalising an inclusive culture by promoting inclusive social interactions between students, teachers and administrative staff. Let us now look into the method of assessing student diversity in HEIs across these stages.

## Method to Assess Student Diversity in Higher Education Institutions

As discussed above, the framework for managing diversity in the student population helps identify the areas where institutional action is required for diversifying student composition and making HE campuses more inclusive. These areas include:

- at the entry level with a focus on supporting admission of students from SEDGs,
- in classrooms for their academic integration, and

### Questions for consideration and discussion

What are the three stages of student diversity?

What are the features of Stage I of student diversity? How might stage I of student diversity be attained?

What are the features of Stage II of student diversity? How might Stage II of student diversity be attained?

What are the features of Stage III of student diversity? How might Stage III of student diversity be attained?

- for inclusion of students from the SEDGs outside classrooms in social and interpersonal relationships with peers, staff and faculty members.

To engage in the process of managing student diversity and bringing about change in an institution, it is essential that individuals of the institutions first become aware of the status of diversity across these three domains. This section discusses the indicators to measure each of the three stages of student diversity.

### *Indicators to Measure Stage I Diversity*

Stage I of diversity is the presence of students from diverse social groups. At Stage I, relevant statistical indicators to assess the level of access and social diversity, that is, representation of SEDGs in the student body, include enrolment ratios at the higher education level and share of students belonging to the SEDGs in total student enrolment.

- Gross enrolment ratio (GER) is measured as students enrolled in higher education regardless of age as a percentage of their population in a theoretical college-going age group (18-23 years). The calculation method is as follows: the number of students enrolled in higher education regardless of age/the population of the age group (18-23) \*100. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) helps in the understanding level of access of students from the SEDGs in higher education vis-à-vis non-SEDGs.
- A high GER for a specific group will indicate a high level of HE participation. GER at a given time provides us with an insight into social disparities/inequalities in higher education at the macro level.
- Social diversity is understood in terms of the relative share of students from different socio-economic groups in total student enrolment. Diversity is defined in terms of social background or characteristics such as gender, caste, ethnicity, economic background, age, or disability. For example, large-scale surveys show that today the share of students belonging to socially excluded groups such as the scheduled castes (SCs), scheduled tribes (STs), and other backward classes (OBCs) in total student enrolment in HE is close to 57 per cent.

- To assess diversity within the student population at the institutional level, the proportion of students from SEDGs enrolled in higher education institutions in total student enrolment at a given HE level will provide this information.
- Further, the share of students belonging to the SEDGs in the student body can be assessed at the level of study, type of institution and discipline. Assessment of diversity through statistical indicators contributes to understanding the extent to which underrepresented students gain access to the elite institution and the fields and programmes they offer.
- Measuring statistical diversity will enable policymakers and campus administrators to take into stock which groups seem to be gaining access, which groups are under-represented in which programmes of study, and explore the ways to provide more equitable access to students from previously under-represented groups.

Findings from the CPRHE study (Sabharwal and Malish, 2016) suggest that the higher education system in the country has made commendable improvement in achieving social diversity though new forms of inequalities have emerged in the form of institutional and disciplinary segregations. Level of social diversity in student composition differ across levels of study, by nature of student admission policy followed by the institutions and by disciplines. This results in skewed access in favour of students from privileged groups. Social diversity in student composition is greater at the under-graduate level vis-à-vis post-graduate, in HEIs admitting students based on qualifying examination marks vis-à-vis those admitting students based on entrance tests. In relation to disciplines, social diversity is greater in arts and social sciences vis-à-vis STEM disciplines.

## *Indicators to Measure Stage II Diversity*

Stage II is of academic integration after entry and is concerned with dealing with academic diversity present in the classrooms. This stage engages and assesses diversity in the pre-college academic & language background of students. It entails assessing academic challenges facing students from disadvantaged groups and planning for their academic integration into the classrooms. To recapitulate, academic challenges faced by students from the SEDGs include a lack of understanding of basic concepts related to their subjects, lack of study habits and time-management skills, lack of note-taking skills, writing skills and oral communication skills, and problems with English language.

Assessment of academic diversity is essential as it helps in determining diversity in learning needs, planning for learning opportunities for academic integration of diverse learners, and addressing their academic challenges to improve their academic performance.

- Planning for academic integration of students requires foremost information and data on comparative or differences across students by several pending papers (year-wise), repetition rates and completion rates for students from SEDGs and by a programme of study.
- Indicators to assess academic diversity include examining pre-college academic characteristics and language backgrounds of students in HE classrooms. Some of the variables to assess pre-college academic background are the following:
  - Type of school (secondary & higher-secondary) attended: government, government-aided, unaided (private)
  - Type of syllabus studied: State, CBSE, ICSE
  - Medium of instruction followed in school (secondary and higher secondary)
  - Percentage of marks obtained in class 10 and class 12
  - Location of high school: rural/urban
  - Subjects studied in high school
  - Attended private tuition (secondary & higher secondary)

A focus on assessing the pre-college academic background of students from the SEDGs will help provide information on their academic preparedness to undertake and cope with college-level coursework. It is widely acknowledged that college-level coursework requires analysis, interpretation, and reasoning.

Assessing the study skills and time management skills of students is equally important to determine the learning needs and address the academic challenges of students from the SEDGs. Variables that help in assessing the study skills and time management skills of students could include the extent to which students do the following activities:

- Whether students attend classes regularly?
- Whether students request a copy of the notes from the day of not being able to attend class?
- Whether students ask questions in the classrooms to clarify doubts?
- Whether students take notes while reading the course material?
- Whether students use libraries and the internet to find documents?
- Whether students are reading textbooks and finding information?
- Whether students are submitting all assignments?
- Whether students are using the syllabus as a guide to each course?
- Whether students are regularly studying for the exam and not just one-two days before an exam?
- Whether students are setting aside a specific time each week to study?
- Whether students are using a day planner/calendar to organise weekly routines?

Teachers in the classrooms are best placed to address academic differences and target support for meeting the diverse learning needs of students from the SEDGs for their academic integration in classroom transactions. Efforts should identify ways to provide seamless academic support from the time of enrolment throughout the first two years, specifically and more generally during the student's time in college.

### *Indicators to Measure Stage III Diversity*

Stage III relates to social inclusion in higher education and the development of socially inclusive campuses. The process of inclusion requires assessing students' social experiences and taking positive actions, which:

- increase engagement of students from the SEDGs in campus activities and
- enhance on-campus student interactions that bridge social differences

Taking positive actions or targeted special measures becomes an essential component of addressing social identity-related challenges of students from SEDGs, which may be harder to manage with general provisions or strategies available for all students. In this context, it is essential to note that the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), which oversees the monitoring and interpretation of the provisions in the ICESCR human rights treaty, has emphasised:

*Eliminating discrimination in practice requires paying sufficient attention to groups of individuals which suffer historical or persistent prejudice instead of merely comparing the formal treatment of individuals in similar situations (General Comment 20, Para 8).*

The assessment of specific challenges related to prejudice and negative stereotypes faced by students from the SEDGs will help detect, monitor and prevent discrimination on HE campuses. An assessment of the social experiences of students from the SEDGs requires a reflection on the nature and forms of negative stereotypes and biases existing against them that could shape students' HE experiences in academic, social and administrative spaces.

Such assessments are possible through periodic campus student surveys that capture differences in college experiences of diverse student bodies. Using a scale from 1-4 (where 1: never, 2: rarely, 3: frequently, and 4: always), college experiences can be assessed by understanding the degree and extent to which students feel that they receive support in the following spheres of interactions:

- Interactions between students and faculty
  - Whether students feel that they receive academic support from their teachers
  - Whether students feel that their teachers monitor their performance and give feedback
  - Whether students feel that they are encouraged to organise academic activities
  - Whether students feel that the evaluation is fair
  - Whether they feel free to clarify their doubts in the classrooms
- Interactions among students
  - Whether students feel that they receive academic support from their peers
  - Whether students feel that they can interact freely informally with peers outside the classroom.
  - The social background of their first best friend
- Extent of participation in social life
  - Whether students are a member of co-curricular activities and campus programmes (e.g., drama clubs, debating society, NSS & NCC etc.)
  - Whether students are members of informal groups in hostels
  - Social group of students' roommates
  - Whether students feel that they are welcomed in the social life on campus
- Nature of student–administration interactions
  - Whether students feel that they receive updated information on access to scholarships and other support schemes
  - Whether students received information and attended orientation programmes
  - Whether students had information and attended remedial courses

Equally important are qualitative approaches, such as group discussions and interviews, which help reveal the process aspects of social interactions and how

students make sense of their daily experiences in college. Group discussions can help develop an understanding of the collective nature of challenges faced by students from the SEDGs and their perceptions of who shares a common social belonging. By questioning individual experiences through interviews, insights can be gained into the impacts of these challenges. Such approaches, in combination, can also reveal important insights as to why some students may report positive interactions with diverse others while still reporting hostility in some spheres on campus.

In sum, asking students from the SEDGs about their college experience and then linking these with academic outcome indicators such as those listed below will provide insights into some of the reasons for the lower academic performance of the students from the SEDGS. These academic outcome indicators may include:

- mid-term course grades,
- number of pending back-papers or credit completion,
- persistence past the first year
- graduation rates (number of students graduating from HEIs divided by the total number of students)

Thus, assessing college experiences will provide important insights into some of the factors as to why students from the SEDGs face lower academic success vis-à-vis the rest. To conclude, building structures, establishing processes and systematically assessing student experiences through dedicated institutional research offices are important institutional ways to achieve inclusion on higher education campuses.

## Questions for consideration and discussion

How would you assess that your institution has achieved Stage I of student diversity? What are the ways to measure social diversity in student composition?

How would you assess that your institution has achieved Stage II of student diversity? What are the ways to measure stage II of student diversity?

How would you assess that your institution has achieved Stage III of student diversity? What are the ways to measure stage III of student diversity?



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# **MODULES ON STUDENT DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Editors: Nidhi S. Sabharwal and C.M. Malish

## **Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses**

**Wandana Sonalkar, Nidhi S. Sabharwal and  
Roma Smart Joseph**

**MODULE**

**3**



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National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration**

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## PREFACE

The Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE) is a specialised centre established at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA). The centre promotes and carries out research in higher education policy and planning, and aims to contribute to evidence-based policy-making in higher education. The thrust areas of research include access and equity, quality, teaching and learning, governance and management, financing, and graduate employability in higher education. The centre is currently implementing research studies in selected institutions in several states of India.

Equity and inclusion in higher education are significant research areas at the CPRHE/NIEPA. Related to this theme, the CPRHE/NIEPA completed a large-scale study titled “Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: A Study of Institutions in the Selected States of India,” with funding support from the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). The study was carried out, by Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr C. M. Malish, in institutions located in six states, namely Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. A detailed questionnaire-based survey among 3,200 students was administered, close to 200 interviews were conducted with faculty and administrators, about 70 focus group discussions with students were held, and 50 students’ diaries were completed. The study helped understand unique challenges faced by students from the socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and assess institutional response to the changing nature of student diversity.

As a follow-up to the study, the CPRHE/NIEPA was requested by the ICSSR to prepare modules related to student diversity and social inclusion in higher education. An Expert Group was constituted to advise and guide the modules’ preparation. The expert group consisted of renowned academics, institutional leaders, and representatives of the Ministry of Education (MoE), ICSSR, and NITI Ayog.

Seven modules have been prepared as a part of this study. These are Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches (Module 1); Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education (Module 2); Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses (Module 3); Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education (Module 4); Social Inclusion in a Higher Education Campus (Module 5); Institutional Mechanism for Managing Student Diversity (Module 6); and Student Diversity and Civic Learning (Module 7). These modules are primarily meant to support and facilitate the CPRHE/NIEPA's efforts towards institutional-level capacity development, in improving the student experience in social and academic domains and academic performance of students from the SEDGs, and in creating a more inclusive campus environment.

We are grateful to the ICSSR for the funding support and to Professor Sukhadeo Thorat, former Chairperson of the ICSSR, for his sustained advice and encouragement. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Professor N. V. Varghese, Vice-Chancellor, NIEPA, for his untiring guidance in preparing the modules. Thanks are also due to Professor R. Govinda and Professor J. B. G. Tilak, former Vice-Chancellors of NIEPA, for their support and advice at various stages of the preparation of the modules. We express our gratitude to all authors who have contributed to the modules. Finally, we appreciate the efforts put in by our colleagues, Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr C.M. Malish, for preparing and finalising the modules.

**Professor Pradeep Kumar Misra**

Director, CPRHE

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We would like to thank Professor J. B. G. Tilak, former Vice-Chancellor of NIEPA, for his support and advice at various stages of preparation of the modules. We are grateful to Mr Basavaraj Swamy, former Registrar, NIEPA, and Dr. Sandeep Chatterjee, current Registrar, and his team including staff in department of finance and accounts of the NIEPA for extending administrative support in the preparation of the modules.

We acknowledge with deep respect the contribution by Professor N. V. Varghese, both as an institutional leader such as founding Director of the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education and former Vice-Chancellor of NIEPA, and as academic mentor. We have heavily relied and learnt from the Modules on District Planning in Education prepared at NIEPA 1997 led by Professor Varghese. We express our gratitude for his guidance at different stages of the implementation of the modules and his meticulous efforts in providing comments and suggestions on the draft modules.

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The development of the modules was undertaken as a collaborative activity. The CPRHE/NIEPA organised an expert group meeting to discuss the modules. We are

thankful to the guidance extended by the members of the experts committee: Professor Meenakshi Thapan, Professor Meenakshi Gopinath, Professor Sivanandan, Professor Sudhanshu Bhushan, Professor Siba Prasad Adhikary, Professor Mehtab Manzar, Professor Bakshi, and representatives of the ICSSR, NITI Ayog and Ministry of Education. Their close scrutiny and expert opinion helped in developing the approach and in the revision of the modules. All co-authors who have contributed to the modules were very active and involved from the very beginning. They willingly revised the modules after the discussions in the authors meet.

We express our sincere thanks to Monica Joshi, Mayank Rajput, Chetna, Aqsa and Sumit who helped in organisation of the meetings and preparing documents for reproduction. We are grateful to each one of them for their contribution.

**Nidhi S. Sabharwal**

**C. M. Malish**  
CPRHE/NIEPA

# INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the higher education sector in India has grown considerably. Higher education in India has shifted from an elite stage of development to a massification stage. Accompanying this massification in higher education is the increasing diversity among the student population. The student population on college campuses, relatively homogenous and elite previously, is now represented by non-traditional social group learners. These learners from the non-traditional groups belong to diverse social, economic, linguistic and regional backgrounds. While the presence of diverse groups on campuses reflects the advancement of equity in access, recent research raises concerns about the challenges faced by students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, such as the scheduled castes, other backward classes and scheduled tribes. These challenges are related to low academic outcomes, social tensions and its associated practices, prejudices and biases. For institutions to address the challenges facing students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups, it is essential that educational administrators and faculty members must be sensitive to these students' concerns.

The purpose of the modules is to sensitise the institution-level stakeholders, such as students, teachers and administrators in higher education, on issues related to student diversity, specific challenges facing students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and the role of higher education in promoting civic learning. Developing modules on student diversity in higher education is an extension of the study carried out by the centre and, thus, a mechanism of research-based engagement with institutional-level stakeholders.

The study titled "Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: A Study of Institutions in Selected States of India" was coordinated by Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr. C. M. Malish, and it was carried out in institutions which were located in six states, namely, Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. In order to develop an understanding of the challenges faced by students from the socially excluded groups and institutional response to the changing nature of student diversity, the methodology followed was the following. A detailed questionnaire-based survey among 3,200 students was administered, close to 200 interviews were conducted

with faculty and administrators, close to 70 focus group discussions with students were undertaken and 50 diaries were completed by students. As part of this project, the research outputs prepared and submitted include: 6 state team reports and 1 synthesis report; 2 CPRHE Research Papers; 1 CPRHE Seminar Report; 3 Policy Briefs in English with translations in Hindi; and more than 10 published journal articles and chapters in books (CPRHE Annual Report, 2022). In the policy research cycle, CPRHE-NIEPA organised two major events based on the research findings of the CPRHE study. A national seminar was organised and it brought together academics and policy makers concerned with institutional response to the changing nature of social diversity of student population. A policy dialogue webinar was organised and it was successful in bringing together academics, policy makers and institutional leaders and emphasised significance of institutional reforms for making campuses inclusive by valuing and promoting diversity. Policy briefs prepared by the CPRHE were the basis for the dialogue with various stakeholders of higher education.

On the successful completion of the research project, the CPRHE/NIEPA was requested by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) to prepare modules related to student diversity and social inclusion in higher education. These modules are primarily meant to support and facilitate the CPRHE/NIEPA's efforts toward institutional-level capacity building so as to improve the academic performance of students from the SEDGs and create more inclusive institutional environments. The modules are envisaged to be made available to the public as a public good.

The modules have been written in a simple style. However, they are not meant to be self-learning modules. The primary target group for the modules includes the faculty members, administrators and practitioners who are directly responsible for extending support to students from socially and economically disadvantaged social groups. In other words, these modules can form the essential teaching-learning material to organise training courses at the institutional level. Hence, an effort is made to explain the concepts and elaborate the steps are taken to discuss the challenges faced by students from the SEDGs in detail, with examples of strategies of consideration. Most of the modules contain module-specific reflective questions at the end.

The logic of the sequence of the modules is as follows: Module 1 contains a discussion on the concept and approaches to achieving student diversity, equity and social

inclusion in higher education. Module 2 includes a discussion on the three stages of student diversity for a systematic assessment of the status of student diversity in higher education. The three stages of student diversity are like this: Stage I of social diversity, which is measurable and represents diversity in the nation's population. Stage II is of academic diversity present in the classrooms. In Stage III, diversity is a condition of social inclusion on campus. As noted, these stages are developed on the basis of empirical evidence generated through the CPRHE study and elaborate the indicators to measure the three dimensions of diversity.

Module 3 includes the dimensions of academic diversity found in student composition. It discusses the relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics of the student body with the latter's varying levels of academic preparation to pursue higher education and challenges associated with achieving Stage II diversity, that is, academic integration. The module will highlight promising practices to achieve academic integration in higher education institutions.

Module 4 discusses the concept and the practice of discrimination in higher education in terms of social group identity, such as caste, ethnicity, gender and religion of students and its intersectionalities. Module 5 discusses the concept and approach to social inclusion in higher education institutions and attempts to develop a nuanced understanding of student experiences from admission to exit from college to inform points at which interventions are required. Module 6 elaborates on the approaches and strategies to be adopted by higher education institutions for the efficient management of student diversity. The final module, 7, introduces the concept of civic learning in higher education and attempts to provide clarity on the link between student diversity and civic learning.

The modules were prepared on the basis of several rounds of discussions that we had at the NIEPA. First, the CPRHE identified themes for the modules based on their completed research study and analysis related to student diversity, social inclusion and civic learning in higher education. The themes of the modules were presented, discussed and approved by members of the research advisory group for the research project. The areas identified for the modules included:

Module 1: Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches;

Module 2: Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education;

Module 3: Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses;  
Module 4: Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education;  
Module 5: Social Inclusion in the Higher Education Campus;  
Module 6: Institutional Mechanism for Managing Student Diversity;  
Module 7: Student Diversity and Civic Learning.

A detailed framework was further developed for the modules by the CPRHE faculty members, after which this framework was subjected to close scrutiny by a group of experts in a meeting organised by the CPRHE/NIEPA. An Expert Group Committee was formed for the purpose of advice and guidance on the overall approach towards the modules, and, to discuss structure and content of each module. The framework of the modules, the outline and content of each module were presented to the group. The members of the expert group consisted of academics, intuitional leaders (Vice-Chancellor and Principal of College), and representatives of ICSSR, NITI Ayog and Ministry of Education (MoE).

After the discussions with the experts, the framework of the modules was further revised with general guidelines, comments and suggestions made by the experts before presenting it in the Authors' meet. Academics who are experts in areas of diversity and inclusion in higher education were invited to be co-authors of the modules by the CPRHE/NIEPA. An authors' meet to discuss the structure and contents of the modules was held for developing a shared understanding on the framework to the modules and improving the modules. Based on the discussions, the framework was further modified, after which all the individual modules were developed by the CPRHE faculty members and co-authors of the modules.

These modules were further subjected to a close review in the workshop organised with the members from the Expert Group Committee and the authors of the modules, organised by the CPRHE/NIEPA. The drafts of the modules were shared with all the expert members for their review prior to the organisation of the workshop. The modules have been revised and finalised based on the comments and suggestions of the experts. We hope this module will be useful towards advancing equity and inclusion in higher education in India.

April, 2023

**Nidhi S. Sabharwal**  
**C. M. Malish**  
CPRHE/NIEPA



## MODULE 3

# Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses

This module has been prepared with certain specific objectives.

### **THEY ARE:**

To develop an understanding on diversity in student social characteristics and pre-college academic backgrounds,

To develop a clear understanding of the link between social and pre-college academic background, and academic preparedness for transition to higher education,

To discuss the approach towards academic integration and successful transition to higher education.

## Introduction to Module 3

In recent decades the higher education sector in India has expanded substantially. Today, India has the world's second-largest higher education (HE) system, with 38.5 million students and a gross enrolment ratio of 27.1 per cent (Varghese, 2015; MoE, 2020). The sector's expansion in India has mainly resulted from improved availability of HE facilities and the rising aspiration level of the population to be college educated. Importantly, concerted efforts at the school level to increase enrolment and grade transitions resulted in a larger share of students being eligible for higher education. This created more demand for higher education (Varghese *et al.*, 2019).

Equity has been an important concern in the policies of HE expansion in India. As a result of affirmative action policies such as the quota system and provisions of scholarships, there has been a commendable growth in the enrolment of socially and disadvantaged groups. The new diverse student body in a massified higher education system is diverse not only in terms of the student's socioeconomic characteristics and parents' education, but they also have varying pre-college academic credentials, levels of preparedness to undertake college-level coursework, capacities to participate in academic activities, which in turn influence their capacities of academic integration. Prior learning gaps and variations in the capacities to acquire skill for integrating into the classroom academic activities results in poor academic performance and lower learning outcomes for students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs).

Academic integration refers to improving the levels of participation of diverse students in the teaching-learning classroom process, developing their basic subject knowledge and skills, and encouraging participation across a range of learning activities that influence their academic performance and, ultimately, academic outcomes in college. Compared to their peers from the socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), students from the socially advantaged groups are more likely to have attended high schools lacking the resources that aid in college preparation. They are also exposed to outdated syllabi and would have studied in a regional language as their medium of instruction, negatively influencing their abilities to transition to English as a medium of instruction in higher education.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) must be prepared with supportive strategies in the academic realm to enable the participation of SEDGs in the teaching-learning classroom process, advance their academic outcomes and come closer to achieving the Stage II dimension of diversity in higher education in India. To recall from Module 2, in the process of managing student diversity, the Stage II dimension of diversity is academic diversity, wherein HEIs are required to direct their attention to devising strategies to address academic differences to achieve equity in academic outcomes. That is the subject matter of this Module 3. There will be a difference between strategies at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Achieving academic integration means moving closer to achieving 'equity' in academic outcomes. As discussed in Module 1, equity denotes a condition where everyone has access to resources and opportunities to realise one's potential. Any policy towards equity needs to understand and address unfair differences emerging in the process of accessing educational opportunities. Therefore, ensuring that the opportunities to acquire the necessary academic level to succeed in college are also distributed equitably is crucial. The following sections include a discussion on pre-college academic credentials; level of college preparation; the relationship of socio-economic characteristics of the student body with students' academic preparation for college-level coursework, and challenges associated with pre-college academic credentials to achieve Stage II diversity, that is, academic diversity.

## **Pre-College Academic Characteristics of the Student Body: Type of School, Pre-College Scores, and Subjects Opted in College**

Students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, from both urban and rural backgrounds, are now reaching the college level, and some are going to postgraduate academic institutions. There is great diversity within the categories 'urban' and 'rural'. The CPRHE study (Sabharwal and Malish, 2016) uses distinctions based on religious background and, even more importantly, caste, father's occupation, and distinctions between 'traditional' and first-generation learners. These are all features of the student's social background. There are also certain physical disabilities and specific learning disadvantages that require support.

There is also a variety in the type of schools. English medium schools in most major cities and even provincial towns now offer a variety of board trajectories up to Class 10, leading to CBSE, ICSE, and several other “international” options besides the state-run Secondary School Certificate. Some of these charge very high fees, but private schools cater to different income groups in even the smaller towns now. However, fees for private schools put a financial strain on families choosing to provide their children with a good education. Also, there is no standardisation of the quality of education being offered. State-run schools managed by municipal corporations or smaller urban bodies suffer neglect in various areas, including building maintenance and basic facilities like toilets, playgrounds, laboratories, and libraries. However, they are still better off than their rural counterparts. Specific physical disabilities also require provisions in the building infrastructure, furniture and simple aids that must be planned for.

Available research evidence suggests that students from government schools are disadvantaged compared to their peers from private schools. This disadvantage is mainly due to the difference in the rigour of the syllabus and medium of instruction followed across the types of schools:

- Students from private schools mainly study in English as a medium of instruction and show a higher possibility of getting admitted to elite institutions where one is admitted after qualifying for competitive exams for medical studies and engineering.
- English as a medium of instruction at high school is also found to impact academic confidence, especially in elite higher education institutions.

On the other hand, students from government schools mainly study in regional language as a medium of instruction, making the transition to English as a medium of instruction in higher education difficult. The difficulties are problems in understanding the lecture, lack of understanding of technical vocabulary and limited participation in classroom discussions. However, we should also recognise that being instructed in one’s mother tongue has some advantages at the school level. Research on pedagogy shows cognition is easier when there is a continuity between the language in which a child expresses herself and the medium of

instruction in a primary school class. The transition to English is made at different stages for children from diverse backgrounds. Maybe it is important to recognise and for teachers to convey to students that have studied in a regional language is a *difference*, rather than a *disadvantage*, compared to studying in an English medium school from an early age. These can be addressed through remedial support, defined as instructional programmes. These are designed to help students achieve expected competencies in core academic skills such as literacy and numeracy.

However, physical disability and other specific learning disadvantages, such as dyslexia, and high-functioning autism, require *accommodations* or academic adjustments. These academic adjustments are essentially adaptations in teaching and learning processes for students who face specific learning disabilities or sensory impairments to manage learning difficulties. Accommodations may include auxiliary aids and services and modifications to academic requirements as necessary to minimise the impact of the disability. Physical infrastructure should also be planned to the needs of the physically challenged. Also, students, in general, should be made aware that the concept of diversity includes not just tolerance but an appreciation of classmates with various difficulties, impairments or disabilities.

Care has to be taken that there should be no financial impact on students for receiving the required learning support. Accommodations are set on a case-by-case basis, individualised to each student and their current needs. Some institutions (e.g. Ashoka University) follow the principle that students with an identified/diagnosed disability are not automatically entitled to disability-related accommodations. Each student needs to request learning support for their specific condition. This means that the HEI encourages students to understand factors that can help in managing learning outcomes despite their difficulties and gain self-advocacy skills to support their needs. Following are some examples of accommodations and modifications: curriculum modifications, attendance modifications; extension in assignment submission; examination-related support; note-takers and scribes; lecture recording, or preferential seating.

Where admissions in HEIs require interviews as part of the application process, command of English emerges as one of the most challenging aspects of the interview.

This should signal a change in the interview process, whereby the weight is given to students' cognitive powers and knowledge rather than emphasising linguistic skills. About the syllabus studied, the syllabus taught in vernacular languages needs to be brought up to date. Considering the lacunae in teaching processes in most schools, there is often a lack of understanding of basic concepts related to their subjects, resulting in limited participation in the teaching-learning process by students from the SEDGs.

Perhaps the best schools are those run by private trusts but receiving government aid; these have a history of being part of the educational movements of pre-independence and early post-independence years. These movements were inspired by a wide range of political and social philosophies, ranging from Gandhi's *nai taleem*, based on the philosophy of integrating knowledge and work, to Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil's Raiyat Shikshan Sanstha, which explicitly aimed at making education available to those children who had previously been denied it, especially on the grounds of caste, religion or economic status. Some schools in this category were founded by persons who have been locally active in the movement for independence, for the formation of linguistic states, or in other democratic movements. A school established with a foundational philosophy of this kind usually sets up a system that endures fairly well over time and is able to deliver an education of standard quality to most of its students. This kind of system is sustainable even with changes in the capability of individual teachers and so on. As Sabharwal and Malish (2018) observe in their research paper on student diversity and social inclusion:

Historically, massive socio-religious movements, particularly led by subaltern castes and communities, intensive and extensive commercialisation of the agricultural economy, the work of Christian missionaries such as the Church Mission Society (CMS) and London Missionary Society (LMS), and the progressive attitudes of princely states and democratically elected governments are decisive in raising the demand and supply of education (Lieten, 2003; Tharakan, 2006).

These historical legacies need to be recognised and efforts made to revive them. Over time, scholars have observed deterioration in the education offered at the plus two levels in schools/colleges. For instance, between the end of the 1990s and the first decade of the new century, private tuition classes (often run by retired or even in-service teachers from government-aided schools or junior colleges) became much more widespread, and the regularity and seriousness of classes conducted by the official institutions decreased. The school/junior college authorities told students in the science streams that it was important to attend the practical classes and that other classes didn't matter.

The pedagogy in these private tuition classes is extremely exam-oriented and fails the criterion of providing a sound basic knowledge of the subject. Classes oriented towards the premium HEIs in engineering and medicine, of course, charge high fees. After some time, as entrance exams draw near, concentrate their attention on students evaluated as having a good chance of success. This applies to some extent even in arts subjects, where the aim of the best students would be to succeed in competitive examinations leading to jobs in civil services at the central or state level.

Some government schools, however, do function well. It would be useful to develop criteria for the evaluation of state-run schools that give adequate weight to the objectives of achieving diversity rather than focussing only on competence attained by pupils in basic cognitive and linguistic areas. State education policy and the importance given to elementary education by local politicians do matter. The reservation of seats for women in local panchayat raj bodies from 1993 onwards has made a difference in some cases, as elected women representatives in some gram panchayats and municipalities have invested time and effort in seeing that the schools in their constituencies run well. A dialogue between policymakers and administrators in education and these local democratic bodies could, in principle, give a better understanding of parents' expectations from schools and nudge them towards expecting, and valuing, something more than exam performance from the schools.

What do we mean by this? A long record of unemployment in the Indian economy, coupled with the desire in rural families for a source of regular income for at least

one family member, has generated understandable anxiety in parents' minds about scores in school-leaving examinations. But an appreciation of diversity among students in terms of 'natural' skills and talents, inherited work traditions, and social impediments to learning can shift the emphasis to higher valuation of sports and other recreational facilities, as well as 'vocational' education, developing employable skills outside the academic curriculum.

For example, modern developments in communications and sound technology could make it possible for schools to teach music, and visual arts, even photography, in imaginative ways, drawing on popular songs and local/caste-based musical traditions while imparting knowledge about a broader range of musical and art forms and disciplines. If we start looking at 'diversity' as not only originating from social 'difference' and social inequality but also as reflecting the rich and many-layered diversity in Indian society, this could completely change the way parents and teachers perceive school education. There has to be such a change in perception, significantly, right down from governments at central, state and local levels, policymakers and administrators, to local elected representatives, teachers, school support staff, and parents and guardians of the school pupils themselves.

## **Level of Post-Secondary Career Planning, Sources of College Preparation and Its Relationship with Student Background Characteristics**

In the college-going process, college preparation and knowledge are closely interlinked with students' socio-economic background, parents' educational levels and types of schools attended. College preparation and basic knowledge of college involve guidance on post-secondary career, encouragement to attend college, college choice process and choice of subjects. Students' choices are influenced mainly by parental expectations, often based on a lack of information coupled with social pressures, economic constraints, and their peers. Attempts by teachers to modify parental expectations will not be effective unless there has been prior interaction between parents and teachers that builds confidence and trust. Teachers' guidance of students on these matters must be enabling rather than one which builds pressure or generates feelings of inadequacy. This requires sensitivity



to gender, caste, linguistic competence and disability. It is a rapidly changing world in which various career possibilities are opening up. Still, lack of information can lead to wrong choices that cost dearly in terms of finance, stress, disappointment and failure.

Having said this, we do have to look at the level of preparation offered by the various schools for entrance to HEIs, both local arts-science-commerce colleges and colleges providing professional courses in engineering, architecture, and medicine, as well as newer areas like hospitality, tourism, sports training etc. Students from the SEDGs are less likely to receive counselling support regarding college admissions and less likely to be guided on the options available for further studies and to be prepared for them. Students from the SEDGs are more likely to attend high schools lacking the resources that aid in college preparation. Concerning differences in sources of support for a post-secondary career between government and private schools, students from private unaided schools, compared to government schools, are more likely to have their school organise post-secondary career events.

With all the above variations in the types of schools discussed above, there is a significant variation in the methods and outcomes of preparation. One crucial aspect is whether the school/junior college adequately informs students about the various academic, professional and vocational courses available and suggests careers geared towards each student's preferences, skills and talents, the qualifications required, and the financial risks. A suggestion would be that workshops be held annually to educate and train staff in these schools/junior colleges about these possibilities. Programmes that prepare students for college are required at the school level, especially in government schools.

To summarise, gaining an insight into the diverse social characteristics of students and their level of academic preparation is essential as an absence of such support leads to un-informed educational decisions and college outcomes. Such insights on student characteristics, including a wide array of academic attributes that students bring to college, are essential as these correlates with college success. Knowledge of student characteristics can illuminate the mechanisms through which social inequalities in educational outcomes operate and what HEIs can do about it.

## Approaches Aiming at Academic Integration

To achieve academic integration and achieve Stage II diversity (refer to Module 2), it will necessarily involve increasing the participation of students from the SEDGs in the teaching-learning process, bridging course content gap and language skill gap in subjects and improving student learning. While integration in academic domains is primarily the student's responsibility, this is possible only when adequate additional learning opportunities are available to students from the SEDGs. Providing additional learning inputs to disadvantaged students in universities and colleges is also a teaching-learning strategy to provide personalised learning opportunities.

The primary aim of providing additional academic support as a teaching-learning strategy is to improve the learning outcome or academic performance of the student; however, at the undergraduate level, the college can play an influential role in bolstering or undermining the student's sense of self-worth, and a broader task of socialisation is also carried out at this level. Additional learning inputs and learning support are seen as a significant equity intervention to redistribute the learning opportunities in favour of students of the SEDGs and equip disadvantaged populations to overcome barriers to learning. These are the primary concerns of this module, but we need to be aware of the broader context of what college education offers.

In the literature, three dominant approaches have been put forward, which aim at providing academic support and improving the academic preparedness of students. These include *remedial education*, *compensatory education* and *developmental education*.

- *Remedial education*: Remedial education connotes 'remedy' or 'healing' and includes courses covering content that should have been learned in high school. Remedial education most commonly includes fourteen-to-sixteen-week college courses for college students in reading, writing, or mathematics (Parsad and Lewis, 2003).
- *Compensatory approach*: Compensatory education approach views students' deprived living and learning environment, more often induced by poverty, as a

source of their academic under-preparedness and lower academic achievements. Common practices in compensatory education include academic preparatory and supplementary work to develop maths (computational) and writing skills, improvement of study habits and provision of a learning environment to counter-balance deprived home environment (Arendale, 2008).

- *Developmental education*: Developmental education is a broader term wherein academic development is seen as a process and in a continuum encompassing the learner's cognitive and affective domains. The National Association for Developmental Education (NADE) (nd) defined it thus:

Developmental education is a comprehensive process that focusses on the intellectual, social, and emotional growth and development of all students. Developmental education programs and services commonly address academic preparedness, diagnostic assessment and placement, development of general and discipline-specific learning strategies, and affective barriers to learning.

Developmental education programmes include remedial courses as a component of short-term courses to develop academic capabilities. Other interventions include individual tutoring and group tutoring. The term developmental education and its programmes are considered more humane and holistic vis-à-vis the terms remedial or compensatory education. It should be possible to break the indelible connection between socio-economic background and academic performance *even during* the conduct of these classes rather than seeing the remedial or compensatory function as merely a desired outcome. For example, students from SEDGs may have mathematical skills that do not need too much linguistic proficiency.

Proponents of developmental education (Clowes, 1980), while distinguishing between the three terms 'remedial' 'compensatory' and 'developmental' programmes, associates 'remedial education' with education designed to bring the underprepared in line with the elite; students from SEDG's are treated to remedies in the medical model to produce an acceptable range of competence. The compensatory model is associated with egalitarian educational objectives, wherein schools are asked to compensate for the deficiencies in family and environmental support systems and to bring underprepared students into mainstream society.

The approach of “developmental education is based on a humanistic world view, according to which education addresses universal developmental aspects of students, aiming to bring all students to a minimum level of accomplishment in both academic and personal functioning” (Clowes, 1980: 10).

More current terminologies for improving levels of preparedness include academic enrichment programmes and academic development programmes that combine academic skill building and remediation with the development of social and emotional skills. Some specific support services include (as mentioned by some Universities, such as Ashoka): volunteer-based peer learning support program; social & emotional guidance; English language help and guidance; mentoring and self-advocacy skills; residence life support programme; career guidance and assessment services including curriculum needs-based assessment and screening for any disability. These programmes, with components of student support services, bring together students’ academic and social experiences for a more positive experience for diverse learners.

## **Status of and Challenges Facing HEIs in the Implementation of Academic Integration**

An example of a remedial coaching programme in India is the UGC remedial coaching programme. The remedial coaching programme in India is a targeted group-specific programme mandated by the state to focus on students from the SC/ST/OBC and Minority communities. The objectives of the remedial coaching programme supported by the UGC are aligned with the goals of the developmental education rubric. The guidelines (UGC nd) define remedial coaching broadly as follows: A programme that offers courses/classes to “improve academic skills and linguistic proficiency of the students in various subjects, ‘raise the level of comprehension of basic subjects to provide a stronger foundation for further academic work,” “strengthen their knowledge, skills and attitudes in such subjects, where quantitative and qualitative techniques and laboratory activities are involved, so that, the necessary guidance and training provided under the programme enable students to come up to the level necessary for pursuing higher studies efficiently” and “reduce their failure and dropout rate.”

The programme provides financial assistance to organise special classes in colleges and universities for SC/ST/OBC (non-creamy layer) and Minorities in addition to regular class hours prescribed by universities and colleges. Universities and colleges with at least 100 students belonging to SC/ST/OBC/Minority are eligible for financial assistance under this scheme. *The guidelines also allow 20 per cent of students (other than SC/ST/OBC and Minorities) to be beneficiaries of the scheme. In case of a lack of an adequate number of SC/ST and Minority students, the percentage of non-creamy layer OBCs and general candidates from poor backgrounds can be increased to 40 per cent.* A nominal fee is charged for those students in the general category and students who do not hold BPL (Below Poverty Line) cards (UGC nd).

The guidelines insist on maintaining a teacher-student ratio of 1:20 in remedial classes, which indicates the need for individualised care and attention for learning support. The UGC guidelines suggest that teachers for the coaching scheme can be subject teachers, retired teachers, eminent educationists, postgraduate students and research scholars. The programme's component includes career guidance and psychological counselling for emotional well-being. In a nutshell, the programme's target is to ensure that once students from the SEDGs are in higher education institutions, they receive appropriate learning and teaching support for a stronger foundation for further academic work and completing their academic courses.

*Status of its implementation:* Available evidence from the CPRHE study on the evaluation of coaching programmes (Malish and Sabharwal, 2021), carried across 10 HEI located across ten states in India, shows that

- The programme extends academic support to underprepared students through coursework in college to develop a stronger foundation for further academic work.
- Faculty and students across colleges and institutions highlight the importance of remedial coursework. Across institutions, many students from the SEDGs find remedial coaching useful. Those who attend remedial classes are more likely to be first-generation learners, those from low socio-economic and rural areas, from government schools, and ones who studied state-level syllabus in Hindi or some other regional language.

- Most remedial classes are taught by regular teachers, followed by guest faculty and instructors from outside. Teacher involvement is critical in determining how students participate and benefit from the teaching-learning processes. Research shows that students, in general, indicate that they prefer regular professors as their teachers for remedial classes because they feel that their regular teachers know their level of understanding better. Indeed, it is found that the subject teachers in remedial classes are aware of the requirements of the students attending remedial classes.

In summary, it is found that the programme addresses the underlying socio-economic disadvantages students face that become barriers to their learning and academic success. Thus, remediation programmes are a significant institutional diversity strategy to ensure academic success for underprepared students.

### ***Challenges Facing HEIs in Implementing Remedial Programmes***

The remedial programmes offered by HEIs to the students from the SEDGs are considered an important strategy to consider the variations in the academic background of the diverse student body on HE campuses. In the process of managing student diversity, this programme can help HEIs to deal with the stage of diversity in the learning needs of the student body. To recall from Module 2, Stage II diversity deals with diversity in the academic background of students from SEDGs. Especially at the undergraduate college level, the HEIs are required to plan for improving the academic preparedness of students from the SEDGs to undertake college-level coursework and for their academic integration in the classroom teaching-learning processes.

By extending additional academic support to bridge the course content gaps and build academic skills, this programme can improve students' learning and advance the academic integration of students from the SEDGs. In other words, a remedial programme is an important strategy that helps higher education institutions manage the barriers related to academic diversity in the student body and plan for Stage II of academic integration.

However, HEIs face considerable challenges in the process of implementation of the remedial programme in India. One of the critical challenges confronting HEIs

in implementing this programme is that they do not receive funds on time (often, they receive funds at the end of the academic year). This becomes a barrier for HEIs towards organising classes on time. The other challenge facing HEIs is related to uncertainties about the continuation of the coaching programme, which results in anxiety over its future and disrupts the ability of institutions to plan for the implementation of classes. Moreover, lower funding levels and associated financial norms stipulated by the UGC guidelines pose a barrier in attracting experts to teach in coaching programmes, specifically in colleges located in remote rural areas.

Regarding the coordination and planning of the programme, there is a general feeling among the coordinators and teachers that there is insufficient incentive for them to invest commensurate time in organising these classes and giving feedback to students. They feel that their time and effort are not adequately recognised and considered when promotions are done. *In short, all these problems stem from a low priority to 'remedial' schemes when financial resources are allocated, and institutions and teachers are evaluated.* Planning-related challenges include the limited availability of mechanisms for institutional-level planning, management and monitoring of coaching schemes. This results in limited coordination with other campus-level organisations looking after student welfare, including the internal quality assurance cell (IQAC). IQAC, which attempts to maintain the overall quality of college and university, are not directly engaged with any of the activities of the coaching schemes, including remedial coaching.

Students from the SEDGs face considerable challenges while accessing remedial teaching. These challenges include the following:

- At present, remedial teaching for students from diverse backgrounds is offered only by a few HEIs, and most concentrate on linguistic skills.
- Students face inconsistencies in remedial placement and assessment, with limited attempts by institutions to diagnose the specific learning challenges facing students.
- There are delays in the announcement of the timetable, and students are not regularly offered updated information on the time and venue of classes.

- Many times, these are offered only to first-year students, and sometimes only in the first semester, while many students would prefer these to continue throughout the course.
- Classes are large with a high teacher-student ratio, which results in problems for teachers to give individualised attention to students, provide regular feedback or encourage discussion in classrooms.
- Sometimes, insensitive remarks related to students' social backgrounds are made in the classrooms.
- There are inadequate provisions for study materials.
- The description of these programmes as 'remedial' often generates a feeling of inadequacy in students, especially those from socially marginalised backgrounds, and makes them reluctant to opt for these courses. Typically, students at the college level are still finding their individuality and have a strong desire to conform. Being picked out as 'underprepared' because of one's social background can be humiliating.

## Highlights of Good Practices on Academic Integration

How can these insights help design strategies for academic integration in college campuses other than in elite professional colleges?

First of all, we must emphasise that integration, social inclusion and diversity have to be accepted as fundamental values at every level and stage of educational planning and implementation. Only then will it be possible to allocate financial and human resources appropriately. It is crucial that the existing remediation programmes be strengthened at the college level with the help of the following measures:

- Institutions should ensure that information related to remedial and other support programmes is widely disseminated among the student population. Institutions where remediation programmes are in operation, *need to strengthen existing teaching-learning processes* in remediation programmes. Institutions should also ensure that there is no stigma attached to remedial and other support programmes.



- Training should be provided for teachers to deal with academically diverse student groups.
- Some HEIs have also been implementing academic enrichment programmes that combine academic skill-building with social and emotional support with attention to students' identities. *Some of the institutions were coupling academic enrichment programmes with co-curricular programmes.* Such 'social learning' programmes brought together students' academic and social experiences, and resulted in a more positive experience for first-generation learners.
- It is well recognised that participation in students' organisations is a significant factor in their integration into campus life. Friendships struck in such associations help build confidence and a feeling of belonging. In addition, senior students helping their juniors with coursework help in academic integration. However, all this is more applicable to the postgraduate level, where the students are mature enough to pursue their own ethical, social, cultural and political values.
- For students of bachelor-level courses, practical sessions, which require persons from different backgrounds to work together in teams, are a great help in academic integration. Teachers across all disciplines must plan for such sessions as part of the academic curriculum
- At the undergraduate college level, students should be freed from the pressure of exams, and exam performance must cease to be the only criterion of 'merit.' We repeat that this requires all levels of college administration, from government departments of education, governing boards and principals to teachers and administrative staff, to learn to value diversity in the student body.
- There are many parameters of diversity. Gender is one of them. The college should be an environment where male and female students learn to accept each other as classmates and learn the values of mutual respect and cooperation. For this age group, it will be necessary for teachers to design activities that promote such learning. Essay competitions, debates, team activities, art projects, and collaborative projects must be encouraged, even between students in different classes and years.

- What applies to gender applies to other differences such as urban/rural backgrounds, caste, type of school attended, language spoken at home, occupation and education level of parents and siblings, etc. Again, teachers need to nurture in students a sensitivity to the experiences and feelings of those different from oneself.
- In our society, proficiency in English language bestows a person with cultural capital, which gives them an advantage in many situations where linguistic skills are not, in actuality, centrally critical. Teachers should also expose students to situations where a lack of knowledge of local/regional languages is a disadvantage. The idea that those from English school backgrounds may also need 'remedial' programmes should be introduced. We should look for a better word than 'remedial', which implies that lack of knowledge of English, e.g., is a 'defect'.
- Language laboratories must be established to improve the language proficiencies of students. The technology and pedagogy for language teaching are well-evolved now. Students who may not be able to access language courses on their mobile phones can use language laboratories which will not need more than the usually available number of computers.
- Setting up 'learning laboratories' and tutorial services can directly address students' academic vulnerabilities. Senior students willing to take part in these should be encouraged and rewarded. Infrastructure for formal and informal interactions should be available in the college space.
- Bilingual teaching, additional sessions where topics covered in class, are revised in different languages, involving students in translation activities, use of poetry, songs of different social/regional communities, oral history projects, research on local monuments and ruins, improvisation in drama; all these can be used in the teaching of a wide range of subjects.
- At the level of undergraduate college education, academic integration can be partially achieved in the classroom. Bilingual teaching, teamwork, identifying students to present a reading in class: all these help towards that end.

- However, classroom time is limited, and the pressure on teachers to ‘complete the portion’ can restrict the use of such methods. Students from less well-off backgrounds are more likely to feel this pressure, as employment goals may be more important.
- Thus, extra-curricular activities are essential in guided engagement with the outside world through methods such as those outlined in the previous section. However, we need to point out that students from underprivileged backgrounds often complain that upper-caste students from wealthy families usually dominate extracurricular activities. At the undergraduate level, extracurricular activities must be guided by teachers keeping academic integration in mind.
- All this will require a restructuring of the timetable and a reframing of criteria for the evaluation of teachers and for grading of students.
- In social sciences, there must be bridge programmes to bring experiences of the excluded social groups into the curriculum and generation of bilingual teaching material through translation.
- There must be widespread use of modern technology: ICT facilities, language laboratories, wi-fi etc. Making digital content on subjects available to students enables them to prepare for classroom discussions in advance. These facilities should also be made available in schools to enhance the pace of academic integration.
- Students at every level need guidance on how to use digital knowledge sources. These should not be seen as shortcuts, and it is necessary to steer students away from plagiarism to a discerning use of digital materials.

All the approaches to academic integration and the suggested implementation methods we have outlined in this module need time and a healthy student-teacher ratio. If values change, then evaluation can change. Evaluation of teacher performance needs to be linked to academic integration. This can open up exciting possibilities for creative and dedicated teachers from varied social backgrounds. Adopting such values in education requires a significant turnaround in the education policy, which is increasingly oriented towards market values. Of course,

the challenge is to balance the development of employable skills and proficiencies with the goal of academic integration.

### **Reflective questions to consider for discussion**

What are the variations in pre-college academic characteristics and how are they linked with academic preparedness of students from varying socio-economic backgrounds?

What is the level of post-secondary career planning, sources of college preparation and its relationship with student background characteristics? How can these be enhanced?

What are some of the approaches that aim to achieve academic integration? How do these operate at different levels of institutional planning, syllabus-framing, time management and evaluation of teachers, students and institutions?

How is the implementation of academic integration linked with an appreciation of diversity in the student body as a resource and not just a 'problem'?

What are some of the good practices on academic integration highlighted in this module? Can you add examples from your own observation and experience?

Which practices specific to the classroom contribute to academic integration?

How can guided extra-curricular activities contribute to academic integration in the classroom?

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# MODULES ON STUDENT DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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## Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education

C.M. Malish

MODULE

4



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17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi - 110016 (INDIA)





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## PREFACE

The Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE) is a specialised centre established at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA). The centre promotes and carries out research in higher education policy and planning, and aims to contribute to evidence-based policy-making in higher education. The thrust areas of research include access and equity, quality, teaching and learning, governance and management, financing, and graduate employability in higher education. The centre is currently implementing research studies in selected institutions in several states of India.

Equity and inclusion in higher education are significant research areas at the CPRHE/NIEPA. Related to this theme, the CPRHE/NIEPA completed a large-scale study titled “Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: A Study of Institutions in the Selected States of India,” with funding support from the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). The study was carried out, by Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr C. M. Malish, in institutions located in six states, namely Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. A detailed questionnaire-based survey among 3,200 students was administered, close to 200 interviews were conducted with faculty and administrators, about 70 focus group discussions with students were held, and 50 students’ diaries were completed. The study helped understand unique challenges faced by students from the socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and assess institutional response to the changing nature of student diversity.

As a follow-up to the study, the CPRHE/NIEPA was requested by the ICSSR to prepare modules related to student diversity and social inclusion in higher education. An Expert Group was constituted to advise and guide the modules’ preparation. The expert group consisted of renowned academics, institutional leaders, and representatives of the Ministry of Education (MoE), ICSSR, and NITI Ayog.

Seven modules have been prepared as a part of this study. These are Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches (Module 1); Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education (Module 2); Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses (Module 3); Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education (Module 4); Social Inclusion in a Higher Education Campus (Module 5); Institutional Mechanism for Managing Student Diversity (Module 6); and Student Diversity and Civic Learning (Module 7). These modules are primarily meant to support and facilitate the CPRHE/NIEPA's efforts towards institutional-level capacity development, in improving the student experience in social and academic domains and academic performance of students from the SEDGs, and in creating a more inclusive campus environment.

We are grateful to the ICSSR for the funding support and to Professor Sukhadeo Thorat, former Chairperson of the ICSSR, for his sustained advice and encouragement. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Professor N. V. Varghese, Vice-Chancellor, NIEPA, for his untiring guidance in preparing the modules. Thanks are also due to Professor R. Govinda and Professor J. B. G. Tilak, former Vice Chancellors of NIEPA, for their support and advice at various stages of the preparation of the modules. We express our gratitude to all authors who have contributed to the modules. Finally, we appreciate the efforts put in by our colleagues, Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr C.M. Malish, for preparing and finalising the modules.

**Professor Pradeep Kumar Misra**  
Director, CPRHE

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The development of the modules was undertaken as a collaborative activity. The CPRHE/NIEPA organised an expert group meeting to discuss the modules. We are

thankful to the guidance extended by the members of the experts committee: Professor Meenakshi Thapan, Professor Meenakshi Gopinath, Professor Sivanandan, Professor Sudhanshu Bhushan, Professor Siba Prasad Adhikary, Professor Mehtab Manzar, Professor Bakshi, and representatives of the ICSSR, NITI Ayog and Ministry of Education. Their close scrutiny and expert opinion helped in developing the approach and in the revision of the modules. All co-authors who have contributed to the modules were very active and involved from the very beginning. They willingly revised the modules after the discussions in the authors meet.

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**Nidhi S. Sabharwal**  
**C. M. Malish**  
CPRHE/NIEPA

# INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the higher education sector in India has grown considerably. Higher education in India has shifted from an elite stage of development to a massification stage. Accompanying this massification in higher education is the increasing diversity among the student population. The student population on college campuses, relatively homogenous and elite previously, is now represented by non-traditional social group learners. These learners from the non-traditional groups belong to diverse social, economic, linguistic and regional backgrounds. While the presence of diverse groups on campuses reflects the advancement of equity in access, recent research raises concerns about the challenges faced by students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, such as the scheduled castes, other backward classes and scheduled tribes. These challenges are related to low academic outcomes, social tensions and its associated practices, prejudices and biases. For institutions to address the challenges facing students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups, it is essential that educational administrators and faculty members must be sensitive to these students' concerns.

The purpose of the modules is to sensitise the institution-level stakeholders, such as students, teachers and administrators in higher education, on issues related to student diversity, specific challenges facing students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and the role of higher education in promoting civic learning. Developing modules on student diversity in higher education is an extension of the study carried out by the centre and, thus, a mechanism of research-based engagement with institutional-level stakeholders.

The study titled "Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: A Study of Institutions in Selected States of India" was coordinated by Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr. C. M. Malish, and it was carried out in institutions which were located in six states, namely, Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. In order to develop an understanding of the challenges faced by students from the socially excluded groups and institutional response to the changing nature of student diversity, the methodology followed was the following. A detailed questionnaire-based survey among 3,200 students was administered, close to 200 interviews were conducted

with faculty and administrators, close to 70 focus group discussions with students were undertaken and 50 diaries were completed by students. As part of this project, the research outputs prepared and submitted include: 6 state team reports and 1 synthesis report; 2 CPRHE Research Papers; 1 CPRHE Seminar Report; 3 Policy Briefs in English with translations in Hindi; and more than 10 published journal articles and chapters in books (CPRHE Annual Report, 2022). In the policy research cycle, CPRHE-NIEPA organised two major events based on the research findings of the CPRHE study. A national seminar was organised and it brought together academics and policy makers concerned with institutional response to the changing nature of social diversity of student population. A policy dialogue webinar was organised and it was successful in bringing together academics, policy makers and institutional leaders and emphasised significance of institutional reforms for making campuses inclusive by valuing and promoting diversity. Policy briefs prepared by the CPRHE were the basis for the dialogue with various stakeholders of higher education.

On the successful completion of the research project, the CPRHE/NIEPA was requested by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) to prepare modules related to student diversity and social inclusion in higher education. These modules are primarily meant to support and facilitate the CPRHE/NIEPA's efforts toward institutional-level capacity building so as to improve the academic performance of students from the SEDGs and create more inclusive institutional environments. The modules are envisaged to be made available to the public as a public good.

The modules have been written in a simple style. However, they are not meant to be self-learning modules. The primary target group for the modules includes the faculty members, administrators and practitioners who are directly responsible for extending support to students from socially and economically disadvantaged social groups. In other words, these modules can form the essential teaching-learning material to organise training courses at the institutional level. Hence, an effort is made to explain the concepts and elaborate the steps are taken to discuss the challenges faced by students from the SEDGs in detail, with examples of strategies of consideration. Most of the modules contain module-specific reflective questions at the end.

The logic of the sequence of the modules is as follows: Module 1 contains a discussion on the concept and approaches to achieving student diversity, equity and social



inclusion in higher education. Module 2 includes a discussion on the three stages of student diversity for a systematic assessment of the status of student diversity in higher education. The three stages of student diversity are like this: Stage I of social diversity, which is measurable and represents diversity in the nation's population. Stage II is of academic diversity present in the classrooms. In Stage III, diversity is a condition of social inclusion on campus. As noted, these stages are developed on the basis of empirical evidence generated through the CPRHE study and elaborate the indicators to measure the three dimensions of diversity.

Module 3 includes the dimensions of academic diversity found in student composition. It discusses the relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics of the student body with the latter's varying levels of academic preparation to pursue higher education and challenges associated with achieving Stage II diversity, that is, academic integration. The module will highlight promising practices to achieve academic integration in higher education institutions.

Module 4 discusses the concept and the practice of discrimination in higher education in terms of social group identity, such as caste, ethnicity, gender and religion of students and its intersectionalities. Module 5 discusses the concept and approach to social inclusion in higher education institutions and attempts to develop a nuanced understanding of student experiences from admission to exit from college to inform points at which interventions are required. Module 6 elaborates on the approaches and strategies to be adopted by higher education institutions for the efficient management of student diversity. The final module, 7, introduces the concept of civic learning in higher education and attempts to provide clarity on the link between student diversity and civic learning.

The modules were prepared on the basis of several rounds of discussions that we had at the NIEPA. First, the CPRHE identified themes for the modules based on their completed research study and analysis related to student diversity, social inclusion and civic learning in higher education. The themes of the modules were presented, discussed and approved by members of the research advisory group for the research project. The areas identified for the modules included:

Module 1: Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches;

Module 2: Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education;

Module 3: Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses;  
Module 4: Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education;  
Module 5: Social Inclusion in the Higher Education Campus;  
Module 6: Institutional Mechanism for Managing Student Diversity;  
Module 7: Student Diversity and Civic Learning.

A detailed framework was further developed for the modules by the CPRHE faculty members, after which this framework was subjected to close scrutiny by a group of experts in a meeting organised by the CPRHE/NIEPA. An Expert Group Committee was formed for the purpose of advice and guidance on the overall approach towards the modules, and, to discuss structure and content of each module. The framework of the modules, the outline and content of each module were presented to the group. The members of the expert group consisted of academics, intuitional leaders (Vice-Chancellor and Principal of College), and representatives of ICSSR, NITI Ayog and Ministry of Education (MoE).

After the discussions with the experts, the framework of the modules was further revised with general guidelines, comments and suggestions made by the experts before presenting it in the Authors' meet. Academics who are experts in areas of diversity and inclusion in higher education were invited to be co-authors of the modules by the CPRHE/NIEPA. An authors' meet to discuss the structure and contents of the modules was held for developing a shared understanding on the framework to the modules and improving the modules. Based on the discussions, the framework was further modified, after which all the individual modules were developed by the CPRHE faculty members and co-authors of the modules.

These modules were further subjected to a close review in the workshop organised with the members from the Expert Group Committee and the authors of the modules, organised by the CPRHE/NIEPA. The drafts of the modules were shared with all the expert members for their review prior to the organisation of the workshop. The modules have been revised and finalised based on the comments and suggestions of the experts. We hope this module will be useful towards advancing equity and inclusion in higher education in India.

April, 2023

**Nidhi S. Sabharwal**  
**C. M. Malish**  
CPRHE/NIEPA

## **MODULE 4**

# **Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education**

This module has been prepared with certain specific objectives.

### **THEY ARE:**

To develop an understanding of the concept of discrimination in higher education

To identify the forms of discrimination in higher education institutions

To discuss the consequences of discrimination for learners and society.

## Introduction to Module 4

Equal access to education is one of the major goals in the vision of a democratic and just society. Provision of equal access to education is simultaneously the means and the outcome of democratisation of society. A right based approach to education emphasises that no one should be denied the opportunity to access education based on their individual characteristics and group belongings, such as caste, class, race, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, geographical location and language. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4) views "inclusive and equitable quality education for all" as a major goal as well as the means to achieve all other goals. SDG places education at the centre of efforts towards developing sustainable communities and society. Education for SDG (ESDG) further elaborates the crucial need for foundational changes in approach towards teaching-learning processes in order to equip learners to face unforeseen and unprecedented challenges of the future. Technology provides further impetus to viewing the learners as active agents in the process of learning. This is the context for the renewed focus on a learner-centred approach to learning. Learner centred-approach is now gaining wider currency for all levels of education, including higher education.

At any stage of education and in any form, any act of discrimination is based on background characteristics of the learners and may impinge on one's access to and participation and achievement in education. Inequality in access to education has severe implications for the perpetuation of inequalities at the higher levels of education. Inequality in education can lead to inequality in other domains, such as health, income and employment. More importantly, education inequalities in the current generation can be a major source for inequality in future generations. Higher education is an important public sphere where public matters are discussed and the future direction of society takes shape. Higher education is thus crucial for developing collective capacities and the capacity for associative learning. In an era of knowledge economy in which higher education qualifications are necessary qualifications to access decent employment, discrimination leading to exclusion in higher education negatively impacts individuals and groups. It also shadows the concerned country's efforts to develop the pool of qualified graduates required for

the economy and society. Thus, inequalities in education in any form are antithetical to the principles of an inclusive society and equity in development.

Being a quasi-public good, benefits of higher education are not confined to individuals who access higher education. Society is also benefited from higher education in many ways. Non-market social benefits of higher education are integral for developing an inclusive and democratic society (Teixeira and Shin, 2020). Higher education makes a major contribution to improving individual well-being, such as improved health and longevity. It also equips individuals to make informed decisions. Public debate in societies which have a higher number of higher educated population is significantly different from societies where only few have access to higher education. Higher education is integral to developing political awareness and informed citizenship. A broader perspective of higher education underscores higher education's contribution to civilisational ethos and progress of humanity.

In the specific context of massification of higher education in India, characterised by increased student diversity in terms of their background characteristics, in campuses and classrooms, this module discusses meaning and various forms or manifestations of discrimination and its consequences.

## **Meaning of Discrimination in Higher Education**

Discrimination is an act of making distinction on the basis of background characteristics with an intention to exert, or results in, negative impacts on others. Although the capacity to distinguish is an important cognitive faculty or competency for survival of human beings, discrimination is an act of making distinctions, preferences and exclusions on the basis of certain background characteristics of others. It results in a harmful effect on the learners or the group of learners who share those characteristics. These characteristics could be the social group of origin such as caste and ethnicity, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, bodily features, language and region or location one belongs to, to list a few.

In the context of education, we can identify two types of discrimination, viz negative discrimination and positive discrimination. The act of making distinctions and behaving accordingly, on the basis of background characteristics, has the intention

to exert a negative impact or results in a negative impact on the learners belonging to a certain group. This is called negative discrimination or unlawful discrimination. But there may also be an act of discrimination, mostly at institutional, policy or government levels, in order to eradicate disabilities faced by a certain group of learners and create abilities among them. This is a part of the agenda of promoting social justice and equity and is called positive discrimination or protective discrimination. Affirmative action policies such as the policy of reservation for historically marginalised groups like the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are examples of positive or protective discrimination in India. (Refer to Module 1 for a detailed discussion on protective discrimination.) Positive discrimination is justified by a commitment to democracy and social justice. The rationale for positive discrimination, as followed in the reservation policy, is not merely the need to compensate for the past injustices. Rather it is based on the conviction that the prevailing social structure and social inequalities in distribution of resources would not be conducive for open and fairer competition for education and public employment. Positive discrimination also needs to be seen as a correctional mechanism to address the present state of inequality ingrained in social structure and its institutions. People's access to material and symbolic resources varies according to their social position. Those who are located at the bottom of the social hierarchy have less access to resources. Since all do not have an equal initial endowment, the principle of natural equality does not address the specific needs of the disadvantaged. This is the context of demand for positive discrimination.

This module primarily focusses on negative discrimination based on the background characteristics of learners, such as caste, class, gender, ethnicity, language, region, physical ability, appearance, etc. Throughout the module the term discrimination is used to denote negative discrimination unless it is specified otherwise.

## **Definition of Discrimination in Higher Education**

Drawing on the Convention against Discrimination in Education adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO 1960), discrimination in higher education can be defined as "any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on caste,

ethnicity, gender, language, religion, political affiliation and economic class has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of access, participation and outcome of higher education.”

We need to underscore an important point here. The intention of an act is not the only element needed to consider it as discriminatory. Any action which is not intended but leads to negative consequences for certain groups of learners is also an act of discrimination. In societies where structural inequalities are predominant, discrimination is embedded in everyday practices. That forms of untouchability exist even in the 21st century shows how inequality and exclusion are ingrained in the social fabric. Those who make discrimination may not acknowledge that their actions are discriminatory. This lack of awareness cannot be a justification in favour of the perpetrator. Any act of discrimination must be viewed in the victim’s perspective. As ignorance of law is no excuse for committing a crime, ‘unreflexive’ and ‘natural’ acts of discrimination have no value. Rather, an idea of ‘unreflexive’ or ‘natural’ acts of discrimination would help the perpetrator to escape from the responsibility of his or her act. It is also based on the false assumption that discrimination is mere manifestation of prejudiced minds. As indicated, whether one has a prejudiced mindset or not is not a major consideration.

## **Typology of Discrimination in Higher Education**

Discrimination in higher education can be classified into two major types, based on the level at which it is practised. They are individual discrimination and institutional discrimination. Individual discrimination can be further divided into overt (direct) and covert (indirect) types of discrimination. Unlike overt forms, covert forms are hidden forms of discrimination and comparatively difficult to capture. Similarly, institutional discrimination may not have single perpetrator; rather it may be systemic and collective in nature.

### ***Individual Discrimination***

Individual discrimination takes place during interpersonal engagements inside or outside the classroom. Verbal expressions, behaviour patterns, physical gestures and use of any media or objects such as cartoons and pictures, ICT gadgets and

social media platforms, with an intention to devalue or hurt a learner belonging to a certain background characteristic is referred to individual discrimination.

### **Box 1: Mocking of Transgender Students**

Transgender students get access to higher education after overcoming many social and emotional barriers. Some states such as Kerala have introduced reservation of seats for transgender students in higher education. Calling transgender students by derogatory names and showing some physical gestures in order to demean them is an act of discrimination. Discrimination can also take other forms, such as not allowing transgender students to sit in common places and showing resistance to accept them as members of a laboratory group or assignment group.

### ***Direct and Indirect Forms of Discrimination***

In each of these three domains, discrimination can be direct or indirect forms. Direct or overt form of discrimination is a visible form of discrimination. Therefore, evidences on direct discrimination are comparatively easy to gather. For instance, a teacher or co-student may use an abusive language by referring to the caste background of a student or group of students; this is a direct form of discrimination. Indirect and covert form of discrimination is less visible and rarely appears as a discriminatory act to the general public. Indirect discrimination can also be explained as a demand for a conditional requirement which someone lacks, in order to exclude them or with a purpose of making a harmful impact on them. Since it is manifested as an inability to comply with such conditional requirements, it is often viewed as a problem on the part of the individual or group of individuals being discriminated against.



## Box 2: Public Announcement of Marks and Entrance Scores

Grades in qualifying degrees and scores in entrance tests are meant for providing admission. Some teachers, during early days of a college session, request students to write their marks or entrance scores in a paper and pass it to the next students. The idea is to understand the academic background of the students. This is an example of indirect discrimination. It is discriminatory because this practice has a negative impact on a certain group of students. Not all who have similar access to resources needed to succeed in qualifying examinations. It is possible that students admitted through reservation may have lower scores compared to those who got admission on the basis of merit. This specific practice puts the disadvantaged students in an embarrassing situation. As the list is passed from one student to another, all students in the class get to know about the variations in the scores. Irrespective of the intention of the teacher, this practice negatively affects the self-confidence and morale of students from the disadvantaged groups.

Unravelling indirect forms of discrimination is a difficult process. For instance, a teacher asks students to write an essay on a city they visited during their last vacation as part of student assessment. As students from lower economic strata who reside in villages are less likely to have an exposure to cities, students from upper economic strata get undue advantage. Similarly, discrimination in the form of subtle bodily gestures and non-verbal communication which makes person being discriminated feels disrespected and devalued in a social or inter-personal context inside or outside the classroom and campus is difficult to capture. These forms of discrimination are called *micro aggression*. Unlike discrimination in its direct forms, identifying indirect forms of discrimination and micro aggression is comparatively difficult.

### **Institutional Discrimination**

Institutional discrimination refers to policies of institutions and behaviour of people who implement the policies and controls institutions. These often appear as neutral but have a negative and harmful effect on certain groups of learners. Unlike

individual discrimination, institutional discrimination is systemic and embedded in the structures, processes and everyday practices of higher education institutions. Institutional discrimination can occur in academic and non-academic domains. It can take the form of general policies, rules, tradition, and formal and informal norms that govern the conduct of academic and socio-cultural activities in campus and classroom. One can remember here that many of the acts which are considered to be criminal activities now were once well accepted and a part of the divine tradition. Humanity progressed to modernity by fighting against these types of tradition in all domains including education.

### **Box 3: Differential Timing for Girls' Hostel**

Considering the 'safety' of girls, some colleges make differential timing for reporting in a girls' hostel. These rules go against the interest of the girl students. If girl students alone are required to report to the hostel just after class hours, and they lose the opportunities to benefit from post-class hour engagement in academic activities such as accessing library and laboratory and participating in group discussion and socio-cultural life on the campus. It is the responsibility of the college or university to ensure a safe environment for all on the campus.

## **Forms of Discrimination**

As discussed, discrimination in higher education takes many forms (Pincus, 1996). Here we discuss some contemporary forms of discrimination in colleges and universities, experienced by students from disadvantaged social groups and women. Major forms of individual and institutional discrimination (Sabharwal and Malish, 2016; Malish and Sabharwal, 2018) are discussed as follows.

### ***Individual Discrimination***

Three major stakeholders of a college or university are students, teachers and the administrative or support staff. Individual students interact with co-students, teachers and staff of college. Forms of individual discrimination are therefore

discussed under three major domains such as student-student interaction, teacher-student interaction and administration-student interaction. Here “student” means any students, irrespective of levels and status, full time or part time, or those in distance mode, enrolled in any discipline/branch. “Teacher” means any teacher or instructor, irrespective of their status, such as permanent, ad-hoc or contract. “Administrative staff” means any non-teaching staff working in administration, library, laboratory, hostel or any other department on a regular or contract basis.

### ***Student-Student Interaction***

Higher education provides its students the opportunities to interact with other students from diverse backgrounds. Social and academic experience gained through such peer interaction is found to have lasting implications for the career trajectory and life of students. Social networks developed during college life can be a major resource for one’s personal and professional growth. Available literature on student experience, therefore, emphasises the need for concerted institutional efforts to ensure that students from all backgrounds are provided with adequate opportunity to experience richness of peer interaction without the fear of discrimination.

One of the major forms of discrimination in the social space of campus is the expression of unwillingness to share common premises such as cafeteria, playgrounds and washrooms with a certain group of learners. For example, male students may express their unwillingness to share the playground with female students because of the feeling of male superiority. It is an act of discrimination because it denies those female students an opportunity to use the playground at par with male students.

Peer group formation is an important domain of discrimination. Discriminatory practices take the form of reluctance to form a peer group with students belongs to other social groups due to the perceived feelings of superiority and a belief in social hierarchy. An example is expression of unwillingness by “upper caste” students to form peer groups with “lower caste,” as the former consider the latter group as inferior. When students directly and openly express unwillingness to form peer groups with students with certain background characteristics, it is a direct form of discrimination.

In many situations, one may not openly express one's preferences but consciously choose friends on the basis of caste backgrounds by excluding others. It is an overt form of discrimination. Aggregate data on peer group formation may indicate discriminatory attitudes that prevail in the campus. In many national level institutions, one may find that students from north eastern states such as Mizoram, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Nagaland are not part of the peer group of students from other Indian states.

Use of derogatory words, caste/ethnicity-based jokes, expression of sexual intent in formal and informal social contexts is another form of discriminatory acts. Discrimination of this sort poses barriers for women students to fully enjoy the social experience of campus. Although one has the right to express their ideas and feelings, such expressions should be lawful and uphold mutual respect and right of dignity guaranteed by the constitutional principles. It can also take the forms of using double meaning and abusive words in order to outrage the modesty of women or ridicule and mock at the transgender students or those with certain characteristics.

#### **Box 4: Calling by Caste or by Derogatory Names**

It is not uncommon in campuses that students from disadvantaged groups are called by derogatory names. Publicly calling students by their caste names with an intention to single out or hurt is an act of discrimination at the level of student-student interaction. Making fun of students from disadvantaged backgrounds by calling or referring to "code names" is pervasive across the campuses. This "code name" may express a negative attitude towards the policy of reservation. It leads the victims to feel that they are socially and academically inferior to others. It may take heinous forms, hurting the self-esteem of students and leading to dehumanisation. Some such acts lead to socially undesirable outcomes such as withdrawal of students from social and academic life, and to other vulnerabilities.

Discrimination can also take non-verbal forms. Instead of oral expression, picture, dress or any other media showing derogatory words and physical expressions can

be used to purposefully insult and abuse others. For instance, wearing a T-shirt with an abusive slogan or cartoon or any other expression which are aimed to devalue a certain group of learners is an act of discrimination. While freedom of expression is important, non-verbal forms with a purpose of making or resulting in a harmful impact on students with certain background characteristics is not socially desirable. They are discriminatory acts.

Use of social media is pervasive now. Therefore, use of social media for circulation of derogatory and abusive contents such as text, pictures, cartoons and videos in order to hurt students with certain background characteristics may become a major form of discrimination. For instance, sharing abusive content in official social media groups or social media platforms which are used for academic purposes. Although one has the right to use the mobile phones and other electronic gadgets, any use which results in devaluing and disrespecting certain group of students are a clear case of discrimination.

Similar to discrimination in social spaces of campus, expression of unwillingness to share the common space and interact with certain group of learners for academic related activities due to a belief in social hierarchy and perceived superiority of one's own group is an act of discrimination in academic domain. The common space can be classroom, laboratory and library. For example, students are not ready to jointly carry out laboratory work by citing non-academic background characteristics of other students.

Use of micro aggression, in the form of a subtle insult against the socially disadvantaged and transgender students in classroom and out of classroom situations, with the purpose of or resulting in their devaluation, is another important form of discrimination. For instance, laughing or making an expression in order to devalue a student with certain characteristics during a classroom presentation. These forms of micro aggression are found to have long-lasting negative implications for students.

### ***Teacher-Student Interaction***

The patterns of teacher-student interaction greatly contribute to students' experience in higher education. Along with the academic support, the socio-emotional support

extended by teachers is an integral component in determining the quality of student experiences and student outcomes. Inclusive teacher-student interaction is one of the hallmarks of an inclusive campus.

One of the major forms of discriminations in the domain of teacher-student interaction is lower academic expectations of teachers from the students belonging to certain background characteristics. This lower expectation is based on a deficit mode of thinking that a certain group of students are not able to perform well. This is one's prejudicial attitude to a group of learners. It can either be expressed in the classroom or reflected in attitude towards those students outside the classroom.

Frequent references to a certain student group while teaching in order to alert them about the need for more attention to understand a topic, is an act of discrimination from the part of a teacher. Although intention can be different, public calling in this context reinforces the prejudicial attitudes towards certain groups that they are academically weak or less attentive in class. Moreover, it damages the morale of the students.

In connection with lower academic expectations, teachers may deny opportunities to students belonging to certain groups of having one-to-one discussion on academic matters. This is a crucial form of discrimination in campuses. It can also take the form of exclusion of certain students while distributing opportunities to develop leadership qualities, such as coordinating classroom seminars or any such academic events. Similar is the case of denial of opportunities to students belonging to certain groups of asking questions in the classroom.

Another form of discrimination is the use of caste, ethnicity and gender-based jokes, stories and remarks during classroom transactions. Whether the teacher is making it intentionally or unintentionally, it ultimately leads to harmful effects on students from the deprived backgrounds. One good example is the sharing of stories reflecting the prevailing gender stereotypes. Whether intended or not, the sharing of such stories or remarks would have a negative impact on students, particularly women students. It also indirectly demands women students to comply with certain traditional roles.

The practice of unfair evaluation of examination papers and other assessments is also a major form of discrimination. While allocation of marks to a test-based examination may have some kind of objectivity, internal marks based on performance in the classroom are solely based on the subjective assessment by the teacher. Therefore, any preference for certain groups of students or exclusion of certain others, intentionally or unintentionally, can lead to unfair distribution of allocation of internal marks.

### **Administration-Student Interaction**

Administrative staff includes a wide range of non-teaching staff employed in higher education institutions. It includes office staff in administration at the department/school and university/college level and staff in student welfare offices, library, laboratory, hostel, recreation centres and campus amenities. Students need to interact with the administrative staff on a regular basis and administrative staff plays a major role in shaping social and academic life on campus. Perhaps students who first visit a college are more likely to engage with administrative staff rather than academic staff such as a teacher or instructor.

On some occasions, administrative staff works with or under the physical presence of academic staff such as teachers, instructors and demonstrators. Here the teacher is responsible to ensure that the interaction between staff and students is non-discriminatory. But not all administration-student interactions are mediated by the physical presence of the academic staff. This module mainly discusses discrimination during the interaction between administrative staff and student without the presence of academic staff.

Making derogatory remarks and micro aggression against students belonging to certain groups, such as students with disability, SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities and transgenders and the learners from other non-traditional backgrounds, is a major form of discrimination in the domain of administration-student interaction. Such discriminatory acts can occur on a plethora of occasions --- while seeking admission, submitting certificates, paying fees, accessing library services, and seeking certificates or documents.

Delaying services or extending poor services to those students who seek admission through reservation is an example of discriminatory acts during the admission phase. It may also take the form of demand of additional documents other than university/government prescribed necessary documents for claiming reservation. It may also take the form of raising unnecessary queries or making unnecessary statements on reservation, with the purpose of or result in devaluing students.

Suppression of information by administrative staff regarding affirmative action schemes and programmes such as scholarships, freeships, book bank, book grant, remedial coaching being operational in the institutions, are known cases of discrimination on campuses.

## **Institutional Discrimination**

It is not necessary that a single individual is responsible for discriminatory practices that are taking place in campuses. Institutional policies, rules and norms which guide how one should behave in campus spaces and classrooms can be major sources of harmful impacts on certain students. In institutional discrimination, what needs to be understood is as to how institutional policies lead to harmful impacts on certain sections of the student's community.

It is the right of students to know the rules and norms that govern admission in colleges and universities. Lack of availability of such information may make them face severe difficulties. If HEIs are not providing mandatory information about the admission process, including the number of seats available and mandatory requirements to claim reservation, students seeking admission through reservation may face many difficulties. Therefore, suppression of necessary information regarding admission process is an act of institutional discrimination.

As a significant share of students are the first-generation learners, they may face many difficulties in completing the formalities, including online registration, if any while seeking admission. It can lead to harmful impacts on students. Not making any institutional arrangements in the form of a student's help desk or assigning staff or faculty for providing admission related information can also be treated as a form of institutional discrimination.



According to the rules of the land, merit seats can be accessed by all students, irrespective of background characteristics. Student characteristics such as caste or economic background are to be considered only for allocation of seats coming under quota or reservation. Therefore, admitting students through reservation, despite their eligibility for admission to a merit seat, if application of reservation does not have any implications on the choice of students, is an act of institutional discrimination.

Another form of institutional discrimination is the practice of collecting original certificates from certain group of students and keep it as a kind of bond to ensure their continuity in the institution. This form of institutional discrimination violates the fundamental rights which the Constitution of India guarantees.

Allocation of hostel rooms according to social category of students leads to segregation in general hostels where all categories of students are eligible to get admission. However, admitting disadvantaged students to hostels specifically built for them, using the earmarked funds such as the Tribal Sub Plan and Scheduled Caste Sub Plan, do not come in the category of institutional discrimination. However, it is desirable to have a common hostel where adequate rooms are allocated to the disadvantaged groups.

Allocation of separate sections and timing or any other distinction for socially disadvantaged groups other than part of book bank or book grant schemes or any other special support schemes targeted to disadvantaged students is institutional discrimination. Similar is issuing of library cards in different colours or appearances, indicating the social group origin of students. Administrative convenience should not be a justification for such practices.

Another important form is the suppression of information regarding scholarship, fellowship, UG coaching schemes and any student support programmes run by the government or various organisations. Such activities impinge on a student's capacity to make use of the available opportunities. It is the responsibility of the head of the institution to ensure that all such information is adequately disseminated through necessary mediums. It is also applicable to information regarding various institutional mechanisms for the welfare of students such as Equal Opportunity

Office, SC/ST Cell, Internal Complaint Committee, Anti-Ragging Cell and the person in charge, and how to approach each of the cells in case students wish to register a grievance or complaint and share the suggestion or feedback.

Forming the UGC mandated cells and committees, appointing office bearers and allocating and using funds available for the said cells/committee is the responsibility of the institution. Failure in regard to the same may have a harmful impact on student groups targeted by the said initiatives.

Any gender-based restrictions, such as restricted allocation of time for women students compared to male students, for leaving and reporting in the hostels and to access campus services such as internet and amenities such as physical fitness and sport facilities such as swimming pool, gymnasium, indoor stadium and activity centre are discriminatory.

## **Consequences of Discrimination**

Discrimination in education at all levels and forms leads to exclusion and exercises harmful effects on students being discriminated against. Such harmful effects may take the form of inability to access, withdrawal from the college or constraints for students not to take fuller benefits of opportunities provided by higher education. Consequences in both the cases are socially not desirable and they adversely affect individuals and society. Therefore, the consequence of discrimination may be discussed in terms of the ways it impacts an individual, institution, family, community and wider society.

As far as an individual is concerned, the adverse effect of discrimination can be discussed in three domains --- access, participation and student outcomes. Such effects ultimately lead to negative social and academic outcomes. While the academic outcome may be discussed in terms of successful completion of a course and access to decent employment and higher studies, social outcome refers to the gain of social and behavioural competency which are necessary to learn, work and live in a diverse world.

During the admission phase, discrimination takes place at the level of administration-student interaction and the institution is a potential source of constraint to one's

effort to take admission in a college or university. Along with the discriminatory attitudes of administration, illegal demands for additional documentation further push students from disadvantaged castes and communities into the grip of vulnerability. All forms of discrimination at the stage of admission negatively impact student choices and decision to join college.

Social and academic experience of college life has a lasting impact on students. Discrimination experienced by students negatively impacts meaningful and productive student participation, both in academic and social domains of college. Inability to take full advantage of the social and academic exposure that the college or university provides, due to discrimination, fails the purpose of higher education. As a result of discriminatory practices, disadvantaged students are more likely to be confined to a peer group consisting of members with the same background characteristics. It negatively affects their ability to fully experience the richness of diversity and gradual acceptance of themselves as inferior ones compared to students from dominant castes and affluent classes.

Fissures in teacher-student relationship is a potential source for production and reproduction of inequalities. Expression of discrimination in classroom by teachers negatively impacts the morale of students. It further pushes the disadvantaged students in the margins of the classroom. It is less likely for such students to approach a teacher with a discriminatory attitude. As a result, they are less likely to get an opportunity to engage in productive academic practices such as classroom discussion and out of classroom academic discussions with teachers. All these implications are not conducive for students to succeed in college academically. The ultimate outcome of such forms of discrimination are academic failure of students.

*Prima facie*, one may assume that discrimination affects only individuals or groups of individuals being discriminated against. This is not true. A closer examination of the consequences of discrimination shows that its negative implications are not confined to individuals or certain groups who are being subjected to discrimination. Intellectual losses caused by discrimination are enormous. Inability to incorporate the rich and diverse perspectives of students into the social contexts and teaching-learning situation in college is a loss to all students and teachers. Discrimination and exclusion thus adversely impact all.

The consequence of discrimination on institutions is deep. As some or a significant proportion of students are unable to take advantage of higher education due to discrimination, the effectiveness and efficiency of higher education comes to be questioned. Student withdrawal and student failure can also be looked at from a perspective of institutional performance and social accountability. Discrimination led failure also has an adverse impact on national efforts to develop a pool of graduates required for the economy and society.

Social consequence of discrimination is as follows. Let us consider the case of first-generation learners from disadvantaged social groups. They are at the odds and have to overcome various layers of entry barriers in accessing higher education. Their failure or withdrawal due to discrimination conveys a wrong message to the community they belong to --- that investing in higher education is not useful and productive. Lack of role models leads to further marginalisation of the community. Similar is the case of employment prospects. As discrimination negatively impacts the academic outcome and gain of academic credentials, they are compelled to engage in an employment which does not require a higher level of education. It impacts their earnings and their family continues to maintain characteristics of past generations. This is not a desirable outcome as far as social equity and equity in development is considered.

One important social consequence of discrimination is failure of governmental efforts to generate demand for education as well-developed pool of educated is required for society and economy. The policy thrust for expansion of higher education, in tune with the demands of a knowledge economy, is meaningful only when discrimination-free campus spaces exist, and all students are able to realise their full potentials. So, any form of discrimination that impinge on access, participation in both social and academic domains, and student outcome, have an adverse effect on individuals, institutions, families, communities and wider society.

## Conclusion

Discrimination in higher education, based on student characteristics, has serious negative implications. As discussed, considering an act to be discriminatory is not necessarily on the basis of the intention behind it. Rather any act which has

a negative impact on students with certain characteristics is discriminatory. This aspect is very significant in a society where the structural roots of inequality are predominant and pervasive.

Discrimination can take several forms. Individual forms of discrimination can be direct and indirect. Both these forms of discriminations are practiced by co-students, teachers and administrative staff. They adversely impact the access, participation and academic outcome of students from disadvantaged social groups and women. Through a demand for compliance to a condition, indirect discrimination is more often perceived to be a neutral act. Therefore, compared to direct forms of discrimination, indirect forms of discrimination are difficult to identify.

Institutional discrimination through policies, rules and norms exercises a harmful effect on certain social groups. It is not necessarily an act by a single person; it may be collective and systemic. Institutional discrimination can constrain a student's efforts to access higher education and benefit from the socio-academic experience provided by higher education.

While discrimination exercises a harmful effect on individual or group with certain background characteristics, its implications are not limited to the direct victims of discrimination in campuses. Discrimination ultimately constrains or denies access to higher education and meaningful and productive participation in socio-cultural domains and academic domains. Thus institutions, families, communities and society at large are unable to benefit from the process of expansion of higher education. This broader perspective would suggest that discrimination is inherently anti-social and against humanity. Therefore, adequate changes need to be made in the structure and process of higher education and values, beliefs and assumptions of teachers, staff and student community in order to promote discrimination-free college experience for all.

### **Questions for Consideration and Discussion**

What is the meaning of discrimination in higher education?

What is the nature and various forms of discrimination in campuses?

What is the impact of discrimination on the social and academic outcome of learners?

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# MODULES ON STUDENT DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Editors: Nidhi S. Sabharwal and C.M. Malish

## Social Inclusion on the Higher Education Campus

C.M. Malish

MODULE

5



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## PREFACE

The Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE) is a specialised centre established at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA). The centre promotes and carries out research in higher education policy and planning, and aims to contribute to evidence-based policy-making in higher education. The thrust areas of research include access and equity, quality, teaching and learning, governance and management, financing, and graduate employability in higher education. The centre is currently implementing research studies in selected institutions in several states of India.

Equity and inclusion in higher education are significant research areas at the CPRHE/NIEPA. Related to this theme, the CPRHE/NIEPA completed a large-scale study titled “Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: A Study of Institutions in the Selected States of India,” with funding support from the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). The study was carried out, by Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr C. M. Malish, in institutions located in six states, namely Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. A detailed questionnaire-based survey among 3,200 students was administered, close to 200 interviews were conducted with faculty and administrators, about 70 focus group discussions with students were held, and 50 students’ diaries were completed. The study helped understand unique challenges faced by students from the socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and assess institutional response to the changing nature of student diversity.

As a follow-up to the study, the CPRHE/NIEPA was requested by the ICSSR to prepare modules related to student diversity and social inclusion in higher education. An Expert Group was constituted to advise and guide the modules’ preparation. The expert group consisted of renowned academics, institutional leaders, and representatives of the Ministry of Education (MoE), ICSSR, and NITI Ayog.

Seven modules have been prepared as a part of this study. These are Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches (Module 1); Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education (Module 2); Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses (Module 3); Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education (Module 4); Social Inclusion in a Higher Education Campus (Module 5); Institutional Mechanism for Managing Student Diversity (Module 6); and Student Diversity and Civic Learning (Module 7). These modules are primarily meant to support and facilitate the CPRHE/NIEPA's efforts towards institutional-level capacity development, in improving the student experience in social and academic domains and academic performance of students from the SEDGs, and in creating a more inclusive campus environment.

We are grateful to the ICSSR for the funding support and to Professor Sukhadeo Thorat, former Chairperson of the ICSSR, for his sustained advice and encouragement. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Professor N. V. Varghese, Vice Chancellor, NIEPA, for his untiring guidance in preparing the modules. Thanks are also due to Professor R. Govinda and Professor J. B. G. Tilak, former Vice-Chancellors of NIEPA, for their support and advice at various stages of the preparation of the modules. We express our gratitude to all authors who have contributed to the modules. Finally, we appreciate the efforts put in by our colleagues, Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr C.M. Malish, for preparing and finalising the modules.

**Professor Pradeep Kumar Misra**  
Director, CPRHE

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We would like to thank Professor J. B. G. Tilak, former Vice-Chancellor of NIEPA, for his support and advice at various stages of preparation of the modules. We are grateful to Mr Basavaraj Swamy, former Registrar, NIEPA, and Dr. Sandeep Chatterjee, current Registrar, and his team including staff in department of finance and accounts of the NIEPA for extending administrative support in the preparation of the modules.

We acknowledge with deep respect the contribution by Professor N. V. Varghese, both as an institutional leader such as founding Director of the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education and former Vice-Chancellor of NIEPA, and as academic mentor. We have heavily relied and learnt from the Modules on District Planning in Education prepared at NIEPA 1997 led by Professor Varghese. We express our gratitude for his guidance at different stages of the implementation of the modules and his meticulous efforts in providing comments and suggestions on the draft modules.

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The development of the modules was undertaken as a collaborative activity. The CPRHE/NIEPA organised an expert group meeting to discuss the modules. We are

thankful to the guidance extended by the members of the experts committee: Professor Meenakshi Thapan, Professor Meenakshi Gopinath, Professor Sivanandan, Professor Sudhanshu Bhushan, Professor Siba Prasad Adhikary, Professor Mehtab Manzar, Professor Bakshi, and representatives of the ICSSR, NITI Ayog and Ministry of Education. Their close scrutiny and expert opinion helped in developing the approach and in the revision of the modules. All co-authors who have contributed to the modules were very active and involved from the very beginning. They willingly revised the modules after the discussions in the authors meet.

We express our sincere thanks to Monica Joshi, Mayank Rajput, Chetna, Aqsa and Sumit who helped in organisation of the meetings and preparing documents for reproduction. We are grateful to each one of them for their contribution.

**Nidhi S. Sabharwal**  
**C. M. Malish**  
CPRHE/NIEPA

# INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the higher education sector in India has grown considerably. Higher education in India has shifted from an elite stage of development to a massification stage. Accompanying this massification in higher education is the increasing diversity among the student population. The student population on college campuses, relatively homogenous and elite previously, is now represented by non-traditional social group learners. These learners from the non-traditional groups belong to diverse social, economic, linguistic and regional backgrounds. While the presence of diverse groups on campuses reflects the advancement of equity in access, recent research raises concerns about the challenges faced by students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, such as the scheduled castes, other backward classes and scheduled tribes. These challenges are related to low academic outcomes, social tensions and its associated practices, prejudices and biases. For institutions to address the challenges facing students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups, it is essential that educational administrators and faculty members must be sensitive to these students' concerns.

The purpose of the modules is to sensitise the institution-level stakeholders, such as students, teachers and administrators in higher education, on issues related to student diversity, specific challenges facing students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and the role of higher education in promoting civic learning. Developing modules on student diversity in higher education is an extension of the study carried out by the centre and, thus, a mechanism of research-based engagement with institutional-level stakeholders.

The study titled "Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: A Study of Institutions in Selected States of India" was coordinated by Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr. C. M. Malish, and it was carried out in institutions which were located in six states, namely, Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. In order to develop an understanding of the challenges faced by students from the socially excluded groups and institutional response to the changing nature of student diversity, the methodology followed was the following. A detailed questionnaire-based survey among 3,200 students was administered, close to 200 interviews were conducted

with faculty and administrators, close to 70 focus group discussions with students were undertaken and 50 diaries were completed by students. As part of this project, the research outputs prepared and submitted include: 6 state team reports and 1 synthesis report; 2 CPRHE Research Papers; 1 CPRHE Seminar Report; 3 Policy Briefs in English with translations in Hindi; and more than 10 published journal articles and chapters in books (CPRHE Annual Report, 2022). In the policy research cycle, CPRHE-NIEPA organised two major events based on the research findings of the CPRHE study. A national seminar was organised and it brought together academics and policy makers concerned with institutional response to the changing nature of social diversity of student population. A policy dialogue webinar was organised and it was successful in bringing together academics, policy makers and institutional leaders and emphasised significance of institutional reforms for making campuses inclusive by valuing and promoting diversity. Policy briefs prepared by the CPRHE were the basis for the dialogue with various stakeholders of higher education.

On the successful completion of the research project, the CPRHE/NIEPA was requested by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) to prepare modules related to student diversity and social inclusion in higher education. These modules are primarily meant to support and facilitate the CPRHE/NIEPA's efforts toward institutional-level capacity building so as to improve the academic performance of students from the SEDGs and create more inclusive institutional environments. The modules are envisaged to be made available to the public as a public good.

The modules have been written in a simple style. However, they are not meant to be self-learning modules. The primary target group for the modules includes the faculty members, administrators and practitioners who are directly responsible for extending support to students from socially and economically disadvantaged social groups. In other words, these modules can form the essential teaching-learning material to organise training courses at the institutional level. Hence, an effort is made to explain the concepts and elaborate the steps are taken to discuss the challenges faced by students from the SEDGs in detail, with examples of strategies of consideration. Most of the modules contain module-specific reflective questions at the end.

The logic of the sequence of the modules is as follows: Module 1 contains a discussion on the concept and approaches to achieving student diversity, equity and social



inclusion in higher education. Module 2 includes a discussion on the three stages of student diversity for a systematic assessment of the status of student diversity in higher education. The three stages of student diversity are like this: Stage I of social diversity, which is measurable and represents diversity in the nation's population. Stage II is of academic diversity present in the classrooms. In Stage III, diversity is a condition of social inclusion on campus. As noted, these stages are developed on the basis of empirical evidence generated through the CPRHE study and elaborate the indicators to measure the three dimensions of diversity.

Module 3 includes the dimensions of academic diversity found in student composition. It discusses the relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics of the student body with the latter's varying levels of academic preparation to pursue higher education and challenges associated with achieving Stage II diversity, that is, academic integration. The module will highlight promising practices to achieve academic integration in higher education institutions.

Module 4 discusses the concept and the practice of discrimination in higher education in terms of social group identity, such as caste, ethnicity, gender and religion of students and its intersectionalities. Module 5 discusses the concept and approach to social inclusion in higher education institutions and attempts to develop a nuanced understanding of student experiences from admission to exit from college to inform points at which interventions are required. Module 6 elaborates on the approaches and strategies to be adopted by higher education institutions for the efficient management of student diversity. The final module, 7, introduces the concept of civic learning in higher education and attempts to provide clarity on the link between student diversity and civic learning.

The modules were prepared on the basis of several rounds of discussions that we had at the NIEPA. First, the CPRHE identified themes for the modules based on their completed research study and analysis related to student diversity, social inclusion and civic learning in higher education. The themes of the modules were presented, discussed and approved by members of the research advisory group for the research project. The areas identified for the modules included:

Module 1: Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches;

Module 2: Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education;

Module 3: Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses;  
Module 4: Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education;  
Module 5: Social Inclusion in the Higher Education Campus;  
Module 6: Institutional Mechanism for Managing Student Diversity;  
Module 7: Student Diversity and Civic Learning.

A detailed framework was further developed for the modules by the CPRHE faculty members, after which this framework was subjected to close scrutiny by a group of experts in a meeting organised by the CPRHE/NIEPA. An Expert Group Committee was formed for the purpose of advice and guidance on the overall approach towards the modules, and, to discuss structure and content of each module. The framework of the modules, the outline and content of each module were presented to the group. The members of the expert group consisted of academics, intuitional leaders (Vice-Chancellor and Principal of College), and representatives of ICSSR, NITI Ayog and Ministry of Education (MoE).

After the discussions with the experts, the framework of the modules was further revised with general guidelines, comments and suggestions made by the experts before presenting it in the Authors' meet. Academics who are experts in areas of diversity and inclusion in higher education were invited to be co-authors of the modules by the CPRHE/NIEPA. An authors' meet to discuss the structure and contents of the modules was held for developing a shared understanding on the framework to the modules and improving the modules. Based on the discussions, the framework was further modified, after which all the individual modules were developed by the CPRHE faculty members and co-authors of the modules.

These modules were further subjected to a close review in the workshop organised with the members from the Expert Group Committee and the authors of the modules, organised by the CPRHE/NIEPA. The drafts of the modules were shared with all the expert members for their review prior to the organisation of the workshop. The modules have been revised and finalised based on the comments and suggestions of the experts. We hope this module will be useful towards advancing equity and inclusion in higher education in India.

April, 2023

**Nidhi S. Sabharwal**  
**C. M. Malish**  
CPRHE/NIEPA

## MODULE 5

# Social Inclusion on the Higher Education Campus

This module is prepared with the following specific objectives.

### **THEY ARE:**

To develop a comprehensive understanding of social inclusion in higher education campuses

To discuss the challenges of social inclusion faced by students from diverse backgrounds

To understand the features of a socially inclusive campus.

## Introduction to the Module 5

The demand for inclusiveness in socio-economic, cultural and political life of the population is one of the key characteristics of a modern democratic society. The idea of inclusiveness is built on the principles of equality, social justice and democracy. International conventions and treaties urging member countries to uphold human rights and human dignity provide resources and support for the fight against all forms of exclusion and discrimination in all domains of society as a means to envisage an inclusive society. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and its new avatar Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015), take this commitment forward by developing well defined targets and measurable indicators. Since its inception, the Constitution of India promotes values of inclusion for envisaging a society where incidents of birth no longer decide one's destiny. The very idea of constitutional morality put forward by the Indian Constitution is based on the premises of inclusion and democratic ideals. As education is visualised as a means for transforming our society, social inclusion is imperative for achieving the social and economic goals of education. The growing significance of educational attainment in development and distribution of resources, democratisation of education is not only a goal to be achieved but also a necessary precondition for achieving all other goals of inclusion in development.

In the context of mass higher education in India, when more numbers of students from hitherto under-represented socio-economic backgrounds enter higher education institutions, social inclusion in campuses assumes an unprecedented significance. Available estimates at an aggregated level suggest that the clientele of higher education is becoming more diverse in terms of the background characteristics of the student body. Enhanced diversity in student body has severe implications on social dynamics of campus and pedagogical practices in classrooms. It is against this backdrop that this module discusses the idea of social inclusion in higher education.

Social inclusion in higher education can be discussed in four major contexts. These four Cs of social inclusion mean social inclusion in: Access, Curriculum, Classroom and Campus. Social inclusion in each context is unique, though they are interconnected and interdependent. Since inclusion at the level of access (Module 1 and 2) and teaching-learning in classrooms (Module 3) has already been covered,

this module focusses primarily on social inclusion on the campus. This module is organised as follows. First, we introduce the idea and meaning of social inclusion in higher education. We then discuss various approaches towards social inclusion in campuses. Then follows a discussion on challenges faced by the diverse student body in various domains of higher education campuses. It includes student experience during the admission process, initial days' experience in college, peer group interaction, participation in extracurricular activities and other platforms such as students' political organisations and student unions. The module concludes with a roadmap and strategies to be followed to evolve socially inclusive campuses in India.

## Meaning of Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is a goal as well as a process. It is a detailed framework for action as well as a targeted outcome to be achieved. Meaning of social inclusion is context dependent. In other words, all types of inclusion are not social inclusion. Some forms of exclusion can also lead to social inclusion. For instance, exemption for poor students from paying the fees in college is an exclusion meant to retain them in education. It means that inclusion can be favourable and unfavourable depending on the context. Unfavourable inclusion results in negative consequences. We discuss social inclusion as a favourable inclusion of people belonging to disadvantaged groups in order to ensure their equal and full participation in higher education.

The characteristics that bind individuals together to form a group can be manifold --- such as family, income, caste, ethnicity, community, location of residence, type of school where one studied, medium of instruction followed in schools, sex, sexual orientation, parental employment and so on. These characteristics are sources of their social identity. There are two types of characteristics on the basis of which social identity is drawn. They are inherited characteristics (such as caste, sex and height) and acquired characteristics. Inherited characteristics are passed from one generation to the next and gained by the accident of birth. Individuals have little control on the choice of those characteristics, and one cannot change it. This module primarily focusses on social inclusion of student identities drawn from inherited characteristics.

Social inclusion is of less significance when the population is homogeneous in terms of background characteristics. Social inclusion assumes pivotal significance when the population is heterogeneous in terms of their background characteristics. In an exclusive and stratified social system, social groups are situated in a hierarchy. One social group is positioned over another and there are a top ranked and a bottom ranked social group. This stratification is systemic in nature, such as the caste system. The process of stratification systematically excluded certain groups and prevented them from fully participating in socio-cultural, economic and political life. The same system also provides undue advantage to others. Disadvantage and privilege are two sides of the same coin. However, those who enjoy privileges as a part of social stratification rarely recognise it as social privileges. Since it is socially conferred, a privilege is accumulated and reaffirmed through everyday practices since childhood. Similarly, those who are located at the bottom very often consider their conditions as natural. Along with possession of socio-economic resources, subjective assessment about one's own position shapes and perpetuates exclusive social systems and social practices. Social inclusion as an idea and practice aims to ensure that all irrespective of background characteristics and identity belonging enjoy fuller participation in society and its institutions.

## Defining Social Inclusion

As said, we plan to discuss social inclusion in the institutional context of higher education in India. Our focus is on inclusion of students on campuses, i.e., the socio-cultural milieu of higher education institutions (HEIs). In order to move ahead, we need to develop a working definition of social inclusion.

Social inclusion denotes a condition wherein students from diverse backgrounds find a college or university as receptive and welcoming at the time of admission and enjoy equal participation thereafter, in various domains of social, academic and cultural life of campus and can peacefully engage with diverse peers, teachers and staff of the institution, without being threatened by others because of their social identity and all stakeholders respect and honour diverse student identities.

In so far as the above-mentioned definition is concerned, three issues are important. Firstly, there is a need to recognise that students are diverse in terms of their

background characteristics. Secondly, inclusion is needed throughout the education process starting from the time of seeking admission till one exits the institution, and in all domains of campus life. Thirdly, the right of the students to assert their identity and engage in socio-cultural practices of their choice is to be honoured and respected by all the stakeholders in the campus.

## Measures for Social Inclusion

We discuss two important ways through which social change can be achieved. They are: 1. Legal measures 2. Transforming the socio-cultural value systems. While legal measures primarily use coercive methods, a change in the value system relies on persuasive means. Legal measures relying on coercion bring a change in society by regulating the conduct of individuals and groups. While individual rights are respected, legal measures may use authority and power to shape the conduct of the population. A change in the socio-cultural value systems requires the people's mobilisation. Its primary strategy is to develop collective consciousness and moral values among the population in favour of social inclusion. It is a slow process.

### *Legal Measures*

Legal measures involve an enactment of legal frameworks such as laws and regulations in order to regulate the behaviour and actions of individuals and groups in favour of social inclusion. We can discuss the legal measures at four levels. Firstly, international conventions and treaties signed by member countries of the United Nations. For instance, as a signatory to the UN declaration of Human Rights, India is obliged to promote "universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms." Second is the basic structure of the Constitution of India, which include the fundamental rights. The third level is of the acts and rules enacted by the central and state governments from time to time. Fourth, there are rules and regulations enacted and enforced by regulatory bodies in higher education.

Legal frameworks of inclusion are expected to effect changes in the behaviour patterns and actions of individuals. Violating legal measures of inclusion leads to disciplinary actions or punishment. Thus, the legal framework functions as a coercive force in society and the population refrains from engaging in such activities due to

fear of legal action. Effectiveness of legal measures is dependent on the mechanisms available to ensure strict implementation and awareness about the legal provisions among the society. For instance, UGC Regulation on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Education Institutions (UGC, 2009) aims to make campuses ragging free. A regulation specifies mechanisms for monitoring of compliance by institutions and actions at various levels if an institution fails to comply with the provisions prescribed in the regulations. On the one hand, legal framework is a ground for institutional interventions in order to make campuses ragging free; on the other hand, institutions are compelled to act in certain ways whereby students are forced not to engage in any activities which can be interpreted as ragging under the regulation. This regulation has succeeded in reducing the practice of ragging in colleges and universities.

### ***Transforming the Socio-Cultural Value System***

While legal frameworks direct and often compel people to behave in a certain way in the public domain, they may not have much effect on the value system of individuals. In other words, coercion through legal framework does not necessarily lead to a change in attitudes and value system. It raises concerns about the sustainability of changes. If social inclusion is internalised as a value system, people tend to uphold it in each and every action. When society or community as a whole internalises a particular value, it will become part of its culture. These changes are more sustainable. Contributions made by social reformers at various times endorse the significance of transforming the value systems in bringing social change. Unlike legal measures, transforming the value system is a very slow process. Traditionally non-state actors and groups such as social reformers, socio-religious movements and civil society play a major role to effect changes in values.

In the context of higher education campuses, efforts for transforming values can emanate from any of the stakeholders. Student organisations can play a major role in transforming the values, assumptions and attitudes of individual stakeholders, and the traditions of campuses which are exclusive or unfavourable to certain groups of students. One major contribution made by student political activism in campuses is the mobilisation of students based on an ideology. Whether it is political



organisations supported by major parties or identity based political organisations, student activism has a potential to create a conducive environment for inclusion in campus. In this module, we primarily focus our attention on institutional leadership which can play a major role in inculcating the values of social inclusion in the campus.

## **Manifestation of Non-Inclusive Higher Education Campuses**

A critical assessment of what exists is important to make any changes. Therefore, it is important to assess how inclusive higher education campuses in India are. As said earlier, contemporary higher education campuses are occupied by students from diverse socio-economic, cultural, linguistic, regional, gender and educational backgrounds. Social inclusiveness of the campus can be better assessed by analysing the challenges faced by disadvantaged student groups in higher education campuses. This module discusses the challenges faced by the student body in the five major domains. They are: (1) Admission process (2) Initial days' experience (3) Peer group formation (4) Participation in co-curricular activities (5) Hostel life.

### ***Admission Process***

Students interact with an institution for the first time when they seek admission in a college and university. As students from disadvantaged social groups are less likely to have an adequate exposure to and knowledge about the choice of discipline and college and overall admission process in higher education institutions, they may face challenges even at the early stage of the application process.

The first stage of the admission process is collection and submission of application form. At present, many institutions have moved towards an online mode of application process. In an institution where the traditional mode of paper-based application process is followed; students have to physically visit the institution to collect application forms. In general, sale and collection of application forms are mostly handled by administrative staff of the institution. Evidence from research suggests that students from socially disadvantaged groups face humiliation and discriminatory behaviour from administrative staff while collecting and submitting application forms. As a result, students develop a feeling that they are not welcomed,

and the institution is less receptive towards them. Although the online application process does not require students to visit the institution, lack of ICT infrastructure at home and lack of knowledge about online platforms makes the disadvantaged students vulnerable.

Some institutions conduct entrance tests for admission. As proposed in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 (MHRD, 2020), admission to college and university would be based on a national level entrance test. As research suggests, institutions following test score-based admission have a less diverse student body than institutions that consider marks or grade in the qualifying degree as admission criterion. It is well known that scoring in entrance tests is not solely determined by academic factors. In addition to lack of adequate guidance, financial barriers to access private coaching and additional study material tend to pose challenges for the socially disadvantaged and economically poor. As a result, socio-economic disadvantage is reproduced as an academic disadvantage while seeking admission in selective institutions.

### *Initial Day's Experience*

How students experience a college or university during the initial days of campus life has a longstanding effect on student outcome. Literature suggests that students' experience during the first few weeks of college is more crucial, and it has long term implications on student outcomes even after leaving the college.

Students from disadvantaged social groups come to college with many strengths and skills that they have developed over a period of time. As institutions rooted in traditional values tend to value the culture and disposition of dominant groups, socially disadvantaged students are conceived in deficit terms. Students are seen in terms of "lacks." Their strengths are often undervalued. The idea of the "students at risk" category endorses it. However, educational background, such as schooling from government and less prestigious schools located in rural and remote places with regional language as medium of instruction, often adds to vulnerability during the initial days on campus.

Lack of institutional receptivity and welcoming atmosphere during initial days negatively impacts the capacity of the disadvantaged students to adjust with

the social and academic climate of HEIs. Mismatch between the social world and cultural life of disadvantaged students and campus culture valuing cultural values of dominant cultural strata leads to feeling of being excluded and discriminated against. This feeling of exclusion is compounded by negative experience in the classroom environment which is not conducive to address their learning requirements.

### ***Peer Group Formation***

Peer group formation and peer group interaction are important aspects of higher education experience. It has implications on the social and academic outcome of students. The social capital gained during college days not only influences academic success but also impacts the career trajectory of an individual. Peer groups provide a social and emotional support system during their stay at campus and serve as an important informal source of learning and learning resources. However, available research suggests that peer groups based on social identity are dominant in colleges and universities. Students from each social group prefer to form peer groups from the same group. Thus, campus becomes a space for reinforcing social differences. Fear of discrimination and a feeling of comfort is the major reason for lower caste students to remain in same group peers. On the other hand, upper caste students consciously avoid making peer groups with lower caste students. As a result, campuses become the space for social reproduction of social hierarchies. Caste and ethnicity based peer group formation is a challenge for envisaging inclusive campus spaces.

### ***Participation in Co-Curricular Activities***

Curricular and co-curricular activities together contribute to overall and holistic development of students. Co-curricular activities in campus are increasingly being recognised as a significant factor in shaping social and emotional attributes of students, what we now call transferable skills. Currently, students seeking employment in the private labour market get higher rewards for their involvement in cocurricular activities on campus. Demand for team work skills, communication and leadership skills among the new recruits goes in favour of students who actively participate in co-curricular activities such as engagement in arts, sports, games, National Service Scheme (NSS), National Cadet Corps (NCC), formal and informal

platforms like clubs and committees and student union. Availability of wider opportunities for co-curricular engagement varies from institutions to institutions. Promotion of co-curricular activities requires rigorous institutional support and involvement from teachers.

Research evidence suggests that there is a significant social group variation in the level of participation in co-curricular activities. While some of the activities remain as a privileged space of certain groups, some spaces are often exclusively reserved for certain other groups. One can see that familiarity with dominant culture or cultural capital gained from family and school help students belonging to upper strata of society to largely occupy space for fine arts activities such as debate club, literary club, music and dance. Representation of students belonging to disadvantaged groups appears to be low in these activities and they are less likely to occupy leadership positions in any of such activities. It signals that campuses are not socially inclusive.

The National Service Scheme (NSS) provides wider opportunities for students to develop leadership, team working and interpersonal skills. Two major trends are observed regarding student participation in NSS activities. In some of the institutions, NSS is an exclusive space for students from upper social strata and there is a social privilege attached to participation in NSS. On the contrary, institutions where NSS is predominantly occupied by students belonging to disadvantaged students, there is caste stigma attached to its activities. One can also see that compared to science, technology and professional courses, students from arts and social science mainly engage in NSS and NCC.

In general, women's participation in co-curricular activities are minimal in all campuses. Irrespective of social group background, they rarely occupy leadership positions in such activities. Women students are compelled to follow patriarchal norms prevalent in society even in students' political organisations. Gendered division of labour continues to exist in co-curricular activities. Women students are less acceptable as leaders and office bearers of the student union. Safety issues also compel women students to leave the campus after class hours. There are many instances where faculty members need to convince parents to allow their daughters to attend rural camps and similar events organised by NSS and NCC and arts and cultural events held on holidays and other locations.

## Hostel Life

Hostel accommodation is one of the important enabling conditions for students from remote villages to access higher education institutions located in urban and far-away locations. Hostel life is a great opportunity to develop a capacity to live with diverse others. Evidence indicates that the social group division that exists in society tends to reproduce itself in hostel life. Students from disadvantaged social groups face several forms of exclusionary and hostile attitude and actions from co-students. Lack of sensitivity of hostel staff towards the concerns of students is also a factor.

Allotment of hostel rooms is one of the domains in which principles of inclusion are violated. Caste based allotment of rooms are practised in many places and promotes caste based social segregation in hostels. In places where rooms are allotted randomly, students gradually choose the same caste students as their room partner next semester. The question here is: Why do students continue to prefer students from the same caste?

Scheduled castes (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST) students are provided free of cost accommodation in hostels of public colleges and universities. Some colleges and universities still have separate hostels for SC and ST students. Some of those hostels are named welfare hostel. Student inmates of welfare hostels find it very discriminatory as it publicly reveals their caste identity. This practice of special hostels adds to the stigmatisation process in campus. In public institutions, costs on account of lodging and boarding of SC and ST students are reimbursed by respective state or central government. This practice is a source for hostility and caste-based jokes against SC and ST students. As other students consider it is not fair, they express it explicitly and implicitly. The reimbursement from concerned state departments is often delayed. This further adds to the vulnerability faced by SC and ST students.

To summarise, students face many barriers about fully participating in socio-cultural domains of the campus. Concerted institutional efforts are required to promote inclusion of a diverse student body into the core of the socio-cultural milieu of campus. All the stakeholders such institutional leaders, administrators, teachers, staff and students are responsible for prevailing exclusionary campus cultures. The

outcome of those exclusionary beliefs, attitude and value of individual stakeholders and policies and practices developed by them impedes capacity of students from diverse backgrounds to fully participate in campus life and realise their potential.

## **Approaches to Social Inclusion**

The nature of social inclusion on campus is influenced by many factors. Some of them are the larger social and political history of the state or region where higher education institution is located, stage of higher education development in the state or region, nature of social group composition of students and teachers, institutional history, vision and mission of institution and structures and processes of governance and management. Effectiveness of institutional mechanisms such as campus level cells and committees for welfare of student body has direct implications on developing socially inclusive higher education campuses. (Refer to Module 6 for a discussion on Institutional Mechanism for Managing Diversity.) In the light of the diversity in society, there are three different approaches to promote social inclusion. They are 1. Assimilationism 2. Differentialism and 3. Multiculturalism (Inglis, 2003; 2008). This classification helps us to better contextualise the nuances of social inclusion in higher education campuses. In what follows, we will discuss the features of each approach and their strength and weakness in promoting social inclusion in an institutional context of higher education.

### ***Assimilationism***

According to this concept, campus is a dynamic space for various cultures to melt into a hybrid culture. Students, irrespective of cultural and social backgrounds, are expected to merge into the cultural milieu of their campuses. Campuses are thus conceived as “melting pots” of diverse cultures. The idea of melting pot suggests higher education institutions must promote a cosmopolitan life. Irrespective of background characteristics, all students are expected to assimilate the cultural values and tradition of the university. In case students face any difficulties, due to lack of necessary knowledge and skills to adapt to the campus culture, institutions following an assimilationist approach may provide special training to learn socio-cultural traits which are valued on campus. First year training was common in universities in the west.

The assimilationist approach was seriously critiqued in later periods, and the idea of the melting pot was questioned. Critics argue that campuses are not a neutral space as envisaged in the melting pot approach. Historically higher learning was an exclusive space for male and those who belong to the upper strata of the society. The idea of the elite stage of higher education captures this point. Teachers, institutional leaders and staff were also from elite strata. The purpose of higher education in its elite stage was to produce people for elite roles. Campus culture evolved over a period of time tends to reflect the cultural values and practices of the elite strata. Students from elite backgrounds may not find much difference between the social world they are familiar with and the cultural values and traditions that exist on campus. As a result, they do not face much problem during the transition process from schooling to university or college. This is not the case for disadvantaged social groups who have lesser access to resources and familiarity with high culture that campuses tend to follow. The underprivileged are expected to merge into a culture which was so far unknown to them. There is also an implicit assumption that students from disadvantaged social and cultural backgrounds need to detach from their past identity in order to integrate with the campus. It puts more pressure on disadvantaged students and makes their transition process severely stressful. Moreover, the onus of failure to integrate with the institutional culture rests on students themselves. Assimilationism thus contributes to preserving the structural roots of social inequalities and makes disadvantaged to take responsibility for systemic injustice.

### ***Differentialism***

Differentialism recognises that there exists a student body with diverse backgrounds. However, it is also conceived that the entry of students from diverse backgrounds may lead to conflicts, which is undesirable. Avoiding any possible avenues for conflict between various groups is the hallmark of differentialism. Therefore, parallel and segregated systems are promoted where possibility of interactions are reduced to the extent possible. A parallel system is considered to be a mechanism for serving the best interests of each group. Some argue that a parallel system is effective for equitable distribution of resources. Thus, disadvantages are protected from possible exploitation from others.

In the US, this system existed, historically, in the form of black colleges and universities. Elements of this approach can be seen in the way student hostels are allocated in colleges and universities in India. In order to avoid the conflict situations emerging from students from diverse backgrounds living under one roof, separate hostels are constructed on the basis of social identity.

The approach of differentialism appears to give many benefits to students as their unique identity is respected and resources can equally be distributed across the social groups. However, it makes the least contribution to inculcate in students the values and capacity to live, learn and work with diverse others. This approach does not provide any opportunities for social cohesion and internalising democratic ideals. It is an undesirable situation in the increasingly interconnected world which we live in. In one way or another, it reinforces the structural division that exists in society.

### ***Multiculturalism***

Multiculturalism admits that there exist many differences among the student's body. But this difference is to be celebrated and honoured. Multiculturalism rejects any notion that supports hierarchisation of people and culture and treating one as better over another on the basis of inherited identities. In other words, students may be different in terms of their background characteristics, but they are equal. Multiculturalism believes that provisioning of academic knowledge and skill are meaningful when students are also provided an opportunity to live, learn and work in an increasingly diverse society and culture. Therefore, it promotes peaceful co-existence of diverse others in an educational setting. A culture of mutual respect and social cohesion are the hallmarks of multicultural approach.

This approach has a social and economic rationale. Social rationale is linked to the very idea of democracy and education as a source and means for social transformation. Ideas of global citizenship and the need to come together and develop collective capacities to overcome global threats provides further impetus for multiculturalism in social life and work organisations. The growing process of internationalisation and multi-country and multi-institution research collaboration point to the need



for further strengthening multiculturalism in the structure and process of higher education. The increasing significance of workers with multicultural competencies in the production process supports economic rationale for moving towards multiculturalism in curriculum and teaching-learning practices. Multidisciplinary and holistic education, the Indian avatar of liberal arts model, is built on multicultural ideals.

In multiculturalism, institutions are the central players in ensuring social inclusion on campus. It is the responsibility of the institutions to offer well designed opportunities and resources for students to practice living and learning with diverse others. Idea of multiculturalism needs to be ingrained in structures, processes, curriculum and teaching-learning situations. So, there is a need for structural transformations in the higher education campuses. Institutional leadership assumes a pivotal role in transforming the campuses into multicultural spaces.

## **How to Develop Socially Inclusive Campuses?**

As discussed earlier, available evidence on challenges faced by deprived groups in higher education indicates the exclusive nature of campus spaces in India. Lack of social inclusion leads to a negative impact on students, affecting their social experience and academic achievement. There is immense scope for institutions to develop policies and strategies in order to transform higher education campuses into socially inclusive entities. We need to follow the elements of multiculturalism as an overarching principle for transforming our institutions and institutions and we have a major responsibility to ensure that campuses are socially inclusive. In the light of massive expansion of higher education and the proposal by the National Education Policy 2020 (MHRD, 2020) to achieve a gross enrolment ratio of 50 per cent by 2035, making campuses socially inclusive is becoming crucial. So, we need to discuss what are the strategies to be adopted to achieve social inclusion in higher education campuses. We will discuss the strategies for social inclusion on campuses under two major headings: (1) strategies to be adopted at the system level and (2) strategies at the institutional level.

## System Level Interventions

Following interventions may be initiated at system level.<sup>1</sup>

- UGC Regulation on Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions 2012 seems to be inadequate to address the broader issues of social inclusion. There is a need to revisit the same in the light of NEP 2020 which stresses equity and inclusion. Revamping may be required to include a wide range of equity groups.
- Instead of an anti-discrimination officer as recommended in the UGC regulation (2012), a separate post may be created of diversity or inclusion coordinator/officer. Professionally qualified people may be considered for appointment as the Diversity Officer. In line with student affairs professionals in the west, academic disciplines such as social work, sociology, anthropology and management may be encouraged to train people for diversity management on campus.
- As the NEP 2020 suggests, for institutions to become large institutions enrolling thousands, there may be a need for the services of trained people. Regulatory bodies may explore the possibilities of developing a new cadre of student affairs professionals in higher education in order to facilitate the activities for ensuring social inclusion.
- Developing leadership for social inclusion is the first step. Leaders and future leaders of HEIs need to be provided capacity building for making socially inclusive campuses. Apart from national level bodies such as UGC and NIEPA, Council of State Higher Education and selected Human Resource Development Centres (HRDCs) may be entrusted with the task of capacity building.
- Elements of social inclusion may be made a part of induction and refresher courses for teachers of all cadres and disciplines.
- Faculty involvement in social inclusion activities may be adequately incentivised.
- Social inclusion may be added to syllabus of teaching license tests such as National Eligibility Test (NET).
- A national Online Diversity Test (ODT) may be introduced as a non-credit but mandatory paper for first semester students of all under-graduate and post-

graduate courses so that every student is made aware of the values of diversity and need to adhere to diversity appropriate behaviour on campus. Tests can include questions regarding values of diversity, legal provisions and acts and guidelines from respective statutory bodies (NIEPA, 2020: 78).

- Currently, there is no national level system for eliciting student experiences on social inclusion in campuses. A National Survey on Student Experience (NSSE) may be explored in this regard.
- Appropriate strategies must be adopted to incentivise the efforts of those institutions which make campuses socially inclusive. Adequate weightage may be provided in ranking and accreditation processes.
- Student experience on social inclusion may be added as an indicator for existing National Institution Ranking Framework (NIRF).

### ***Institutional Action for Social Inclusion<sup>2</sup>***

Though legal measures and system level interventions exist as enabling conditions, real change agents are the stakeholders of HEIs such as institutional leaders, faculty members, staff and students. The preliminary requirement is to have an institutional policy on social inclusion. Roles and responsibility of each stakeholder needs to be made explicit and everyone should adhere to it. There should be a mechanism to plan, monitor and evaluate the institutional efforts for making campus socially inclusive. As also included in NIEPA (2020: 77-78), roadmaps for making socially inclusive campuses are as follows.

- A Campus Diversity Policy (CDP) needs to be developed by each institution. Development of CDP is a first step towards institutionalising social inclusion in campus.
- Developing CDP should be a participatory process. Each and every stakeholder of a college or university should be a part of this exercise. It needs to be seen as a first collective exercise to espouse values of diversity and equity in campuses.
- Adequate attention must be given to ensure that CDP is adequately reflected in vision and mission of the institutions and same should be made available for

general population and campus stakeholders (website, college diary, banner/boards etc)

- Each institution may try to ensure that campus spaces are inclusive such that icons and symbols available in campuses are representative of values of diversity.
- Institutions may ensure that secular values are upheld. Institutions may celebrate secular festivals and days such as Constitutional day and avoid celebrating non-secular events in campuses
- Institutions may develop a “Diversity Database” (DD) on student characteristics including social group origin, economic class, parental education, parental occupation regional location, physical ability, language background, preferred gender identity (male, female and transgender) marks and grades in qualifying examination and type of school from one graduated.
- Based on the local contexts and analysis of Diversity Database, a Diversity Plan (DP) needs to be developed by each institution. DP should be an integral part of the Institutional Development Plan (IDPs).
- Campus Diversity Policy and Diversity Plan may be included as part of the induction programme for newly recruited teachers and staff.
- There are several bodies entrusted with the task for providing a support system for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Multiplicity of institutional mechanisms without any interlinkage with each other and statutory power often leads to ineffective implementation. It is recommended that except statutory institutional mechanisms like the SC/ST cell, all other institutional arrangements designed for student welfare may be brought under an umbrella organisation called Centre for Optimising Diversity and Equity (CODE). Senior faculty members at the level of pro-vice chancellor for universities or vice principal for colleges may be appointed as the director/in-charge of CODE represented by faculty members, staff and students.
- CODE may provide opportunities for high school students in their locality to visit institutions and interact with teachers and students. This will help students from

underprivileged sections and less prestigious schools to develop a knowledge and awareness about college and higher education opportunities.

- All HEIs should have an admission support wing such as help desk under CODE. Apart from student support professionals, support of senior students also can be explored for this purpose. This will make the admission experience of students from disadvantaged groups more welcoming and tension free.
- It is the responsibility of the CODE to ensure that all students feel welcomed and well respected at the initial days of admission and throughout the campus life.
- Organisation of induction may be entrusted with CODE. Well-designed induction programme for fresh students can be designed.
- While a general induction programme may be organised for all first-year students, need-based small group induction may be considered for students' group which needs special attention. Discipline/subject or social group could be the basis for need based group formation.
- Student admission to hostels may be on a random basis and adequate strategies to be made to ensure that certain social groups are not dominated in one hostel or one block.
- HEIs can organise events and programmes, on regular intervals which provide awareness about values of diversity and equity.
- Appropriate mechanisms should be in place for students to share their feedback and complaints regarding any issues related to respecting diversity and violating equity. These details should be made available to all students.
- HEIs may devise strategies to collect regular feedback, periodically, from students on issues of diversity, equal treatment and opportunities, particularly during the early weeks after admission.
- Equal opportunities should be provided to students to access and be part of the campus level clubs and activities. It is to be ensured that no activities are dominated by certain equity groups.

- All campus level bodies such as campus union and clubs may be encouraged to select office bearers from equity groups and women.
- A safety audit may be carried out to identify campuses the spaces which are unsafe for women students.
- Campus audit may be carried out to ensure that campus spaces and infrastructures are disabled-friendly.
- CODE may be entrusted the task of coordinating various activities targeted towards social inclusion.

### **Box 1: Pre-Admission Orientation Programme (POP): TISS Model**

How disadvantaged students can be supported at the crucial stage of the admission process is an important consideration as far as social inclusion is concerned. The pre-admission Orientation Programme (POP) of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) is an important initiative in this regard. The TISS conducts national level entrance examinations to recruit students. In order to orient disadvantaged students about the admission process, the SC/ST cell of Social Protection Office (SPO) organises a pre-admission orientation programme for all SC/ST/OBC(NC)/PWD/Minority candidates who have qualified to appear for the national entrance test of the Institute (Sengupta, 2022). The programme is offered free of cost and there is a provision for reimbursement of travelling allowance to students. The programme aims to help students understand the admission process and strategies so as to succeed in various stages such as test, group discussion and interview. The programme also provides information about the campuses and academic programmes. Students get an opportunity to clarify their doubts and seek additional information about study programmes. The SPO was managed by a faculty member designated as Liaison Officer-cum-Dean.

## Questions for Consideration and Reflection

What is the concept and meaning of social inclusion in a campus?

What are the various approaches for promoting social inclusion in higher education?

What are the strategies and approaches for institutionalising social inclusion in higher education campuses?

### Notes

1. Many of the interventions suggested has been contributed by the present module's author to the document titled *Implementation Strategies* (NIEPA, 2020).
2. The same as above.

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# **MODULES ON STUDENT DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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## **Institutional Mechanism for Managing Diversity**

**C.M. Malish**

**MODULE**

**6**



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### MODULE

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## PREFACE

The Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE) is a specialised centre established at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA). The centre promotes and carries out research in higher education policy and planning, and aims to contribute to evidence-based policy-making in higher education. The thrust areas of research include access and equity, quality, teaching and learning, governance and management, financing, and graduate employability in higher education. The centre is currently implementing research studies in selected institutions in several states of India.

Equity and inclusion in higher education are significant research areas at the CPRHE/NIEPA. Related to this theme, the CPRHE/NIEPA completed a large-scale study titled “Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: A Study of Institutions in the Selected States of India,” with funding support from the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). The study was carried out, by Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr C. M. Malish, in institutions located in six states, namely Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. A detailed questionnaire-based survey among 3,200 students was administered, close to 200 interviews were conducted with faculty and administrators, about 70 focus group discussions with students were held, and 50 students’ diaries were completed. The study helped understand unique challenges faced by students from the socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and assess institutional response to the changing nature of student diversity.

As a follow-up to the study, the CPRHE/NIEPA was requested by the ICSSR to prepare modules related to student diversity and social inclusion in higher education. An Expert Group was constituted to advise and guide the modules’ preparation. The expert group consisted of renowned academics, institutional leaders, and representatives of the Ministry of Education (MoE), ICSSR, and NITI Ayog.

Seven modules have been prepared as a part of this study. These are Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches (Module 1); Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education (Module 2); Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses (Module 3); Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education (Module 4); Social Inclusion in a Higher Education Campus (Module 5); Institutional Mechanism for Managing Student Diversity (Module 6); and Student Diversity and Civic Learning (Module 7). These modules are primarily meant to support and facilitate the CPRHE/NIEPA's efforts towards institutional-level capacity development, in improving the student experience in social and academic domains and academic performance of students from the SEDGs, and in creating a more inclusive campus environment.

We are grateful to the ICSSR for the funding support and to Professor Sukhadeo Thorat, former Chairperson of the ICSSR, for his sustained advice and encouragement. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Professor N. V. Varghese, Vice-Chancellor, NIEPA, for his untiring guidance in preparing the modules. Thanks are also due to Professor R. Govinda and Professor J. B. G. Tilak, former Vice Chancellors of NIEPA, for their support and advice at various stages of the preparation of the modules. We express our gratitude to all authors who have contributed to the modules. Finally, we appreciate the efforts put in by our colleagues, Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr C.M. Malish, for preparing and finalising the modules.

**Professor Pradeep Kumar Misra**

Director, CPRHE

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We acknowledge with deep respect the contribution by Professor N. V. Varghese, both as an institutional leader such as founding Director of the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education and former Vice-Chancellor of NIEPA, and as academic mentor. We have heavily relied and learnt from the Modules on District Planning in Education prepared at NIEPA 1997 led by Professor Varghese. We express our gratitude for his guidance at different stages of the implementation of the modules and his meticulous efforts in providing comments and suggestions on the draft modules.

We are also grateful to all colleagues in the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education, viz Professor Mona Khare, Dr. Garima Malik, Dr. Anupam Pachauri, Dr. Jinusha Panigrahi and Dr. Sayantan Mandal, for their valuable inputs in the meetings held for preparation of the modules.

The development of the modules was undertaken as a collaborative activity. The CPRHE/NIEPA organised an expert group meeting to discuss the modules. We are

thankful to the guidance extended by the members of the experts committee: Professor Meenakshi Thapan, Professor Meenakshi Gopinath, Professor Sivanandan, Professor Sudhanshu Bhushan, Professor Siba Prasad Adhikary, Professor Mehtab Manzar, Professor Bakshi, and representatives of the ICSSR, NITI Ayog and Ministry of Education. Their close scrutiny and expert opinion helped in developing the approach and in the revision of the modules. All co-authors who have contributed to the modules were very active and involved from the very beginning. They willingly revised the modules after the discussions in the authors meet.

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**Nidhi S. Sabharwal**

**C. M. Malish**

CPRHE/NIEPA



# INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the higher education sector in India has grown considerably. Higher education in India has shifted from an elite stage of development to a massification stage. Accompanying this massification in higher education is the increasing diversity among the student population. The student population on college campuses, relatively homogenous and elite previously, is now represented by non-traditional social group learners. These learners from the non-traditional groups belong to diverse social, economic, linguistic and regional backgrounds. While the presence of diverse groups on campuses reflects the advancement of equity in access, recent research raises concerns about the challenges faced by students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, such as the scheduled castes, other backward classes and scheduled tribes. These challenges are related to low academic outcomes, social tensions and its associated practices, prejudices and biases. For institutions to address the challenges facing students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups, it is essential that educational administrators and faculty members must be sensitive to these students' concerns.

The purpose of the modules is to sensitise the institution-level stakeholders, such as students, teachers and administrators in higher education, on issues related to student diversity, specific challenges facing students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and the role of higher education in promoting civic learning. Developing modules on student diversity in higher education is an extension of the study carried out by the centre and, thus, a mechanism of research-based engagement with institutional-level stakeholders.

The study titled "Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: A Study of Institutions in Selected States of India" was coordinated by Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr. C. M. Malish, and it was carried out in institutions which were located in six states, namely, Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. In order to develop an understanding of the challenges faced by students from the socially excluded groups and institutional response to the changing nature of student diversity, the methodology followed was the following. A detailed questionnaire-based survey among 3,200 students was administered, close to 200 interviews were conducted

with faculty and administrators, close to 70 focus group discussions with students were undertaken and 50 diaries were completed by students. As part of this project, the research outputs prepared and submitted include: 6 state team reports and 1 synthesis report; 2 CPRHE Research Papers; 1 CPRHE Seminar Report; 3 Policy Briefs in English with translations in Hindi; and more than 10 published journal articles and chapters in books (CPRHE Annual Report, 2022). In the policy research cycle, CPRHE-NIEPA organised two major events based on the research findings of the CPRHE study. A national seminar was organised and it brought together academics and policy makers concerned with institutional response to the changing nature of social diversity of student population. A policy dialogue webinar was organised and it was successful in bringing together academics, policy makers and institutional leaders and emphasised significance of institutional reforms for making campuses inclusive by valuing and promoting diversity. Policy briefs prepared by the CPRHE were the basis for the dialogue with various stakeholders of higher education.

On the successful completion of the research project, the CPRHE/NIEPA was requested by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) to prepare modules related to student diversity and social inclusion in higher education. These modules are primarily meant to support and facilitate the CPRHE/NIEPA's efforts toward institutional-level capacity building so as to improve the academic performance of students from the SEDGs and create more inclusive institutional environments. The modules are envisaged to be made available to the public as a public good.

The modules have been written in a simple style. However, they are not meant to be self-learning modules. The primary target group for the modules includes the faculty members, administrators and practitioners who are directly responsible for extending support to students from socially and economically disadvantaged social groups. In other words, these modules can form the essential teaching-learning material to organise training courses at the institutional level. Hence, an effort is made to explain the concepts and elaborate the steps are taken to discuss the challenges faced by students from the SEDGs in detail, with examples of strategies of consideration. Most of the modules contain module-specific reflective questions at the end.

The logic of the sequence of the modules is as follows: Module 1 contains a discussion on the concept and approaches to achieving student diversity, equity and social

inclusion in higher education. Module 2 includes a discussion on the three stages of student diversity for a systematic assessment of the status of student diversity in higher education. The three stages of student diversity are like this: Stage I of social diversity, which is measurable and represents diversity in the nation's population. Stage II is of academic diversity present in the classrooms. In Stage III, diversity is a condition of social inclusion on campus. As noted, these stages are developed on the basis of empirical evidence generated through the CPRHE study and elaborate the indicators to measure the three dimensions of diversity.

Module 3 includes the dimensions of academic diversity found in student composition. It discusses the relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics of the student body with the latter's varying levels of academic preparation to pursue higher education and challenges associated with achieving Stage II diversity, that is, academic integration. The module will highlight promising practices to achieve academic integration in higher education institutions.

Module 4 discusses the concept and the practice of discrimination in higher education in terms of social group identity, such as caste, ethnicity, gender and religion of students and its intersectionalities. Module 5 discusses the concept and approach to social inclusion in higher education institutions and attempts to develop a nuanced understanding of student experiences from admission to exit from college to inform points at which interventions are required. Module 6 elaborates on the approaches and strategies to be adopted by higher education institutions for the efficient management of student diversity. The final module, 7, introduces the concept of civic learning in higher education and attempts to provide clarity on the link between student diversity and civic learning.

The modules were prepared on the basis of several rounds of discussions that we had at the NIEPA. First, the CPRHE identified themes for the modules based on their completed research study and analysis related to student diversity, social inclusion and civic learning in higher education. The themes of the modules were presented, discussed and approved by members of the research advisory group for the research project. The areas identified for the modules included:

Module 1: Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches;

Module 2: Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education;

Module 3: Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses;  
Module 4: Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education;  
Module 5: Social Inclusion in the Higher Education Campus;  
Module 6: Institutional Mechanism for Managing Student Diversity;  
Module 7: Student Diversity and Civic Learning.

A detailed framework was further developed for the modules by the CPRHE faculty members, after which this framework was subjected to close scrutiny by a group of experts in a meeting organised by the CPRHE/NIEPA. An Expert Group Committee was formed for the purpose of advice and guidance on the overall approach towards the modules, and, to discuss structure and content of each module. The framework of the modules, the outline and content of each module were presented to the group. The members of the expert group consisted of academics, intuitional leaders (Vice-Chancellor and Principal of College), and representatives of ICSSR, NITI Ayog and Ministry of Education (MoE).

After the discussions with the experts, the framework of the modules was further revised with general guidelines, comments and suggestions made by the experts before presenting it in the Authors' meet. Academics who are experts in areas of diversity and inclusion in higher education were invited to be co-authors of the modules by the CPRHE/NIEPA. An authors' meet to discuss the structure and contents of the modules was held for developing a shared understanding on the framework to the modules and improving the modules. Based on the discussions, the framework was further modified, after which all the individual modules were developed by the CPRHE faculty members and co-authors of the modules.

These modules were further subjected to a close review in the workshop organised with the members from the Expert Group Committee and the authors of the modules, organised by the CPRHE/NIEPA. The drafts of the modules were shared with all the expert members for their review prior to the organisation of the workshop. The modules have been revised and finalised based on the comments and suggestions of the experts. We hope this module will be useful towards advancing equity and inclusion in higher education in India.

April, 2023

**Nidhi S. Sabharwal**  
**C. M. Malish**  
CPRHE/NIEPA

## MODULE 6

# Institutional Mechanism for Managing Diversity

This module has been prepared with certain specific objectives.

### **THEY ARE:**

To understand why it is important to institutionally manage student diversity in a massified system

To know existing institutional mechanisms and structures for managing student diversity

To introduce approaches to develop an institutional culture for social inclusion and strategies for managing student diversity.

## Introduction to the Module 6

Globally, student diversity is an important feature of the mass higher education systems. Mass higher education implies democratisation of access. Access to higher education is democratised when hitherto under-represented groups begin enrolling in higher education study programmes. Thus, an increased presence of non-traditional learners in colleges and universities is an inevitable consequence of massification.

The case of massification of the Indian higher education system reinforces the global pattern. At an aggregated level, a larger share of students enrolled in colleges and universities are from non-traditional backgrounds, i.e., from the historically marginalised social groups such as scheduled castes (SCs), scheduled tribes (STs) and other backward classes (OBCs), poor households, underdeveloped regions, remote villages and families which may not have members with post-secondary qualification, and those who studied in government school following state syllabus and one of the Indian languages as medium of instruction. The Indian case further supports the massification argument in higher education.

The nature of student diversity varies according to regions, institutional types, disciplines and levels such as undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral degree. Emerging evidence suggests that, compared to elite and selective public as well as private institutions, student diversity is higher in public institutions such as state universities and their affiliated colleges. Similarly, student diversity is less in institutions offering professional and job-oriented courses such as Medicine, Engineering and Management. Stratified structure of access to higher education opportunities is a major issue to be addressed. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to further increase the GER to 50 per cent by 2035. Increasing gross enrolment ratio (GER) also implies that a greater number of learners from the previously under-presented groups would be entering into colleges and universities, and a significant share of those new entrants is more likely to be the first-generation learners.

Higher education systems at the national and sub-national levels are abstract spaces. Actual student lives are shaped in an institutional context of colleges

and universities. Therefore, we need to understand how our institutions respond to student diversity. This module discusses the institutional level structures and processes for managing student diversity in colleges and universities, and puts forward strategies for channelising student diversity for better social and academic outcome.

The organisation of the module is as follows. We first discuss why student diversity is to be managed institutionally in the wake of massification of higher education in India. Drawing from international experiences and findings of the study carried out by the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE)/NIEPA (Sabharwal and Malish, 2016), consequences of ineffective diversity management is discussed. Then we discuss what are the existing mechanisms and structures to address student diversity in campuses in India. Potential and actual challenges of existing mechanisms and structures are explained. Then we elaborate how existing mechanisms and structures can be strengthened. Approaches and strategies to be adopted for efficient management of student diversity are discussed. It includes developing an institutional perspective and policy towards student diversity and introducing effective mechanisms for periodic planning, monitoring and evaluation of diversity policy and practices at institutional level with active participation of all stakeholders.

## **Mechanisms for Managing Student Diversity**

It is a combination of academic and social life that shapes student experience which makes a lasting impact on the career trajectory of student life even after the college years. However, it was traditionally believed that academic adjustment is a major determinant of student success. Academic adjustment is rooted in a deficit mode of thinking according to which students fail or withdraw since they lack certain personal attributes and dispositions which are necessary to survive and succeed in higher education. It also implies that it is the responsibility of students to adjust with academic and social life on campus. The onus of failure or success in higher education rests on individual students. This process was later labelled as Academic Darwinism in higher education. The assumption that students alone are responsible for student outcomes are found to be elitist in its approach. They are considered

to be less sensitive to students from the under-privileged and under-represented backgrounds.

The perspective on social justice and multicultural education, which flourished later, heavily criticised the ideas of Academic Darwinism and the one which is built on the notion of deficit. New empirical evidence and conceptual models were developed in support of the idea that academic integration and socio-cultural experience are equally contributing in shaping the student outcomes. Socio-cultural experience includes all types of non-academic activities including socialisation, peer group formation, participation in sports and arts activities, organisation of social and cultural events, and engagement in campus level organisations such as nature clubs, debate clubs and film clubs and campus unions. Students who actively engage in socio-cultural activities are found to have a higher level of sense of belonging to their colleges. The more one develops a sense of belonging to institutions, the more they are likely to sustain in the system and succeed academically and socially. Literature on student success and student development is consistent with the idea that those who fail to fully participate in academic and socio-cultural domains of campus gradually develop a sense of alienation. Alienation would negatively impact their efforts for academic integration and lead them not to engage in academically rewarding activities.

In a typical Indian campus, students from disadvantaged or non-traditional backgrounds are not viewed in terms of their strength and diversity of experience and exposure they bring into campus and classroom. Rather they are seen as students with some kind of deficiencies. More importantly, the role of institutions in shaping the social and academic experience is totally neglected. Advanced scholarship in the field has provided adequate evidence on how conditions within campus matters in student lives. The approach placing institutions at the centre of student success is known as the institutional model of student success. The institutional model advocates the availability of structures, well defined and transparent processes, and leadership in campuses to manage and promote student diversity.

Promotion of student diversity is influenced by many factors. Two of the important factors are macro policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms. Macro policy and institutional factors contribute to shaping the structure and process of mechanisms



for promoting diversity. They aim to promote educational access, participation and outcome of diverse student bodies in colleges and universities.

## **Macro Policy Landscape for Promoting Student Diversity**

Macro policy architecture provides a framework for promoting student diversity and enabling conditions for students to experience quality campus and classroom experience. The Constitution of India serves as the overarching principle for promotion of diversity in social, economic and political domains. We can discuss the macro policy factors under three broader categories as follows: 1. Provisions in the Constitution such as fundamental rights, and empowering of the states to enact legislation in favour of socially and educationally backward castes and communities; 2. Legislations passed in the parliament and state assemblies; and 3. Rules and regulations of regulatory bodies in higher education such as University Grants Commission (UGC) and All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE). It can be seen that provisions in the Constitution directly influence any enactment of legislation in favour of student diversity. These legislations, in turn, demand regulatory agencies and individual institutions to act in order to protect the interest of the disadvantaged students.

### ***Constitutional Provisions***

The fundamental rights provided by the Constitution of India uphold the principles of equality, equity, diversity and inclusion in the social, economic and political life of the citizens. The Constitution ensures that no one faces any form of discrimination in access to education and in enjoying the opportunities provided by education at any levels on the ground of caste, class, gender, language, regions and other background characteristics.

While upholding the values of equality, adequate flexibility has been provided in the Constitution to empower the states to make legislations and interventions in order to provide special provisions for socially and educationally backward populations. This is recognition of the fact that open competition in a structurally unequal society is more likely to favour dominant groups and leads to legitimisation of social

inequalities in educational affairs. Compared to the policy of reservation followed in other countries, constitutional support for reservation policy in India is unique. In a nutshell, while discrimination at any levels is prohibited, the Constitution upholds the value of diversity by empowering states to enact legislation for the benefit of underprivileged groups which face under-representation and are subjected to discrimination in socio-economic life.

## **Legislative Measures**

Legislations passed in the parliament and state assemblies from time to time are important for shaping the actions of administrators, regulatory bodies, institutions and other stakeholders of higher education in favour of student diversity. Some legislations mandate the higher education institutions to have arrangements to manage diversity and promote the interest of the student body from diverse backgrounds.

There are many legislations promoting student diversity. Acts pertaining to prohibition of ragging, passed in various state assemblies, are important measures to curb the menace of ragging in colleges and universities. Irrespective of the background characteristics, all students get benefitted from such legal measures. However, the under-privileged students are the bigger beneficiaries of such legal enactments as they are more likely to face severe forms of ragging, compared to their privileged counterparts in college and universities. Other such legal measures include the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 (GOI, 2013) and the Rights of Persons with Disability (RPWD) Act 2016; these are important interventions in this regard. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 mandates all employers to constitute an Internal Complaint Committee (ICC) to receive complaints on sexual harassment and suggest recommendations about actions to be taken by the employers. The RPWD mandates 50 per cent horizontal reservation for the disabled persons. Moreover, legal provisions ensure that necessary institutional mechanisms are put in place for the aggrieved students to lodge their complaints and seek remedies for grievances and discrimination faced in social and academic domains of higher education campus.

## *Interventions of Regulatory Bodies*

Following the spirit of constitutional principles and legislative measures, regulatory bodies such as the University Grants Commission (UGC) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) take actions in the form of rules and regulations in favour of student diversity. One of the first interventions by the UGC to promote the interest of the disadvantaged was the constitution of an SC-ST cell. All institutions were mandated to constitute an SC-ST cell in order to ensure that reservations are followed in admission and that necessary social and academic support systems are made available to the SC-ST students. Later, new mechanisms were recommended for other groups such as women and the physically challenged.

Notification of the UGC's Anti-Ragging Regulations 2009 and the All-India Council for Technical Education (Prevention and Prohibition of Ragging in Technical Institutions, Universities Including Deemed to be Universities Imparting Technical Education) Regulations 2009 (AICTE, 2009), prohibit any forms of ragging in campuses, and there are provisions for stringent actions against those violating the norms. The mission mode approach and massive awareness building programme regarding the regulations and its definition of ragging and provisions for punishment has substantially helped to reduce the menace of ragging in higher education institutions. Three of the other important measures by the UGC are notification of UGC (Grievance Redressal) Regulations 2012 (UGC, 2013a), UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations 2012 (UGC, 2013B), and UGC (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal of Sexual Harassment of Women Employees and students in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2015 (UGC, 2016).

According to the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations each institution should appoint an anti-discrimination officer. Similarly, the UGC (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal of Sexual Harassment of Women Employees and Students in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2015 mandates each institution to constitute an Internal Complaint Committee to deal with the issue of gender-based violence and to conduct gender sensitisation programmes.

## **Institutional Mechanisms for Managing Student Diversity**

There are various types of institutional mechanisms for managing student diversity. Some of them are mandatory mechanisms, like those created by bodies such as the UGC and AICTE. Every institution must have these mechanisms according to the legal framework and regulations and orders of regulatory bodies in higher education. Others are initiatives of the respective institutions. This module primarily discusses institutional mechanisms mandated by legal frameworks and regulatory bodies in higher education. Those mechanisms which are mandatory are guided by the orders and regulations of regulatory bodies. In general, these mechanisms are led by faculty members under the guidance of the Vice Chancellor in case of universities and Principals in the case of colleges.

Institutional mechanisms at colleges and universities as mandated by regulatory bodies can be broadly classified into two based on the primary focus of such arrangements. They are mechanisms for (1) Academic Integration and (2) Social Inclusion. While the mechanisms for academic integration address the learning requirements of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and provide them with adequate learning support, mechanisms for social inclusion ensure that students from diverse backgrounds enjoy equal participation in the social and cultural life on campus.

### ***Mechanism for Academic Integration***

In order to succeed academically, all students are expected to possess the basic collegiate skills such as proficiency in language which is used as the medium of instruction, time management and critical thinking. All students, irrespective of their background characteristics, are expected to possess the basic minimum foundational understanding in the disciplines which are chosen for the core and elective courses. These competencies and foundational understanding are unevenly distributed among the student body due to socio-economic, cultural and pedagogical reasons. While students from privileged backgrounds come to college with more preparation, the underprivileged may have gone through different

educational trajectories in their pre-college education. Variations in academic levels thus pose challenges for academic integration in higher education.

The Equal Opportunity Office (EOO) is entrusted with the responsibility to provide academic, financial and social guidance and counselling as well as to enhance diversity within the campus. In order to address the issue of difference in academic experience, programme for academic integration provide additional learning inputs and necessary learning resources to students from disadvantaged groups. The UGC sponsored remedial coaching scheme is one of such initiatives for academic integration in colleges and universities.

The remedial coaching scheme provides financial assistance to organise special classes for SC/ST/OBC (non-creamy layer) and minorities. Special classes are organised in addition to normal class hours. Students are provided with necessary guidance and training to improve their knowledge, attitude, academic skills and linguistic proficiency. It helps them to bridge the academic gaps due to diversity of pre-college experience and credentials, and enables them to successfully complete the course. The scheme is implemented in colleges and universities. Such universities and colleges as have at least 100 students belonging to the SC/ST/OBC (excluding creamy layer)/Minority groups are eligible for financial assistance under this scheme. A maximum share of 20 per cent of students can be from the non-SC/ST/OBC and Minority groups. In the case of lack of adequate number of SCs, STs and Minority students, the percentage of non-creamy layer OBC and poor general candidates can be increased to 40 per cent. Remedial coaching scheme is coordinated by a faculty coordinator. A committee is constituted to oversee the implementation of the scheme. In fact, only a small proportion of public institutions (government and government aided) are eligible to receive such financial support. A larger share of private institutions which account for a major share in student enrolment does not come under the purview of the scheme.

In addition to remedial classes, there are many schemes to provide learning support to students from disadvantaged social groups. They are called incentive schemes. Facilities such as book bank and book grant ensure that SC and ST students are not deprived of academic resources. The SC-ST cell is responsible to oversee the

allocation of specially earmarked funds to these kinds of academic support programmes. These incentive schemes aim to provide adequate support to the disadvantaged to succeed in higher education.

Apart from centrally funded programmes such as remedial coaching, some institutions have developed their own initiatives to facilitate academic integration. Initiatives to promote language proficiency among the students by Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and B R Ambedkar University, New Delhi, are good examples of institutional interventions to improve academic integration. The Language Empowerment Cell (LEC) of Jawaharlal Nehru University provides English language classes for students from the undergraduate to doctoral level students. Classes for improving proficiency in English language, conducted by the LEC, are open to all students irrespective of the background characteristics.

The Ambedkar University of Delhi (AUD) introduced a system for assessment of English language proficiency among the first-year students. It helps them to identify the language competency levels of its students and those who require additional support for improving language proficiency. In addition, AUD runs a programme called “Language Buddy.” This initiative promotes collaborative learning. Selected language buddies who are in senior classes are provided orientation and training on peer mentoring and English language skills. These language buddies are allotted junior students who require language support. This process can benefit both mentees and mentors. While mentees get support from seniors to improve their language competencies, mentors improve their socio-cultural skills and communication skills.

### ***Mechanism for Social Inclusion***

Social inclusion is a process of ensuring active participation of students from diverse backgrounds in the socio-cultural life of campus, which makes each and every student feel that they are welcomed, accepted and treated with respect. There are a number of mandatory cells and committees in colleges and universities to oversee aspects of social inclusion. They are SC-ST Cell, Anti-Ragging Cell, Student Redressal Cell, Equal Opportunity Office (EOO), Women’s Cell (Internal Complaint Committee). Except the Internal Complaint Committee (ICC) which is mandated by the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act

2013 (GOI, 2013), the remaining cells are mandatory according to the respective guidelines of regulatory bodies. In addition, institutions develop their own committees or cells such as discipline committee and student welfare committee. Considering the challenges faced by students from north-eastern states, many colleges in Delhi have constituted a North-East Cell.

Mechanisms for social inclusion have, in general, three major functions: (1) Creation of awareness about social inclusion through conduct of orientation programmes, workshops and training programmes in selected themes, (2) Providing a platform for students to lodge complaints and seek remedies from institutions, and (3) Contributing to formulate a policy and plan for developing socially inclusive campuses and develop mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating such initiatives.

In general, such cells and committees comprise faculty members from various departments, with one faculty member serving as faculty in-charge or coordinator. The idea of the committee is to ensure collegial nature of functioning and wider support from faculty members. In general, these cells and committees are expected to meet periodically to review the progress made in the respective domain. These cells and committees directly report to the head of the institution such as vice chancellor of the university or principal of the college. The Academic Performance Index (API), followed by UGC for promotion of teachers, also takes into account the contributions made by the faculty members in such cells and committees.

The SC-ST Cells monitor the implementation of reservation policies in student admission. They also oversee fund allocation for welfare of SC and ST students. Any act of caste and ethnicity-based discrimination faced by students can be brought to the attention of the cell. On a thorough investigation of such complaints, the cell reports the matter to the head of the institution who is entrusted with the power to take necessary action. Students, irrespective of disciplines and backgrounds characteristics, can approach the Student Redressal Cell to lodge complaints.

The responsibility of the Anti-Ragging cell is to ensure that no students are subjected to ragging on campus. All students are provided with contact details of the cell and its members. In case of a complaint, students can directly inform the cell. The Anti-Ragging Cell makes efforts to create awareness about the prohibition

of ragging and disciplinary action in case of involvement in such activities. Apart from awareness creation, faculty members of some institutions take turns in making visits to locations where incidents of ragging take place, particularly during early weeks after admission.

The ICC aims to prevent any form of sexual violence against women in campuses. It receives complaints regarding any form of violence against women in campus and classrooms. It directly reports to the head of the institutions. The ICC organises events to generate awareness about gender justice. Apart from general awareness programmes, the ICC of some institutions organise campus safety audit. This is an exercise to collectively identify the campus spots which are considered to be unsafe for women students. This programme has dual objectives. Through this process, male students also get an opportunity to understand the perspectives and experiences of women co-students and develop an attitude to respectfully interact with female students. One of the peculiar characteristics of an ICC is involvement of people from outside. Unlike other committees, it includes an external member. A medical practitioner, advocate or a representative of a non-government organisation working for the cause of women and gender justice can serve as an external member of the ICC.

## **Challenges Faced by Institutional Mechanisms**

As discussed, there are many campus level mechanisms for promoting the welfare of students from diverse background characteristics. Some of them are mandatory mechanisms according to rule of the land and regulatory bodies in higher education. In what follows, we briefly discuss the major limitations of the existing mechanisms and challenges faced by people involved in it.

The first and foremost issue is the compliance mode of operation of institutional mechanisms. Many of the mandatory mechanisms are constituted under the compulsion of law and regulations. In other words, these mechanisms are not introduced due to the necessity felt by the stakeholders. So, the focus of institutions on ensuring that necessary formalities are completed according to the norms stipulated by regulatory agencies and legal framework. One of the reasons for poor



performance of institutional mechanisms for promoting student diversity is this compliance mode of operation.

There are many such cells and committees without any role differentiation between them. For instance, EOO exists as an umbrella organisation in campuses. However, SC-ST cell and women development cell continue to exist as independent cells. Coordination and collaboration between various mechanisms aiming at welfare of students appear to be very weak. This scenario negatively impacts coordinated efforts for the welfare of students belonging to multiple identity groups.

There is a belief among the stakeholders that interventions are required if there is a complaint. They rarely make proactive interventions in the domain of their responsibility. Operation of cells is often reduced to agency for receiving complaints if any from students. Activities of cells and committees rarely rely on empirical evidence on diversity of student experience. Mechanisms for periodically collecting and analysing student feedback are very weak. In the absence of any such efforts at national or state level in the form of student experience survey, lack of such efforts at institution level paint a cosy picture about the smooth management of student diversity in campuses. It may be far from reality.

Although all mechanisms follow a collegial system of operation, not all cells and committees receive adequate support from teachers. Once the committee is constituted, responsibility remains with faculty in-charge or coordinator. But they complain about lack of cooperation from members of the committee. In other words, the operation of institutional mechanisms often takes the form of a “one-man show.” It seriously impacts the effectiveness of such cells. A related issue is the lack of funding support for activities of the cells and committees.

The growing teacher shortage in colleges and universities results in an enhanced teaching workload for teachers. In addition, teachers need to invest in research and publications. Scores or points gained from research and publication are major determinants of career progression and employment satisfaction. Very often teachers are overburdened with multiple responsibilities of teaching, research and extension activities. As a result, engagement in cells and committees is often the last priority.

In general, faculty members involved in cells and committees do not have any prior experience in matters they are supposed to handle. Their core competency in teaching and research may not have any direct relevance to running of the institutional mechanisms. The leading campus level mechanisms demand various types of competencies. They include core competencies in the key domain and various skills of people management, leadership skills and financial management skills. Faculty members are not provided any training to run these cells and committees. It negatively impacts the effectiveness of their activities.

It was found that compared to all other cells and committees, in general, the anti-ragging cell is functional and effective in most of the colleges and universities. Strict implementation of anti-ragging regulations through effective implementation of institutional mechanisms has helped to reduce the incidence of ragging in campuses. Compared to the past, heinous forms of ragging based physical violence are lesser in number. Students feel the presence of institutional mechanisms for curbing ragging and are aware about the rights of the students to launch complaints in case of ragging. It is noteworthy that the anti-ragging cell is constituted in line with the rest of the campus level cells and committees. The structure, process and organisational form of the anti-ragging cell is similar to that of rest of the cells and committees. One of the major elements of success of the anti-ragging cell is institutional commitment to the objectives of the cell. However, unlike other such mechanisms, the anti-ragging cell operates to safeguard all students irrespective of background characteristics. It also indicates variations in institutional commitment to the cause of student welfare. In other words, institutions are less sensitive and committed to effectively operate cells and committees aiming to support students from disadvantaged and women students. It is a reflection of the larger social dynamics on the campus, rooted in its elite and exclusive character. Moreover, institutions try their best to avoid public reporting of any forms of ragging incidents on campus in order to protect their reputation.

Lack of institutional efforts to formulate a policy for promoting diversity and develop a mechanism for overall monitoring of all those activities of cells and committees for the welfare of students is the major reason for the ineffectiveness

of cells and committees. In the absence of such institutional policies and practices, stakeholders are not adequately oriented to the significance of student diversity and ways to address concerns of students from various background characteristics. Only premier institutes have leadership positions such as Dean of Students Welfare who look after the overall welfare of students. This is not to suggest that appointing a faculty member as dean or to a similar post would resolve all problems. The issue is that most of the higher education institutions, particularly colleges, do not have any campus level coordinator to oversee the various types of interventions and activities that are aimed to improve the student experience and outcome. It adversely affects institutions to plan, implement and monitor activities for the promotion of diversity and support students from disadvantaged groups to fully enjoy academic and social life on campus.

## **Consequences of an Ineffective Mechanism**

Along with the growing popular demand for higher education, the policy of reservation and incentive schemes for access have positively contributed to the growth of student diversity in higher education. However, there is a mismatch between student diversity and the structures and operation of higher education institutions. Institutions which were traditionally serving elite socio-economic strata remain unchanged despite the changes in the character of clientele. Structures and processes of such higher education institutions are not receptive to students from non-traditional backgrounds and marginalised identities and women. This is the context of constituting institutional mechanisms to safeguard the interest of the disadvantaged students and provide them various forms of support to fully enjoy the benefits of higher education.

Campus life provides a rich opportunity for students to engage with peers from various identity groups. These interactions are great learning opportunities for students. Students develop skills and competencies to engage with people from other backgrounds. Such learning is not limited to socialisation. Diversity of intellectual backgrounds and academic exposure is ground for developing holistic understanding of social reality. Studies have convincingly demonstrated the benefit

of intellectual diversity in higher education. In a globalised economy and increasingly diverse workforce and collaborative work pattern in modern work organisation, competencies related to diversity is a major asset. Diversity perspectives and skills are essential components for democracy to thrive.

The purpose of institutional mechanisms to promote diversity is to create conducive conditions within the institutions and provide support and resources to overcome challenges they may face in social and academic domains and promote students to experience and benefit from the richness of diversity. As discussed, institutional mechanisms mainly aim to promote academic integration and social inclusion of students from diverse backgrounds. As academic integration and social inclusion are important determinants of college experience and can make lasting impact on career trajectories of students, ineffectiveness of such institutional mechanisms have severe negative implications on students from disadvantaged backgrounds and women.

Absence of effective institutional mechanisms is a fertile ground for the flourishing of socially exclusive practices in campus. As such, the biases and prejudices in terms of caste, ethnicity, gender, class, physical ability and sexual orientation of teachers, staff and students go unchallenged. As a result, social interactions in a campus may be exclusive and discriminatory. Physical violence in the forms of ragging and sexual assaults against the women may make some students feel unsafe in campus and in hostels. Dehumanising peer interactions and engagement with teachers and staff, and the experience of humiliation in campus and classrooms, place students in a vulnerable situation. Mental trauma and stress due to alienation and exclusion gradually pull back students to engage in any form of productive activities on campus. It is a potential source for socially undesirable outcomes including withdrawal from college or suicide.

Ineffective institutional mechanisms affect opportunities for academic integration by students from deprived groups. Lack of planning and of a system for implementation and monitoring makes bridge or development courses less effective. Considering the variations in academic experience that students bring into the classrooms, lack of additional learning inputs and resources are not conducive for academic success

across the student groups. Thus students are deprived of opportunities to acquire generic learning skills and discipline specific foundational knowledge. If variations in academic differences are not addressed adequately at an early stage of study programmes, and classrooms are not inclusive, it negatively affects their capacity to academically succeed in courses in early semesters and lead to widening of learning gaps. As students move to next semester, the number of academic arrears may increase. Ultimately, students lose academic confidence which prevents them from exploring any form of resilience.

Ineffectiveness of institutional mechanisms shadows career progress of students. Ultimately, students fail to achieve their full potential and benefit from higher education opportunities. It is also a question of institutional performance and outcome. When a significant share of students is unable to academically succeed, productivity of the institution would go down. As a result, institutions are able to produce a smaller share of qualified graduates than their actual intake capacity. It adversely affects the policy goals of higher education expansion. In an era of knowledge economy, educational attainment is a core determinant of growth of national economy and social mobility of individuals. Academic failure thus shadows inter-generational equity among the population groups and overall economic prosperity of the country. Both scenarios are not conducive to envisage a democratic and just society.

### **Box: Diversity Statement**

In the west, a Diversity Statement is part of the faculty recruitment process in the higher education sector. A Diversity Statement is written by the aspiring candidates for faculty posts in universities and colleges. It reflects the teaching philosophy and teaching practices which one would follow in order to promote learning by a diverse student body. It also indicates the concerned person's sensitivity towards the issues of diversity in the social and cultural domain on the campus. Considering the growing student diversity in India, institutions may consider incorporating strategies to assess a faculty candidate's capacity and approach towards promoting diversity in the classroom and campus.

## Strategies for Improving Effectiveness of Institutional Mechanisms

One of the major determinants of effectiveness of any organisation is the shared understanding about the purpose, goals and functioning among the people involved in it. Activities of various parts of an organisation contribute to achievement of the common goals set by the organisation. It is pertinent to locate campus organisations aiming to promote and manage student diversity in an institutional context of colleges and universities. In other words, campus level mechanisms for managing student diversity must be seen as a sub-system within the institutions. Campus level sub-systems would be effective when institutions own and value such sub-system as an important means contributing to achieve the broader goal of the institutions.

The primary condition for improving campus level mechanisms is, therefore, congruence between the purpose and functioning of institutional mechanisms and vision, mission and organising principles of the concerned college and university. The fundamental question is whether the college or university, as an institution, upholds the values of diversity and is committed to promote student diversity. Improving the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms demands every institution to have a policy on the issues of student diversity, equity and inclusion. The process of policy formulation can follow participatory models. The participation and contribution of all stakeholders has to be ensured while developing an institutional policy for diversity, equity and inclusion. Rather than focusing on the document to be developed, the process of these consultations may be seen as an action for sensitising on the issues of diversity. Decentralised and participatory models of policy formulation thus help to develop collective awareness about the issues of diversity.

The diversity policy involves the planning and developing of time bound activities and targets. An assessment of the ground reality is an important ingredient for planning and developing effective strategies. An understanding about the nature of the student body is a primary requisite for planning for institutionalising values of diversity, equity and inclusion. An analysis of secondary data which are readily available in office records can shed light on the socio-economic and academic

characteristics of the student body. Social group diversity needs to be seen as one of the considerations. Institutions may include a greater number of equity categories, depending upon the nature of the student body they serve. An analysis of office records may provide important insights into the current status of student diversity and its changing nature over a period of time, depending on the availability of quality and sufficient data.

The institutional policy on student diversity should serve as an overarching principle for institutional mechanisms to function effectively. There will be more clarity on the role and function of each mechanism. Diversity policy also enables institutional leaders and administrators to act efficiently while constituting campus level cells and committees, monitoring and evaluating their activities.

The issue of multiple institutional mechanisms for managing student diversity is an important issue. All new cells and committees, at least the mandatory ones, were added later, as and when their need was felt to address the issues faced by new groups. Beginning with the SC-ST cells, these include many others. There are advantages and disadvantages of this kind of arrangement. Independent mechanisms with a clearly defined targeted group could devote their major attention to the specified groups. Thus, the specific context of and challenges faced by each targeted group get focussed attention. But such a system fails to understand the complex forms of challenges faced by students who may face multiple deprivation. For instance, challenges faced by physically challenged scheduled caste women are very complex. Promoting their inclusion in the social and academic domain requires a strategy that takes into account the multiple disadvantages they face. Lack of interlinkages between such cells and committees, therefore, poses a major hurdle.

During the 12th plan period, the UGC made major reforms in its approach to managing student diversity. Establishment of the Equal Opportunity Office was aimed to address the need for coordinated efforts to promote diversity. However, the broader goals of such efforts did not materialise when EOO was implemented in colleges and universities. Institutions may take the lead, in the light of diversity policy being developed, to develop a platform for coordination of various cells and committees aiming to promote student diversity.

Institutional heads such as vice chancellors in the case of universities and principals in the case of colleges should be the heads of such platforms. However, they may well think of appointing a coordinator. As followed in some premier institutes, appointing a Dean of Students welfare or Diversity and Inclusion Officer may be explored in this regard.

One of the primary responsibilities of the coordinating platforms and of the persons appointed to coordinate the activities of various cells and committees is to provide necessary resources and enabling conditions to the campus level structures and people involved in them. The faculty involved in cells and committees may be provided in-house training to run the institutional mechanisms. Training may include sensitising the values of diversity, various approaches to promote diversity, best practices in India and abroad, and the skills for planning and generic management skills including financial management.

As a major strategy for monitoring the progress of activities being carried out by the institutional mechanism for managing student diversity, institutions may develop an effective mechanism for periodically collecting and analysing student feedbacks. Student surveys can be carried out, at least once in a year, to understand how students from various backgrounds feel about their life in the concerned college or university, and how they assess the availability, accessibility and quality of such campus level mechanisms for improving their socio-cultural and academic experience. In addition, they must be provided an adequate opportunity to raise their concerns and offer suggestions regarding the running of institutional mechanisms.

### Questions for Consideration and Discussion

What is the significance of institutional level structures and processes for managing student diversity?

What are the strength and weakness of existing campus level bodies in managing student diversity?

What is the process of developing effective institutional mechanisms for managing student diversity?



### **Box 1: Compulsory Course on Student Diversity**

Institutions can explore the possibilities of introducing a non-credit but compulsory course on student diversity for new entrants. Every new student who takes admission must complete this course within a stipulated period. Proposed course may have two major components. They are 1. Sensitising the concept and values of diversity in education, employment and society and 2. Creating awareness about the campus level mechanisms which provide support for students and 3. Diversity appropriate behaviour in campus and classrooms and institutional actions in case of breach of code of conduct. Institutions may develop and or identify necessary study materials. Online mode of test may be explored. Those who secure the highest grade in the test may be designated as Diversity Ambassador of the year. An individual student or group of students from each faculty and discipline can be identified in order to broad-stream the representation of student bodies. Identified students may be included in some of the committee on student mechanisms as an invited member.

### **Box 2: Dean of Diversity and Inclusion at IIT Delhi**

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, has recently created a new Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) headed by the Dean of Diversity and Inclusion. It is a positive gesture towards the effective management of diversity. Establishing such structures gives a signal to students as well as faculty members that the institution is committed to issues of diversity and inclusion. Availability of such structure provides the space for debating and discussing its mandate, goals and functioning of diversity and inclusion initiatives. Of course, merely establishing an office is not sufficient. But it needs to be seen as an important effort in the future direction in favour of diversity and inclusion. The status of Dean also indicates that the ODI is located in the upper strata of governance and management structure of the institution. Universities and colleges may explore possibilities for establishing such offices.

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# MODULES ON STUDENT DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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## Student Diversity and Civic Learning

**Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Ivy Dhar**

MODULE

7



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## PREFACE

The Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education (CPRHE) is a specialised centre established at the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA). The centre promotes and carries out research in higher education policy and planning, and aims to contribute to evidence-based policy-making in higher education. The thrust areas of research include access and equity, quality, teaching and learning, governance and management, financing, and graduate employability in higher education. The centre is currently implementing research studies in selected institutions in several states of India.

Equity and inclusion in higher education are significant research areas at the CPRHE/NIEPA. Related to this theme, the CPRHE/NIEPA completed a large-scale study titled “Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: A Study of Institutions in the Selected States of India,” with funding support from the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). The study was carried out, by Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr C. M. Malish, in institutions located in six states, namely Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. A detailed questionnaire-based survey among 3,200 students was administered, close to 200 interviews were conducted with faculty and administrators, about 70 focus group discussions with students were held, and 50 students’ diaries were completed. The study helped understand unique challenges faced by students from the socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and assess institutional response to the changing nature of student diversity.

As a follow-up to the study, the CPRHE/NIEPA was requested by the ICSSR to prepare modules related to student diversity and social inclusion in higher education. An Expert Group was constituted to advise and guide the modules’ preparation. The expert group consisted of renowned academics, institutional leaders, and representatives of the Ministry of Education (MoE), ICSSR, and NITI Ayog.

Seven modules have been prepared as a part of this study. These are Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches (Module 1); Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education (Module 2); Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses (Module 3); Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education (Module 4); Social Inclusion in a Higher Education Campus (Module 5); Institutional Mechanism for Managing Student Diversity (Module 6); and Student Diversity and Civic Learning (Module 7). These modules are primarily meant to support and facilitate the CPRHE/NIEPA's efforts towards institutional-level capacity development, in improving the student experience in social and academic domains and academic performance of students from the SEDGs, and in creating a more inclusive campus environment.

We are grateful to the ICSSR for the funding support and to Professor Sukhadeo Thorat, former Chairperson of the ICSSR, for his sustained advice and encouragement. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Professor N. V. Varghese, Vice-Chancellor, NIEPA, for his untiring guidance in preparing the modules. Thanks are also due to Professor R. Govinda and Professor J. B. G. Tilak, former Vice Chancellors of NIEPA, for their support and advice at various stages of the preparation of the modules. We express our gratitude to all authors who have contributed to the modules. Finally, we appreciate the efforts put in by our colleagues, Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr C.M. Malish, for preparing and finalising the modules.

**Professor Pradeep Kumar Misra**  
Director, CPRHE

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We received valuable help and support from various sources about and during the preparation of these modules on student diversity in higher education. The CPRHE/NIEPA's proposal to develop the modules was supported and funded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). We are grateful to the ICSSR for its help and support. We would like to thank Professor Sukhdeo Thorat, former Chairman of the ICSSR, for his sustained advice and encouragement. He showed keen interest at every stage of preparation of the modules. We would like to thank Professor R. Govinda, former Vice-Chancellor of NIEPA, who provided his guidance and advice.

We would like to thank Professor J. B. G. Tilak, former Vice-Chancellor of NIEPA, for his support and advice at various stages of preparation of the modules. We are grateful to Mr Basavaraj Swamy, former Registrar, NIEPA, and Dr. Sandeep Chatterjee, current Registrar, and his team including staff in department of finance and accounts of the NIEPA for extending administrative support in the preparation of the modules.

We acknowledge with deep respect the contribution by Professor N. V. Varghese, both as an institutional leader such as founding Director of the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education and former Vice-Chancellor of NIEPA, and as academic mentor. We have heavily relied and learnt from the Modules on District Planning in Education prepared at NIEPA 1997 led by Professor Varghese. We express our gratitude for his guidance at different stages of the implementation of the modules and his meticulous efforts in providing comments and suggestions on the draft modules.

We are also grateful to all colleagues in the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education, viz Professor Mona Khare, Dr. Garima Malik, Dr. Anupam Pachauri, Dr. Jinusha Panigrahi and Dr. Sayantan Mandal, for their valuable inputs in the meetings held for preparation of the modules.

The development of the modules was undertaken as a collaborative activity. The CPRHE/NIEPA organised an expert group meeting to discuss the modules. We are

thankful to the guidance extended by the members of the experts committee: Professor Meenakshi Thapan, Professor Meenakshi Gopinath, Professor Sivanandan, Professor Sudhanshu Bhushan, Professor Siba Prasad Adhikary, Professor Mehtab Manzar, Professor Bakshi, and representatives of the ICSSR, NITI Ayog and Ministry of Education. Their close scrutiny and expert opinion helped in developing the approach and in the revision of the modules. All co-authors who have contributed to the modules were very active and involved from the very beginning. They willingly revised the modules after the discussions in the authors meet.

We express our sincere thanks to Monica Joshi, Mayank Rajput, Chetna, Aqsa and Sumit who helped in organisation of the meetings and preparing documents for reproduction. We are grateful to each one of them for their contribution.

**Nidhi S. Sabharwal**  
**C. M. Malish**  
CPRHE/NIEPA

# INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the higher education sector in India has grown considerably. Higher education in India has shifted from an elite stage of development to a massification stage. Accompanying this massification in higher education is the increasing diversity among the student population. The student population on college campuses, relatively homogenous and elite previously, is now represented by non-traditional social group learners. These learners from the non-traditional groups belong to diverse social, economic, linguistic and regional backgrounds. While the presence of diverse groups on campuses reflects the advancement of equity in access, recent research raises concerns about the challenges faced by students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, such as the scheduled castes, other backward classes and scheduled tribes. These challenges are related to low academic outcomes, social tensions and its associated practices, prejudices and biases. For institutions to address the challenges facing students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups, it is essential that educational administrators and faculty members must be sensitive to these students' concerns.

The purpose of the modules is to sensitise the institution-level stakeholders, such as students, teachers and administrators in higher education, on issues related to student diversity, specific challenges facing students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) and the role of higher education in promoting civic learning. Developing modules on student diversity in higher education is an extension of the study carried out by the centre and, thus, a mechanism of research-based engagement with institutional-level stakeholders.

The study titled "Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: A Study of Institutions in Selected States of India" was coordinated by Dr. Nidhi S. Sabharwal and Dr. C. M. Malish, and it was carried out in institutions which were located in six states, namely, Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. In order to develop an understanding of the challenges faced by students from the socially excluded groups and institutional response to the changing nature of student diversity, the methodology followed was the following. A detailed questionnaire-based survey among 3,200 students was administered, close to 200 interviews were conducted

with faculty and administrators, close to 70 focus group discussions with students were undertaken and 50 diaries were completed by students. As part of this project, the research outputs prepared and submitted include: 6 state team reports and 1 synthesis report; 2 CPRHE Research Papers; 1 CPRHE Seminar Report; 3 Policy Briefs in English with translations in Hindi; and more than 10 published journal articles and chapters in books (CPRHE Annual Report, 2022). In the policy research cycle, CPRHE-NIEPA organised two major events based on the research findings of the CPRHE study. A national seminar was organised and it brought together academics and policy makers concerned with institutional response to the changing nature of social diversity of student population. A policy dialogue webinar was organised and it was successful in bringing together academics, policy makers and institutional leaders and emphasised significance of institutional reforms for making campuses inclusive by valuing and promoting diversity. Policy briefs prepared by the CPRHE were the basis for the dialogue with various stakeholders of higher education.

On the successful completion of the research project, the CPRHE/NIEPA was requested by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) to prepare modules related to student diversity and social inclusion in higher education. These modules are primarily meant to support and facilitate the CPRHE/NIEPA's efforts toward institutional-level capacity building so as to improve the academic performance of students from the SEDGs and create more inclusive institutional environments. The modules are envisaged to be made available to the public as a public good.

The modules have been written in a simple style. However, they are not meant to be self-learning modules. The primary target group for the modules includes the faculty members, administrators and practitioners who are directly responsible for extending support to students from socially and economically disadvantaged social groups. In other words, these modules can form the essential teaching-learning material to organise training courses at the institutional level. Hence, an effort is made to explain the concepts and elaborate the steps are taken to discuss the challenges faced by students from the SEDGs in detail, with examples of strategies of consideration. Most of the modules contain module-specific reflective questions at the end.

The logic of the sequence of the modules is as follows: Module 1 contains a discussion on the concept and approaches to achieving student diversity, equity and social

inclusion in higher education. Module 2 includes a discussion on the three stages of student diversity for a systematic assessment of the status of student diversity in higher education. The three stages of student diversity are like this: Stage I of social diversity, which is measurable and represents diversity in the nation's population. Stage II is of academic diversity present in the classrooms. In Stage III, diversity is a condition of social inclusion on campus. As noted, these stages are developed on the basis of empirical evidence generated through the CPRHE study and elaborate the indicators to measure the three dimensions of diversity.

Module 3 includes the dimensions of academic diversity found in student composition. It discusses the relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics of the student body with the latter's varying levels of academic preparation to pursue higher education and challenges associated with achieving Stage II diversity, that is, academic integration. The module will highlight promising practices to achieve academic integration in higher education institutions.

Module 4 discusses the concept and the practice of discrimination in higher education in terms of social group identity, such as caste, ethnicity, gender and religion of students and its intersectionalities. Module 5 discusses the concept and approach to social inclusion in higher education institutions and attempts to develop a nuanced understanding of student experiences from admission to exit from college to inform points at which interventions are required. Module 6 elaborates on the approaches and strategies to be adopted by higher education institutions for the efficient management of student diversity. The final module, 7, introduces the concept of civic learning in higher education and attempts to provide clarity on the link between student diversity and civic learning.

The modules were prepared on the basis of several rounds of discussions that we had at the NIEPA. First, the CPRHE identified themes for the modules based on their completed research study and analysis related to student diversity, social inclusion and civic learning in higher education. The themes of the modules were presented, discussed and approved by members of the research advisory group for the research project. The areas identified for the modules included:

Module 1: Student Diversity and Social Inclusion in Higher Education: Concepts and Approaches;

Module 2: Classification of Student Diversity in Higher Education;

Module 3: Approaches to Achieving Academic Integration on Campuses;  
Module 4: Forms of Discrimination in Higher Education;  
Module 5: Social Inclusion in the Higher Education Campus;  
Module 6: Institutional Mechanism for Managing Student Diversity;  
Module 7: Student Diversity and Civic Learning.

A detailed framework was further developed for the modules by the CPRHE faculty members, after which this framework was subjected to close scrutiny by a group of experts in a meeting organised by the CPRHE/NIEPA. An Expert Group Committee was formed for the purpose of advice and guidance on the overall approach towards the modules, and, to discuss structure and content of each module. The framework of the modules, the outline and content of each module were presented to the group. The members of the expert group consisted of academics, intuitional leaders (Vice-Chancellor and Principal of College), and representatives of ICSSR, NITI Ayog and Ministry of Education (MoE).

After the discussions with the experts, the framework of the modules was further revised with general guidelines, comments and suggestions made by the experts before presenting it in the Authors' meet. Academics who are experts in areas of diversity and inclusion in higher education were invited to be co-authors of the modules by the CPRHE/NIEPA. An authors' meet to discuss the structure and contents of the modules was held for developing a shared understanding on the framework to the modules and improving the modules. Based on the discussions, the framework was further modified, after which all the individual modules were developed by the CPRHE faculty members and co-authors of the modules.

These modules were further subjected to a close review in the workshop organised with the members from the Expert Group Committee and the authors of the modules, organised by the CPRHE/NIEPA. The drafts of the modules were shared with all the expert members for their review prior to the organisation of the workshop. The modules have been revised and finalised based on the comments and suggestions of the experts. We hope this module will be useful towards advancing equity and inclusion in higher education in India.

April, 2023

**Nidhi S. Sabharwal**  
**C. M. Malish**  
CPRHE/NIEPA



## MODULE 7

# Student Diversity and Civic Learning

This module has been prepared with certain specific objectives.

### **THEY ARE:**

To introduce the concept of civic learning in higher education and its role in preparing responsible citizens for a diverse democracy

To develop an understanding of student diversity in higher education

To develop an understanding of the link between student diversity and civic learning

To know about the approaches to and types of initiatives to promote civic learning.

## Introduction to Module 7

Over the last few decades, higher education (HE) in India has witnessed a significant expansion, shifting from an elite stage of development to a stage of massification that saw student populations on campus becoming more diverse. Student composition moved from being homogenous in nature, composed mainly of upper caste-urban-male, to a more diverse student group from rural backgrounds and under-represented groups, such as the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes and women. Along with increasing school participation rates, affirmative action measures have improved social diversity in higher education student composition.

It is acknowledged that a diverse student body creates an atmosphere that is essential for promoting civic learning. Civic learning means acquiring new knowledge, values, skills and habits of mind necessary to respectfully interact with people who represent diverse cultures and perspectives. Education for civic learning means an active engagement with the values of liberty, equality and humanity. Social diversity in the demographic composition of students, faculty and staff representation is a channel to promote civic learning.

Social diversity creates conditions for inter-group interactions and learning about diverse peers. While college campuses are considered the laboratory, structural (numerical) diversity is regarded as a resource for fostering a positive campus climate, inter-group relations, learning outcomes and civic learning (Sabharwal and Malish, 2016b). Efforts to promote civic understanding in higher education are a way to improve the campus environment for the under-represented groups and address many of the inter-group relationship challenges facing a diverse student body on campuses. (Refer to Module 4 on forms of discrimination facing students from the under-represented groups in HE).

This module starts with a discussion on civic learning and its importance in a diverse democracy. It then elaborates on the emphasis placed by national and international educational policies on the importance of higher education in promoting civic learning. This will be followed by the presentation of international experiences on reasons for viewing student diversity as a resource for civic learning. Finally, there

is an elaboration on approaches used within the curriculum and co-curriculum spheres to gain benefits of student diversity and promote civic learning.

## The Concept of Civic Learning

Civic learning is an approach to learning which prepares students with skills to consider each other as equal and engage with respect with fellow beings. The concept of civic learning discussed in this module is distinct. It goes beyond acquiring knowledge about how the government works, nor is it a course-based study that helps to learn how to participate in community services. The mutual exchange between campus and community is included in the umbrella of civic learning but is not the whole of it.

### ***Civic learning as an approach***

Civic learning is understood as means of acquiring continuous training which enables the internalising of constitutional values, recognising and respecting cultural differences, developing faith in peaceful co-existence, identifying and addressing social concerns, and realising the collective potential to contribute to development. Civic learning skills enable learners to practise citizenship and contribute considerably to their lives and others. It primarily orients people to develop democratic skills for participatory decision-making, leadership, advocacy, and becoming change makers. It can be like an acquired life skill that draws upon positive psychology methods. Such positive psychology methods focus on people's strengths to lead meaningful lives. The outcomes of such learning cannot see the light of day unless an environment is provided where democratic values of equality, liberty and a common humanity are respected.

### ***Enabling conditions to support civic learning***

Civic learning cannot occur unless conditions support such a form of capacity development. A study on this aspect has identified certain conditions, of which one necessary condition is the existence of an open and tolerant political system. A healthy political climate protects people's right to associate and express views, grievances and dissent. Where there is a full-fledged legal system, the government recognises human rights as legitimate and invests to secure people's rights (Etra et

al., 2010, p. 7). Another necessary condition, along with the political climate, is the social environment. A society's perceptions of the social identity of groups must not be based on cultural prejudices. Opportunities to participate in public life must not be dominated by particular social groups. These necessary conditions can also be strengthened as an outcome of civic learning so that each generation of citizens can live a meaningful community life and cohabit with each other in a congenial environment.

***Civic learning as an educational priority***

Experts drawing attention to civic learning have said that “civic knowledge and capability are not bestowed at birth. They are hard-won through education at all levels”

(Thorat, 2016). Therefore, civic learning could be incorporated as an educational priority. It can be assumed that the higher the educational attainment a person gains, the more they will achieve greater confidence and opportunities for civic engagement. Education helps break the hierarchy of social identities and is an avenue for equal opportunity. Its link with civic learning cannot be ruled out. However, we cannot say this relationship is direct; learners must be motivated to acquire skills to develop the linkage. It has been observed that education by itself may not encourage individuals to pursue political and community life actively. Civic learning depends on various scopes that may enable it, mainly through education.

***Modes of civic learning***

There are two modes of civic learning, as discussed by Biesta. The first mode is a socialisation process, in which individuals learn the existing civic norms to become part of the current socio-political order. In this mode, the main pedagogic challenge is to see that individuals are included in the order. The second mode is that individuals use their freedom and choice as part of their engagement in experiments with democracy. In this mode, the main pedagogic challenge is to see enough scope for individuals to participate in the action. In a way, learning by adopting and learning by doing are essential. Human togetherness or publicness is evident in the mode of civic learning (Biesta, 2011). The below two are some ways experts have defined civic learning (Reason and Hemer, 2012).

“Civic learning is any learning that contributes to student preparation for community or public involvement in a diverse democratic society.”

**Howard**

Civic learning is “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivations to make that difference.” It means promoting the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes.

**Ehlich**

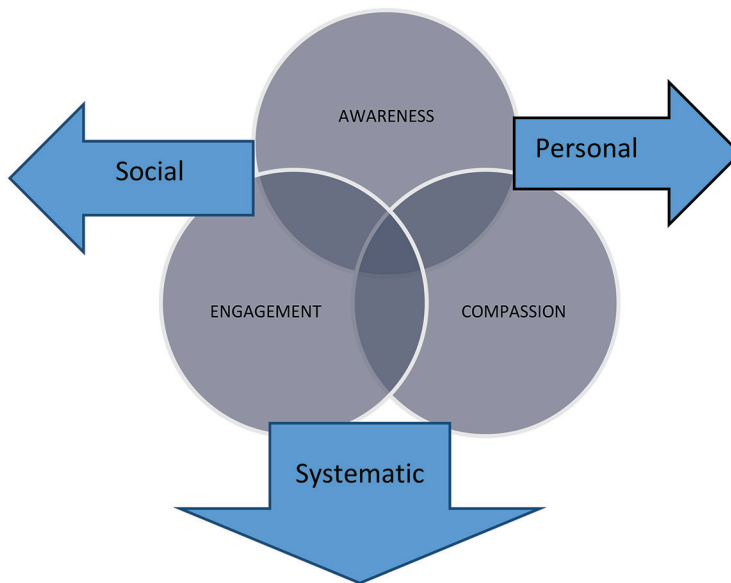
### **Potential components of civic learning**

The above definitions demonstrate that the aim of civic learning is identified with the strengthening of a democratic society. The potential components, identified in civic learning in general are knowledge, skills, values and action. Knowledge builds the scope to cultivate the intellectual ability to understand social and political structures surrounding community life. Values may include “respect for freedom, dignity, empathy, open-mindedness, tolerance, justice, promoting equality, integrity, and responsibility to a larger good” (Reason and Hemer, 2012). In addition, to effectively pursue the matters of public discourse, it is essential to develop informed, analytical thinking and reasoning; therefore, skills are another important element. In a simple sense, skills can be understood as acquiring competencies to apply values and knowledge learnt. Knowledge and skills need to be tested and can be accomplished with actions and outcomes. For example, students may apply skills in shaping decision-making processes by considering new perspectives.

### **Civic learning for humanity**

Civic learning includes training to develop the ability to work together in the interests of the common good; learn to respect all voices, even dissenting ones; and cultivate the habits and values required for practising equality and humanity. The three dimensions that can

be fostered in students to nurture humanity are awareness, compassion and engagement (see Fig. 1). In this framework, awareness refers to developing an understanding of feelings; compassion refers to cultivating ways to relate to others and their concerns; and engagement refers to learning behaviour and attitudes for the well-being of self, social and communal (Emory University, 2017). Feeding these dimensions into education practices can benefit students' well-being and enhance their civic competencies.

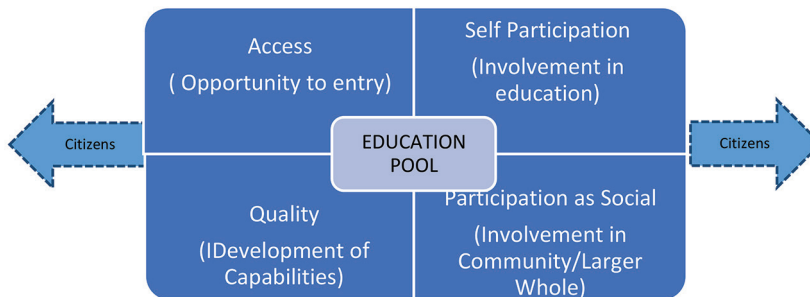


**Figure 1: Drawn from Emory University Framework for Social-Emotional and Ethical Development (SEED) in Education**

***Civic learning for training of citizens***

Participation in education will draw individuals into a wider pool of involvement in communities as citizens. When individuals participate with positive consciousness, enhanced communication and leadership skills and with an experience of interaction with the community, this will further nurture the values of being responsible citizens. Students are citizen-in-training, and when they enter educational institutes, it opens

avenues of encountering other citizens. This way, it enhances chances to face the realities of fellow students' different backgrounds, abilities and affiliations. Civic learning can give students the required skills to further develop their capabilities and create a platform of collaboration in strengthening democracy. The quality of citizens as an outcome of the education pool is essential and can be represented as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Education Pool (Authors)**

If we read the explanations in Figure 2 carefully, civic learning necessarily envisions building cooperation and involvement to create a better civic life. Its goal is to inculcate civic virtues and strive to connect individuals with community life and humanity. When discussing cooperation in a state with many cultures and identities, the focus on unity is important, but more thought must be given to understanding diversity. A meaningful civic life cannot occur in an environment with mistrust and unequal treatment of individuals. The education component for civic learning must be understood against the broader socio-political implications of diversity.

## **Citizens in a Diverse Democracy**

Citizens are the most vital component of any democracy. The aim of democracy should be to provide scope for equal opportunity and recognise group rights. In this section of the discussion, we will look at the ideas around the concept of citizen, democracy and diversity to understand how the citizen's role is essential for broader participation in civic life.

### ***Ideas on Democracy***

Many political leaders have discussed the idea of 'democracy' worldwide and scholars have studied it. It has been the rule of law since ancient times and has evolved throughout history. The ancient Athenian democracy was based on the principles of civic virtue, meaning righteous behaviour about society/community and the democratic participation of citizens in decision-making. Modern democracies have adopted this understanding and added a rights-based approach for enabling participation. Alexis de Tocqueville discussed that democracy is far from simply inheriting rules. He (Tocqueville, 2004: 542) states, "in democratic nations, each new generation is a new people, habits of democracy need to be cultivated among citizens." Dr B R Ambedkar (1979: 57) opines that "democracy is not a form of government, it is a mode of associated living." Gathering from his views, there is a need to reflect upon what will enrich democracy. Does it need to go beyond the achievement of voting and majority rule to promote dialogue for the growth of communities so that it can serve as a social organisation? What does participation mean, and how can it further enhance the scope of civic activities?

### ***Citizen's involvement- passive vs active***

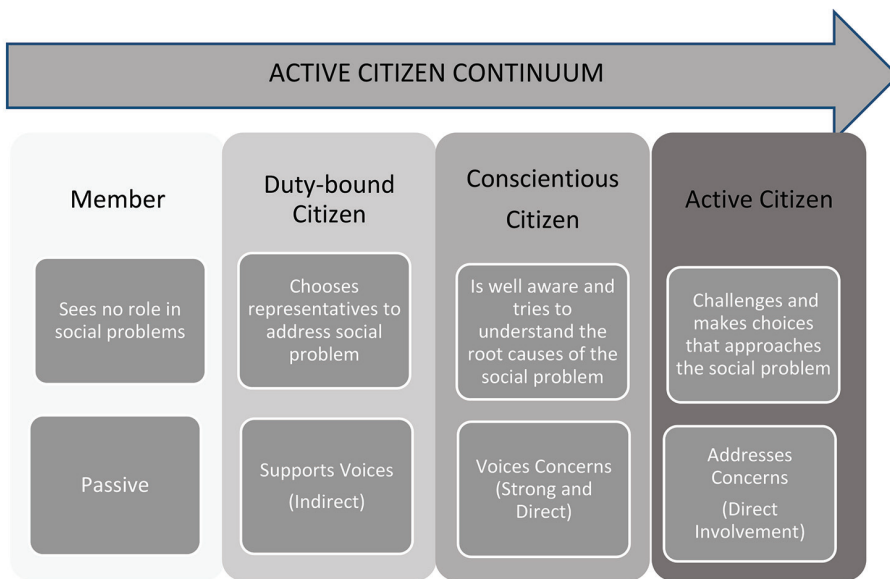
Recent studies discuss the passive nature of citizen involvement. Lokniti-CSDS states that educated men and the upper class participate in civic activities. While educated women participate as spectators (following news and events) but participation in civic activities is low compared to their male counterparts (Lokniti, 2015: 36-37). One can say from this analysis that education does not become a leveller for civic participation unless some conscious efforts are taken up in that direction. Bennett makes an interesting observation that the traditional model of educating about civic life had focused on the idea of making dutiful citizens. Such citizens were expected to learn about the basic workings of political institutions, be informed and responsibly decide voting choices. He suggests that such qualities are essential for civic learners but require new orientation. Participation in democracy can be extended as more than a duty towards bringing in "self-actualising citizens." With this term, he meant that citizens might see their commitments with a higher sense of personal involvement. The commitment required from citizens is not only



about a sense of duty to the political state but how through such commitment, they can improve their lives and others.

**Young citizens as Active citizens**

Bennett also discusses that the “motivation of young people to find personal meaning in civic life” may bring them closer to the virtues we wish they could learn. Young minds must be motivated to identify how their role is vital towards realising democratic goals as a primary form in their immediate surrounding. Universities across the globe are reflecting upon the obligation to promote active citizenship and have developed courses and activities around it. Tufts University explains that active citizenship means “building stronger, healthier, and safer communities.” Irrespective of backgrounds, experiences and fields of study, students as learners must “share a commitment to actively engage in their communities” (active citizenship program at tufts.edu). This can be explained as a progression in which the meaning of citizens changes as one acquires the role of active citizen (see Fig. 3).



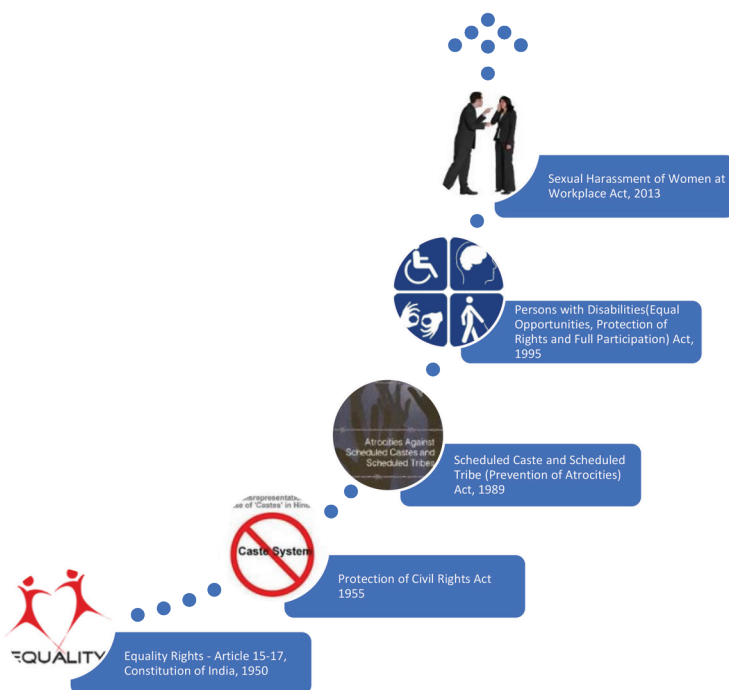
**Figure 3: Prepared by authors, partly draws upon the framework provided by [www.alternativebreaks.org](http://www.alternativebreaks.org)**

### ***Citizens and diversity***

In the fast-developing world of the 21st Century, with globalisation and modernisation, there is a renewed scope to experience meaningful citizenship (Kymlicka, 1999: 118-119). Access to information and open markets create a platform for broadening the scope of dialogue among citizens. Discussions in citizens' forums are perhaps now much broader and more updated. It also makes us realise that today's citizens belong to a more diverse world than they used to be. The need for mutual trust and commitment is essential to run a democracy.

### ***Diversity and Discrimination in India***

From the very beginning of its democratic rule, India has called for respect for diversity. Different provisions adopted in the Constitution of India ensure diversity of language, religion, race, caste, sex and creed. India has already adopted a robust list of laws prohibiting discrimination from protecting diversity. It is looking into more meaningful use of anti-discrimination clauses by proposing a comprehensive anti-discrimination and equality bill in 2016. The bill not only touches upon the discrimination context inscribed in fundamental rights but also focuses on vulnerabilities of gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, food preference, skin tone, living with HIV, children and senior citizens. It deals with various forms of social discrimination, including direct, indirect, harassment, segregation, victimisation, and discriminatory violence and lists out measures of remedies against discrimination. If the bill is passed as an Act, this will broaden the safety net and bring several discriminatory practices within the scope of the law. Below is a representation of milestones India adopted to address diversity and protect equality (see Fig. 4).



**Figure 4: Key Milestones of Anti-Discrimination Acts in India**  
 (Illustrations in the above picture are taken from several sources)

Furthering the cause of anti-discrimination, the UGC has passed the Prevention of Caste-Based Discrimination/Harassment/Victimisation and Promotion of Equality in Higher Educational Institutions Regulations 2012. This is binding upon all higher educational institutions in India, which must become more vigilant to restrict any practice of discrimination and adopt redressal measures accordingly. Implementing such a law could be very significant because it is about responding to situations of discrimination, both on and off campus. We must not forget that, like democracy, discrimination is also by habit. Laws will provide a protective cover to equality and diversity. Still, to uproot the cause, there must be a sustained effort to teach the citizens the value of democracy, diversity and civic virtue. There is no counterargument to the fact that value nurturing must begin with young citizens.

## The Importance of Higher Education for Civic Learning: Its Emphasis in Policies

There is a shared belief in the potential of higher education to be a social laboratory for civic learning. In this way, it can prepare young minds for becoming responsible citizens. In this section, we will discuss the importance of higher education for civic learning by highlighting policy inputs in recent decades.

### **Role of education and youth**

In higher education institutions, the majority population are citizens between 18 and 30 years of age. The National Youth Policy defines youth as those in the age bracket of 15-29 years, constituting 27.5 per cent of the population. Students enrolled in higher education fall within the youth-defining age group. Youths are nurtured as one of the most valuable human resources and potential components for engaging in the country's progress. This potentiality will depend on the scope of access to resources, education, healthcare and other vital opportunities. Government initiatives on youth development linking investments and public policies may substantially impact building them as assets for progress. The stage of youth in an individual's life span is also the time of life when they experience psychological, behavioural and social changes. Tanner and Arnett discuss that though the role of society is vital in structuring and shaping youth, educational attainment can play a crucial role in shaping and contributing to their lives. It can even reduce the other influences on society. For example, the social class distinction will not strongly impact youths who have attained some levelling through education (Tanner and Arnett, 2009: 44).

**The energy and passion of the youth, if utilised properly, can bring a huge positive change to the society and progress to the nation. This section of the population needs to be harnessed, motivated, skilled and streamlined properly to bring rapid progress for a country (CSO, 2017: 1)**

### ***NYP's suggested youth interventions***

Youth in India is a complex and heterogeneous group. By 2020, India is set to become the world's youngest country with a high percentage population of youth.

The National Youth Policy, 2014 discusses a wide range of programmes, multiple stakeholders, sustainable targets and a holistic assessment of challenges to work upon towards the youth's development. It discusses targeting skills for building a knowledge base and individual growth, focussing on education, sports, employment, and entrepreneurship. The national policy aims to work on soft skills. It lists community engagement, promotion of social value, civic engagement and inclusion as priority areas. It seeks to facilitate participation in governance and create equitable opportunities for marginalised and disadvantaged groups. It is alerted with rising delinquency among youth, lack of youth engagement in politics and low turn-out of young voters. It suggests working on the above aims to avoid settling these as perennial problems. What is underlined in these motivations is building a cohort of active citizens possessing civic education. India already shows some promising achievements in this direction with an existing history of social reform movements, the National Service Scheme and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan's (NYKS) contribution to building relationships between universities, colleges, communities and villages (Etra *et al.*, 2010: 44-45).

**It is important to build awareness on the importance of an active citizenry. Education curriculum must be revised such that the civic component is made more relevant. Youth must be made aware of the various channels available to them to engage with and question government agencies.**

(National Youth Policy, 2014: 61)

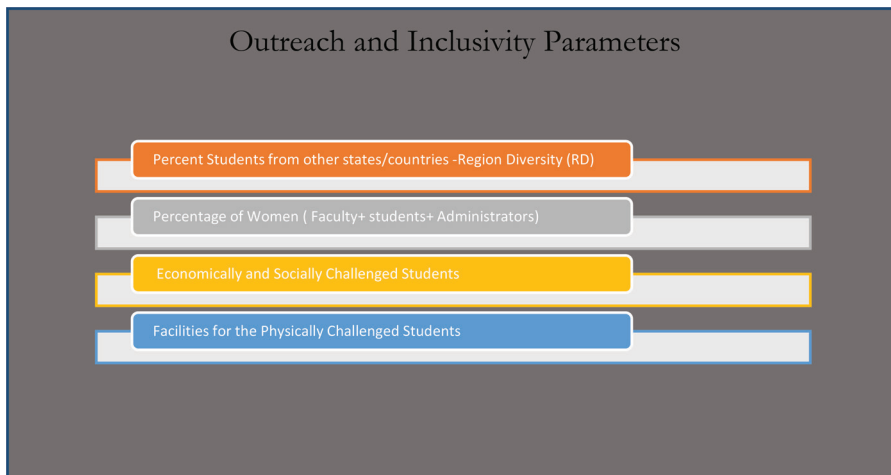
### ***Learning Skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: UNESCO***

The education for sustainable development (ESD) framework has recently highlighted the civic learning approach. Developed in UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, in 2014, it

urges higher education institutions to develop learners' knowledge, skills, attitudes, competencies and values required for addressing global citizenship and local contextual challenges of the present and the future (UNESCO, 2014) through integrating ESD framework in teaching and learning. At the heart of the twenty-first-century approach to education is learning for greater social justice and global solidarity. Cross-cultural understanding and collaborative skills are given importance to develop competencies for (a) living and working together in culturally diverse societies and organisations, (b) being responsible citizens, and (c) being able to tackle complex global challenges. India's Vision 2030 for higher education is to adopt a learner-centred education paradigm, developing an orientation for multi-disciplinary, skill-based and experiential learning.

**Higher education  
commitments: NPE and NIRF**

The National Education Policy 2020 envisions education as a vehicle of transformations, which must inculcate values that strengthens democracy by empowering its citizens, acting as an integrative force and fostering social cohesions. The first University Education Commission, 1948-49, under the leadership of Dr S Radhakrishnan, stated that higher education must 'cultivate the art of human relationship, the ability to live and work together overcoming the dividing force of the time' (GOI, 1962: 31) Universities and colleges have commitments to the public good. It was also the prime reason why universities were founded. The motivation to attain a reputation should not downplay institutions' core social responsibility. In the recently developed National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), pioneered by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), apart from having parameters of teaching, research, and quality evaluation, one way to assess the Universities was to look at their 'outreach and inclusivity' (see Fig. 5). It measures the educational institutions' access and diversity quotient on region, gender, caste, enrolment of economically disadvantaged and policy for physically challenged.



**Figure 5: Outreach and Inclusivity**

Source: Prepared by authors from NIRF 2017 (MHRD: [www.nirfindia.org](http://www.nirfindia.org))

If we observe the higher educational institutions in India, we can still ask whether they have been entirely successful in sensitising students towards the commitment to inclusiveness. Or, broadly, has the agenda of intellectual pursuits and strengthening disciplinary grounding preoccupied the institutional mission? The heart of the problem lies in over-relying on imparting learning by delivery of content knowledge and neglecting understanding of values for a just and equitable society. If students remain unaware of how to integrate their learning with social needs, it is time to revisit learning goals and our educational approach. With a diverse set of students entering the campuses, these objectives become more important to be pursued.

## **Student Diversity in Indian Higher Education**

In the last few decades, education remained no longer a space for the privileged few, which applies to all education levels. This expansion has been accompanied by its challenges. This section will focus mainly on the challenges as we discuss the diversity and development of higher education.

### ***Expansion and disadvantages in the higher education sector***

Higher education has changed considerably over the years, growing fast post-liberalisation. The most visible change has been an expansion of institutions and enrolments. From 27 Universities across India in 1950-51, universities expanded to 1043 in 2019-20, and student enrolment has seen much acceleration. The gross enrolment ratio in the year 2019-20 is 27.1 per cent. Referring to Martin Trow's classification, this growth stage in the higher education sector can be understood as massification when GER is between 15 and 50 per cent. Some states in India are nearing the stage of universalisation where enrolment is almost catching 50 per cent. Some states have enrolment less than 15 per cent. The change expected or happening is not uniform in India. There are wide disparities, mainly in three aspects; regional disparities, social group disparities, and gender disparities (Varghese, 2015: 3-5). Women from backward regions born in disadvantaged social and lower-income groups have the highest chance of being left out of education. As the level of education increases, there are higher chances of facing these disadvantages.

### ***Student diversity***

Expansion and diversification of the higher education sector meant increased participation of non-traditional social and economic groups in higher education. The non-traditional learners include those who are the first in their families to attend higher education and from socially and economically disadvantaged groups. (Refer to Module 1 for further elaboration on non-traditional learners). As a result, the campuses became more diverse. The social-cultural composition of the student population has been changing. Students from rural backgrounds, minorities, backward classes and transgender are accessing higher education along with those from traditional elite groups, continuing generations in higher education, and higher income categories.

The numerical diversity in the demographic composition of students, faculty and staff on campus creates conditions for inter-group interactions. It can have an impact on the campus climate and learning outcomes. If we think giving educational opportunities is enough to overcome regressive thinking and build a progressive society, let's give it a second thought. While diverse backgrounds provide a chance



to experience richness and variety of students, it also challenges them in learning and living in a socially inclusive way (Sabharwal and Malish, 2016a: 2).

***Inequality experience  
in campuses***

College campuses are spaces where young people come together from different backgrounds. Their classroom experiences and social interactions are different from their home environments. The campus experience can have a transforming effect on their personality. Students from socially excluded groups may experience strained social relations with their peers and a non-inclusive campus environment. The societal challenges related to caste, ethnicity and gender, and associated prejudices and beliefs are replicated on campuses. As a result, increasing diversity sometimes is accompanied by social tensions across the campuses. (For further elaborations on forms of discrimination on HE campuses, see Module 4).

When such strained social relations are seen on the campuses, this leads us again to the debate on practice of democratic values in higher education institutions. If campus culture does not provide support for multicultural values, respects cultural distinction, and does not have adequate measures to promote gender equality and protection against caste, ethnic and religious discrimination, then pushing the number of enrolments is a lost battle of democracy. No individuals are born alike with similar backgrounds, but their accidental circumstances must not shape the chances of opportunity. The prevalence of inequality on campus may obstruct the possibility for the disadvantaged to assert their voice.

***Making campuses  
more democratic***

India has been trying to overcome social and economic disadvantages through the reservation policy. Relaxation in admission criteria, scholarships and other positive measures are taken to encourage campus diversity. It has adopted several legal frameworks and guidelines to safeguard against discrimination and protect the disadvantaged in educational institutions. These regulations may help reduce inequality and show positive results but could not out-root imbalances. Further creation and active involvement of enabling cells such as the Equal Opportunity

Cells, Women's Cell, and Anti-Ragging Cells in higher education institutions are attempting to institutionalise equality, protect students from discrimination and adopt redressal measures accordingly. The implementation of such regulations could be very significant because it is about responding to the situation of discrimination both on and off campus.

***Developing capacity for realisation of democratic goals***

The system can be effective in substance when students, irrespective of backgrounds, can engage with issues, express their opinion, respect dissenting views, and challenge the elites. Not to forget that education is a vital human right that interacts with other rights. Higher education is deeply connected with developing the capacity to enjoy the freedom of thought, speech and expression. Empowering students to step in and experience their rights and responsibilities is crucial to their progress as individuals. In the process, it will benefit the democratic health of the institutions. Institutions must try to bring sensitivity and educate students to question all forms of social injustice. Behavioural change to respectfully look at others who are different can come only with learning to internalise the values of democracy.

Attainment of diversity in terms of access is only the first step. Unless democratic values can enter the classrooms and students can see themselves as actors and leaders in creating the change, institutions will be unable to realise their role in social transformation. To propose a framework for diversity initiatives for India, we must observe more comprehensive experiences.

**Student Diversity as a Resource for Civic Learning: International Experiences<sup>1</sup>**

Across countries in the late 20th century, student diversity on college campuses increased rapidly due to the expansion of higher education systems. This section will first reflect on why student diversity on college campuses is viewed as a resource for civic learning and a means to strengthen democracy. It shall highlight the impact of diversity initiatives implemented by various countries into the curriculum and in educationally purposeful activities.

### **Student diversity and racial relations in the US**

US higher education has undergone increased student diversity since the middle of the 1960s. Student diversity increased as a result of multiple reasons. The US Supreme Court supported student diversity in higher education at a time when affirmative action policies in college admissions were being challenged. The decision stated that 'diversity promotes learning outcomes, provides skills for a global marketplace, creates a diverse officer corps vital to national security, and serves as a path to diverse leadership' (*Grutter v. Bollinger* 539 U.S. 306, 2003). The passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the *Brown* decision led to a drastic increase in the presence of racial minorities in institutions of higher learning (Smith *et al.*, 2002). A significant challenge emerging from these changes was the co-existence of a diverse student body which led to rising racial/ethnic campus violence on higher education campuses with a dominant white population (*ibid*). Racial relations on campuses continued to remain in a state of crisis.

### **Approaches to improve racial relations in institutions**

The problem of inter-group tensions was mainly a result of stereotypes and misinformation about groups, particularly minority groups. Scholars and educators have identified three main approaches to address the issue. These were: enlightenment programmes that provided knowledge about other groups to increase inter-group understanding; inter-group contact programmes which provided opportunities for members of different groups to interact with each other in controlled settings; and skill programmes to manage differences peacefully and collectively solve public problems. Many educational programmes were thus created to improve race relations on college campuses. The purpose of such reforms was to identify transformational elements that would lead to the retention of minorities (Smith, 1997). Over time, hundreds of colleges, universities, and community colleges started working together to bring diverse narratives of communities into the curriculum, make campus life constructively inter-cultural, and engage in partnerships with the wider community.

### ***Diversities' positive impact on students***

Many studies have discussed how interaction with diverse peers can reduce prejudice and other harmful behaviour among students. For example, the Michigan Student Survey (MSS) at the University of Michigan and the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), covering 11,383 students from 184 institutions, found that diversity experiences positively affected students' cognitive learning and democratic outcomes. The surveys were carried out with students who entered college in 1985 and after four years. The learning outcome included intellectual self-confidence, artistic work creation, and the motivation to understand human behaviour. The democratic outcomes included the motivation of students to participate in activities that affect society, that is, civic engagement, consideration of other people's perspectives and views, and understanding of how values in life were common between their own racial/ethnic group and other groups (that is the compatibility of differences). More recently, Mijs, in his study of a nationally representative sample of 14,000 students across 99 US colleges, found that colleges, where students interacted with those from a different social group, were more concerned with racial and income inequality (Mijs, 2017).

### ***Diversity outcomes in improving campus climate***

For the positive effects on the campus environment of the presence of diversity to be realised, studies have suggested focusing on the quality of interactions (Pike and Kuh, 2006). For example, Pike and Kuh's 2006 study used a sample of 305 nationally represented institutions, including variations in the type of institution, the courses offered, numerical diversity, and the perceived campus environment. The study found that while students attending liberal arts colleges had a higher scope of informal interaction because of higher student diversity, a supportive curriculum that promotes understanding and enables interaction with diverse groups, using non-violent communication skills was essential.

### ***Pedagogy and Courses***

The three important pedagogical methods that can help develop capacities for unprejudiced

interaction and promote a long-term intercultural consciousness are inter-group dialogues (interaction with diverse peers), informal peer interactions and diversity awareness workshops. (Antonio, 2001; Gurin *et al.*, 2002; King and Magolda, 2005). Prejudice was lower in students who completed a diversity course, specifically addressing race and gender issues. It effectively promoted racial understanding and improved students' inter-group tolerance (Gurin *et al.*, 2002). The scope of interactions affected majority and minority student communities as these experiences determined students' attitudes and feelings towards other groups. Various studies found that frequent interactions among students and skills of interaction were the most important in developing cultural knowledge and intercultural consciousness.

The above studies have shown that campus initiatives can make students more culturally aware, provide new perspectives, and help them examine their own experiences. To sustain long-term benefits, young people must develop civic engagement skills, which will not only help them to participate in the development but will also make them the "vanguard of transformations and help reduce forms of inequalities" (Etra *et al.*, 2010: 4).

## **Approaches and Methods to Promote Civic Learning<sup>2</sup>**

Higher education for civic learning has three main components: knowledge, skill, and action for democratic engagement. In this section, we will discuss the details of each, which we have discussed briefly in the previous sections.

### **Knowledge component**

Building the students' knowledge base in higher education institutions is essential to civic learning.

The knowledge reform includes content that makes students aware of society's problems and sensitises them to the issues. Curriculum content could consist of concepts and examples that challenge the mainstream academic knowledge that may have dominated the education curriculum. The introduction of the *Bystander Intervention* programme has been identified in the literature to reduce sexual violence. The intervention aims to prepare students as agents whose actions can reduce the risk of sexual violence committed by others, toward others. Through this educational approach, the

responsibility for reducing sexual violence is extended beyond the victim and perpetrator and includes the entire campus community (Kleinasser *et al.*, 2015).

Diversity courses which relate to themes dealing with diversity, inequalities, poverty, or discrimination associated with social belonging and colour may be included. Such types of diversity courses can be prepared with content from a variety of cultures and groups. These can illustrate key concepts and theories from various disciplines. These diversity courses could be imparted to all students irrespective of their field.

**Skill component** The second component is to develop capabilities and skills among the students to engage in critical thinking and take democratic action based on thoughtful review. Skills that develop students' competencies to clarify their thinking logically (mindful thinking), consider the extreme of two steps, defend their choices and base their actions on compassion (concern for others) and rational assessment of a situation. This will prepare just and humane citizens because when they learn to weigh decisions with compassion, it will help to interrupt one's thoughts about its likely impact on stigmatised groups.

Developing such skills require new pedagogical methods and teaching strategies, such as inter-group dialogue and mixed-peer groups for undertaking assignments. Such methods offer opportunities for interactions with each other and learning to understand and respect differences. These pedagogical methods can help promote multicultural friendship, inter-group communication and mutual interaction. Opportunities should be created for students of diverse groups to interact and discuss in a spirit of respect.

**Action component** The third component is to motivate students to take action to achieve greater public good, for example, through participating in community engagement activities. The new pedagogical ways could include assignments and engagement with deprived groups and minorities. Being involved in community engagement assignments is also known to help in the practice of developing compassion and working in a pluralistic society.

The knowledge, skill and value of care are expected to enhance the "civic capital" among the youth for enhanced citizenship. As a result of the wide scope of civil

learning, there is still work to be done on how to operationalise civil learning. The domain, abilities and outcomes in Panel A are grouped for the benefit of understanding, but they may have several overlaps. The following is an indicative list present in Panel A:

Panel A: Civic Learning Methods		
Domain	Method	Abilities/ Outcomes
Knowledge	a. Introduce a special course that builds a multi-disciplinary base to understand citizenship. b. Introduce liberal studies concepts of race, class, gender, caste, sexual orientation and other social diversities. c. Include a curriculum that focuses on diversity, discrimination, inequalities, prejudices and inclusion. d. Perspectives and practices of various social groups and cultures must be referred to in-class discussion. e. Introduce a Bystander Intervention programme to reduce sexual violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive dimension of understanding</li> <li>• Comprehension</li> <li>• Recall</li> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Analysis</li> </ul>
Skills	f. Create a platform for inter-group dialogues and conduct mixed group activities. g. Conduct debates and workshops on political, social and global issues. h. Exposure to everyday practices across cultures and communities. i. Provide spaces for planning various stakeholders group within the institution (gender, backward social groups, environment etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical thinking</li> <li>• Empathy (care &amp; compassion)</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Social Competency</li> <li>• Leadership</li> </ul>

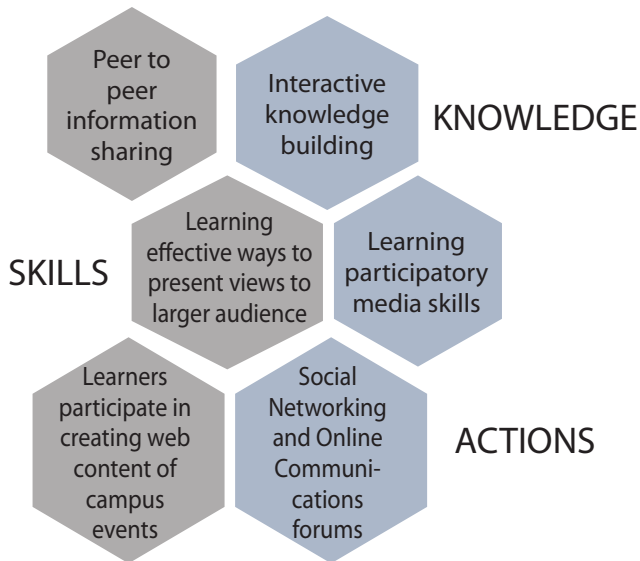
Domain	Method	Abilities/ Outcomes
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>j. Draw the institution's attention to concerns raised in the stakeholder's groups for actions</li> <li>k. Create awareness and sensitise the public on immediate social concerns.</li> <li>l. Volunteering to involve in neighbourhood issues through projects like developing community radio.</li> <li>m. Participate in local Anganwadi and senior citizens centres.</li> <li>n. Intern with NGOs, activist groups, lawyers collectives, etc.</li> <li>o. Collaborate with private/industry in realising the social responsibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy</li> <li>• Planning-Implementation</li> <li>• Care</li> <li>• Commitment</li> </ul>

Source: Prepared by Authors; Partly drawn from Sabharwal and Malish, 2016b: 54-55

### **Civic learning and virtual networks**

Institutions give a physical space for students to interact. However, students today in the information age are connected with digital media and social networking. Studies have found that there are marked generational differences in the styles of affiliations. Authors have started recognising 'the civic potential of the online environment' and that 'it is clear that digital media and web networks offer great potential for reinvigorating youth participation' (Benett *et al.*, 2008: 24). Universities and higher educational institutes must start exploring and have an innovative approach for involving young citizens in civic actions through online learning spaces.





**Figure 6: Civic learning in the digital information age**

*Source:* (prepared by authors)

Finally, this module does not suggest that higher education institutions implement a single required civic course as that would hardly be sufficient. Instead, the goal here is far more ambitious. The goal is to adopt practices and standards that can be measured over time to indicate whether institutions and their students are becoming more civic-minded. Adapting from AACU (2011: 15), this module presents four elements of a civic-minded campus in Figure 8. The four elements in a civic-minded campus include:

- fostering of civic ethos that governs campus life,
- make civic literacy a goal for every graduate,
- integrate civic inquiry within majors and general education, and
- advance civic action as a lifelong practice.

Students are presented with various opportunities for diverse socio-cultural experiences inside and outside the classroom; being encouraged to participate constructively with diverse others and work collectively to address common

problems can enhance leadership skills, confidence building and exploring ways of decision-making among students. These only depend on the commitment of faculty and institutional leaders to creating such enabling conditions. Finally, the institutions must view student diversity as a resource that can help the growth of cognitive abilities and enhance democratic values in young adults who enter colleges.

#### CIVIC ETHOS governing campus life

The infusion of democratic values into the customs and habits of everyday practices, and interactions; the defining character of the institution and those in it that emphasizes open-mindedness, civility, the worth of each person, ethical behaviours, and concern for the well-being of others; a spirit of public-mindedness that influences the goals of the institution and its engagement with communities.

#### CIVIC LITERACY as a goal for every student

The cultivation of foundational knowledge about fundamental principles and debates about democracy; familiarity with global themes, societal problems, and human needs; the ability to think critically about complex issues and to seek and evaluate information about issues that have public consequences.

#### CIVIC INQUIRY integrated within the majors and general education

The practice of inquiring about the civic dimensions and public consequences of a subject of study; the deliberate consideration of differing points of views; the ability to describe and analyse civic intellectual debates within one's major or areas of study.

#### CIVIC ACTION as lifelong practice

The capacity and commitment both to participate constructively with diverse others and to work collectively to address common problems; the practice of working in a pluralistic society and world to improve the quality of people's lives and the sustainability of the planet; the ability to analyse systems in order to plan and engage in public action; the moral and political courage to take risks to achieve a greater public good.

### **Figure 7: A civic-minded campus may look like this**

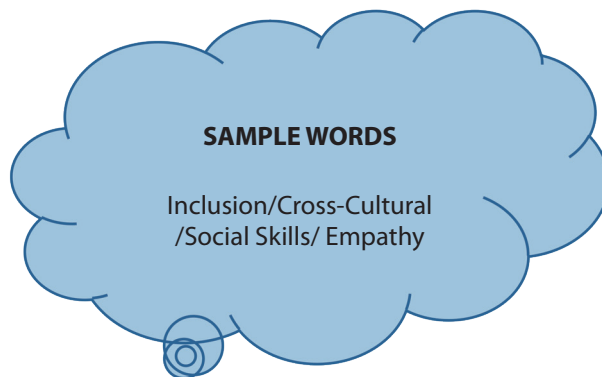
(Source: Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) (2011). *Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*. Washington, DC. P 15).

## Practical Exercises

**Aim:** The aim of the following exercises (1-3) is to know if freedom and compassion are valued on the campus and to engage with skills of discussing multiple viewpoints.

### Exercise 1: Multiple Views: One Word

1. Pick up a word from the above text. Choose the word which you think needs more discussion for clarification.
2. Each participant must write on a sheet of paper how they understand the meaning of the word.
3. Each participant must read aloud individually, and all must listen carefully.
4. The facilitator can summarise the exercise by highlighting common and diverse thoughts.



### Exercise 2: Case Studies Discussion

- The facilitator can draw up case studies that appear to have a content of harassment (any form). Try to include variation. These cases could be drawn up from complaints available in the institution or any other source. Do maintain the anonymity of cases.
- Cases must be read out to the participants.

- After hearing the case/s, the participants should be asked to write down responses from the list they feel as citizens.
- Open the responses of each case; the facilitator could summarise the responses by checking how many responses were active and how many were passive. Maintain anonymity.
- Finally, close the session after discussing the trend of responses in the session.

### **Exercise 3: Measuring Perceptions**

- The facilitator can prepare a list of statements on what may indicate perceptions on the campus. The statements should be brief and specific.
- Read at least 4-5 statements, and each person must decide their position of agreement or disagreement on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 as complete disagreement to 5 as complete agreement).
- Ask participants to explain their position, mainly those whose positions are extremely different from most other participants.
- Measure the perceptions by writing the average scale achieved in each statement.
- The facilitator/s can close the session by analysing the campus's openness to freedom and compassion with individuals.

#### **Sample statements**

- Female students feel comfortable to wear the attire of their choice.
- Male students are more active in participating in late-hour extra-curricular activities.
- Some have experienced frequently in campus derogatory words being used for stereotyping cultures.
- Students who can speak good English get more encouragement.
- No attention paid to difficulties faced by the physically challenged.

## Exercise 4: Actions for Civic Learning (Adapted from AACU 2011)

**Aim:** This exercise aims to prompt planning and easily implemented actions for civic learning to become an expected part of every college student’s academic and campus life experience (AACU, 2011).

The facilitator can begin by the reflective questions listed below:

- What single recommendation in the framework for civic learning (knowledge, skills, action) would you like to suggest and work to implement in the coming year? What collaborations have to be established to accomplish that?

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- What is already in place as signature civic enterprises with positive outcomes at your institution?

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- In scanning the range of potential stakeholders committed to strengthening democracy and civic responsibility, what persons or entities might you newly engage?

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- What is one way your institution fosters civic responsibility through your existing programs?

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- Determine what structures are in place to mobilise sustained action to pursue your institution’s goal of educating for civic responsibility. Determine which structures need to be developed to accomplish your goal.

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### Notes

1. This section draws on the CPRHE Research Paper 3, titled Student Diversity and Civic Learning in Higher Education, 2016, written by the lead author of this module. Reference is added in the reference list.
2. The same as above.

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