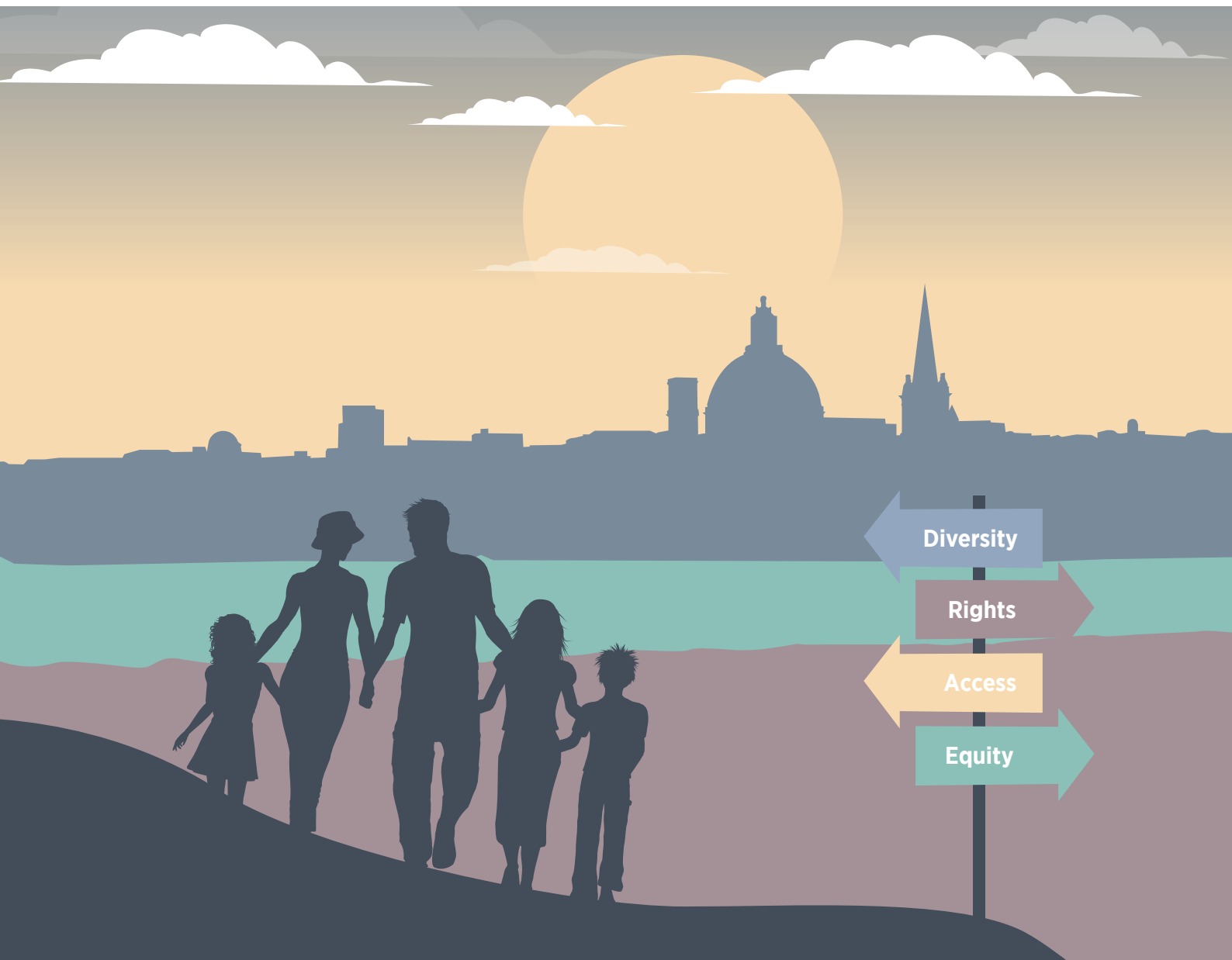


A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools

Route to Quality Inclusion



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Published in 2019



MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT



Hon. Evarist Bartolo MP
Minister for Education & Employment

The national policy documentations *A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion* and *A National Inclusive Education Framework* give a comprehensive, structured and harmonised guide to educators, professionals and parents in the passage towards a more effective and efficient education system. Inclusion, inclusive education and inclusive practices are fundamental for an operative and effective education system. We believe that it is the duty of the Government and society at large to ensure that all citizens are given equitable prospects and experiences through an inclusive education that is designed to meet the strengths and needs of each individual child and young person. The document *A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion* through its four benchmarks presents key areas towards a valued inclusion that is accessible and equitable for all. This national policy is also viewed as a transformational process that is intertwined into ten themes that are presented in the *National Inclusive Education Framework*. The said framework develops a holistic and applied approach towards the implementations of inclusive education practices. Both documents support stakeholders working at the Ministry for Education and Employment, colleges and schools in becoming superior advocates of inclusion and inclusive education practices.

We encourage you to join us in this aspiring venture as we seek a more inclusive education system where everyone is valued, accepted and encouraged to thrive.



Dr Francis Fabri
Permanent Secretary

Inclusive Education is at the forefront of the Ministry for Education and Employment. It is the mission of the Ministry to develop an education system that is committed to encourage schools to maintain an inclusive, democratic, equitable, supportive and safe learning environment that is free from harassment, discrimination, segregation, prejudice, labelling, categorisation and exclusion. *A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion* and *A National Inclusive Education Framework* is committed in consolidating the four broad goals established in the *Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2014*. These policy documents aim to reduce the gaps in educational outcomes, increase participation of learners, support educational achievement of all children and young people and raise the student attainment levels.

These policy documents compliment the new secondary education reform *My Journey: Achieving through different paths*. This promotes a transformation of academic, vocational and applied learning programmes from the 'one size fits all' system to an inclusive and equitable learning system for all learners.

Our vision is for Maltese Society to become truly an inclusive community – a society in which belongingness, equity, diversity and rights play a major role within our education system. Likewise it is our determination to empower all citizens by a personalised and an inclusive educational system.



Maria McNamara
Director General

Every child and young person benefits from involvement in learning contexts that endeavour for quality, recognise and celebrate diversity, and are culturally and socially responsive. The success of this system depends on high quality leadership, teaching and learning, the engagement of parents and communities, and the ability of learners to choose meaningful learning pathways starting from the early years and throughout their life course. It is timely for us to revisit the ways in which we support children and young people to ensure that they all benefit from high quality provision.

These policy documents set the direction for a stepped approach to strengthen the current provision so that it meets the needs of all children, young people and their families in feeling included and supported. The ten themes selected in the framework will support schools to create true inclusive learning-friendly environments. The Directorate of Educational Services is committed to implement these two policy documents in our educational settings for the benefit of all educators, children, young people, parents and Maltese society.

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Terminology and Acronyms

1.1 TERMINOLOGY

Barriers	Refers to factors in a person's environment that, through their absence or presence, limit functioning and create disability (WHO, 2001)
College	Refers to a cluster of Primary, Middle and Secondary schools in the State Education Sector in Malta.
Continuous Professional Education	Refers to training of educators in order to update and enhance their knowledge and skills
Disability	Refers to a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder one's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (Equal Opportunities Act, Act XXIV of 2016).
Diversity	Refers to differences or dimensions that can be used to differentiate groups and individual persons from one another, including body appearance, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, social class, level of education, religion, work experiences, life styles and cultures and being sensitive to emerging diversities and needs.
Educators	Refers to members of the Senior Management Team (SMT), Teachers, Kindergarten Educators and Learning Support Educators (LSEs) working with learners in educational settings including Child Care Centres, Kindergarten, Primary, Middle, Secondary and Post-Secondary Schools, Resource Centres, Learning Support Centres, Alternative Learning Centres and any other educational institution.
Equity	Equity is about ensuring that there is a concern with fairness, such that the education of all learners is seen as having equal importance (UNESCO, 2017.p.13)
High quality education	Refers to a system that serves all learners in such a way that it prepares them for their future. In so doing it makes provisions for a relevant curriculum, appropriate assessment, high quality teaching, collegial leadership and accountability to peers and families. High quality education has high expectations for all.
Inclusive education	Refers to the valuing and acceptance of diversity, to its value and the rights of learners to not only attend mainstream schools, but also to belong as valued members through active participation and the elimination of the barriers limiting the participation and achievement of all learners, respect diverse needs, abilities and characteristics.
Inclusive Learning-Friendly Environment (ILFE)	Refers to a learning environment which provides the optimal conditions for effective learning and teaching to take place. Such an environment welcomes, nurtures and educates all learners regardless of their gender, physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other characteristics (UNESCO, 2015).

Individualised Education Plans (IEP)	Refers to the planning for individual learner needs and the process of planning, implementing and evaluating a curriculum programme as well as the holistic development of the learner.
Inter-cultural education	Refers to any form of education that acknowledges and fosters cultural pluralism, i.e. culture in the broadest possible sense, encompassing differences in ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, social class, religion and education. It is founded on the principle of educational equity for all learners.
Learners	Refers to all children who are attending Child Care Centres, Kindergarten, Primary, Middle, Secondary and Post-Secondary Schools, Resource Centres, Learning Support Centres, Alternative Learning Centres and any other educational institution. This policy uses the term “learner” because this term places a certain degree of responsibility for learning on behalf of the individual (Bray & McClaskey, 2014). However, there are many other factors that influence learning and the role of educators and learners together can lead to more effective outcomes.
Parent	Refers to the biological or legal guardians of the learner attending the school.
School	Refers to all State, Church and Independent Child care centres, Primary schools, Middle and Secondary schools, and other educational centres.
School community	Refers to the Senior Management Team, educators, support professionals and staff members who work in a school, the learners who attend the school and their parents and families, broader social community and organizations that have a stake in the education of learners.
School Management Team (SMT)	Refers to school leaders (Head of School and Assistant Head/s of School) working in a particular school, also in liaison with Head of Departments and Head of Department Inclusion. This term also refers to Learning Support Centre Coordinators.
Support structures and services	Refers to specialised settings and specialised professionals (college based or private) who offer services to learners through screening, early intervention and throughout compulsory schooling. Ideally, these services are offered in class with professionals in consultation with educators, working in transdisciplinary teams.
Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	Refers to a concept that rather than adapting or changing learners to best fit curriculum (curriculum as defined by: goals, materials, methods and assessments), UDL focuses on how to build flexible learning environments that prioritise access for all, from the point of design, rather than as an afterthought, through multiple means of engagement, representation of content knowledge, and action and expression. (Meyer, Rose & Gordon, 2014) UDL provides multiple means of engagement, representation and expression (Salend, 2011).
Whole-School Development Plan (SDP)	Refers to the procedure whereby schools implement and manage change to enhance quality. This planning emerges from a system of ongoing self-evaluation that enables schools to set priority targets in all areas of school life, set up a plan of action which is regularly reviewed and through it establish ways of consultation with, and involvement of different stakeholders.

1.2 ACRONYMS

CPD	Continuous professional development
ESL	English as a Second Language
EU	European Union
IE	Inclusive Education
IEP	Individualised Education Planning
ILFE	Inclusive Learning Friendly Environment
LSE	Learning Support Educator
MEDE	Ministry for Education and Employment
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
SDP	School Development Planning
SEBD	Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
SMT	School Management Team
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organisation

Background and Context

2

2.1 LOCAL DIMENSION

A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion is developed within the context of the *Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024* (MEDE, 2014a), the philosophy outlined in the *National Inclusive Education Framework* (MEDE, 2019) and the values promoted through the *Respect for All Framework* (MEDE, 2014b). The latter encompasses the four fundamental pillars of learning adopted from UNESCO (1996) which are key for teaching and learning and curriculum design for the 21st century: Learning to know, Learning to do, Learning to live together and Learning to be. These pillars will ensure that learners will attain the necessary knowledge of values and acquire the necessary skills for employability, to become active citizens and participate in the community.

This policy delivers the principles of inclusion and diversity that underpin the commitment taken by the *National Curriculum Framework for all* (MEDE, 2012) as it promotes the conviction that all learners should experience success through equitable access to master learning. The policy embraces the concept, values and principles of Inclusive Education into the realm of responding positively to *all* learners' diversity. It views individual differences as opportunities for enriching learning (UNESCO, 2005) by providing every learner with the necessary knowledge, skills, competences and attributes for active citizenship and employability.

A Policy on Inclusive Education for schools: Route to Quality Inclusion also offers a comprehensive and holistic definition of Inclusive Education. This will bring together all educators and practitioners, learners, families and community members who create colleges and schools that are conducive to learning, thereby giving all learners the education they need. Inclusive Education is, therefore, defined in accordance to the conclusion of the Council of the European Union (2017, p3) as a philosophy, process and implementation that should cover all aspects of education and should be:

“Available and accessible to all learners of all ages, including those facing challenges, such as those with special needs or who have a disability, those originating from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, migrant backgrounds or geographically depressed areas or war-torn zones, regardless of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion of belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.”

The policy adopts a whole school approach philosophy to provide a planned and systematic way of how schools are to develop conducive learning environments for all learners. Inclusive Education is conceived as a way to ensure that the needs of all the learners are being properly accommodated (Kiuppis, 2014). Hence the policy offers flexibility to schools to transform existing pedagogical, personal and professional beliefs, attitudes and discourse, as well as re-design processes and practices in a manner that respond effectively to *all* learners' needs and social realities. There needs to be a commitment to ensure an Inclusive Education System that reflects the constitutional right of all learners to have access to inclusive education, in inclusive classrooms where they may access the general curriculum. This will ensure an equitable and accessible education through a learning environment which is flexible to respond to how learner learn.

2.2 INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

This policy draws on a number of international commitments to the provision of Education for all to which Malta is a signatory, including: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and United Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). These policies compel the implementation of Inclusive Education systems through educational policies with effectiveness, efficiency and equity being considered as underpinning aspects in ensuring quality education to learners (Watkins & Ebersold, 2016). Specifically Article 24 of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities identifies that education should be accessible without any discrimination, on the basis of equitable opportunities within an Inclusive Education systems at all levels. The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, in its position on Inclusive Education Systems, has the ultimate vision to ensure that all learners are provided with meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities in their local community, alongside their friends and peers (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2016. p2)

Moreover, Inclusion in Education is recognised as a basic human right together with the foundation and necessary for a more just and equal society (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012). Equity has been a major force internationally, which underpins the movement towards a more inclusive educational system and the concept in which inclusion is implemented (Forlin, 2012). Equity in an education system has two dimension - fairness and inclusion. Equitable education systems are fair and inclusive and support learners to reach their learning potential without either formally or informally erecting barriers or lowering expectations (Schleicher, 2014). An Inclusive Education system is implemented as an endeavour to achieve no-discrimination in education (Poernomo, 2016).

Policy Aims and Goals

3.1 POLICY AIMS

A Policy on Inclusive Education for schools: Route to Quality Inclusion aims to empower and inform all education providers to:-

- create clarity around the concept of inclusion by widening the spectrum of concerns and discourses to all possible forms of diversity;
- foster school cultures and environments that are safe, secure and motivating to all learners, as well as to members of the school community members to further their development and well-being;
- foster school environments that acknowledge, celebrate and further develop the strengths of *all* learners;
- ensure collective responsibility for the teaching and learning of all learners;
- nurture a collaborative culture among all educators, practitioners, learners, parents and members of the community to increase the 'sense of belonging' in all colleges and schools;
- promote educational sustainability to ensure the effective provision of quality education and support services.

3.2 POLICY GOALS

The overarching vision of *A Policy on Inclusive Education for schools: Route to Quality Inclusion* is to **ensure that all learners have access to quality instruction, intervention and support to experience success in learning within a high quality Inclusive Education system.** To achieve this vision, it is necessary to clearly define and reshape all educational services to respond to the diversity of needs of all learners in our school community.

The Policy purposefully has the following ten specific goals:

1. To anticipate, value and support diversity and learner differences.
2. To nurture a conviction among all educators and families that every learner has the capacity to learn and achieve with the appropriate educational strategies.
3. To create a sense of belonging for all learners and their families by developing a welcoming, understanding, caring, respectful and safe learning environments.
4. To hold high expectations commensurate with the potential of the learners and to provide meaningful and relevant learning experiences that maximise the potential of the learner.
5. To focus on strengths, promote established and successful practices and encourage individual initiatives.
6. To assume collective accountability for all students' learning by encouraging collaborative school cultures and climates whilst sustaining independent relationships.

7. To co-construct evidence-based solutions to respond to the needs of all learners.
8. To consider alternative educational routes to eliminate barriers within learning environments.
9. To discover flexible and responsive learning communities.
10. To highlight success to enhance motivation and autonomy among all educators and professionals supporting schools.

4

Principles

At its core, Inclusive Education is a provision committed to educate the whole range of learners with diversity in inclusive schools. School communities create a culture of collaboration in a landscape of mutual respect towards diversity and equality for all. Principles of Inclusion and Equity lie at the heart of this policy and this is evident when all learners form positive social relationships with other members of the learning community and become fully participating members of it.

All educators and professionals supporting schools should ensure that the following guiding principles are embedded in their practice:

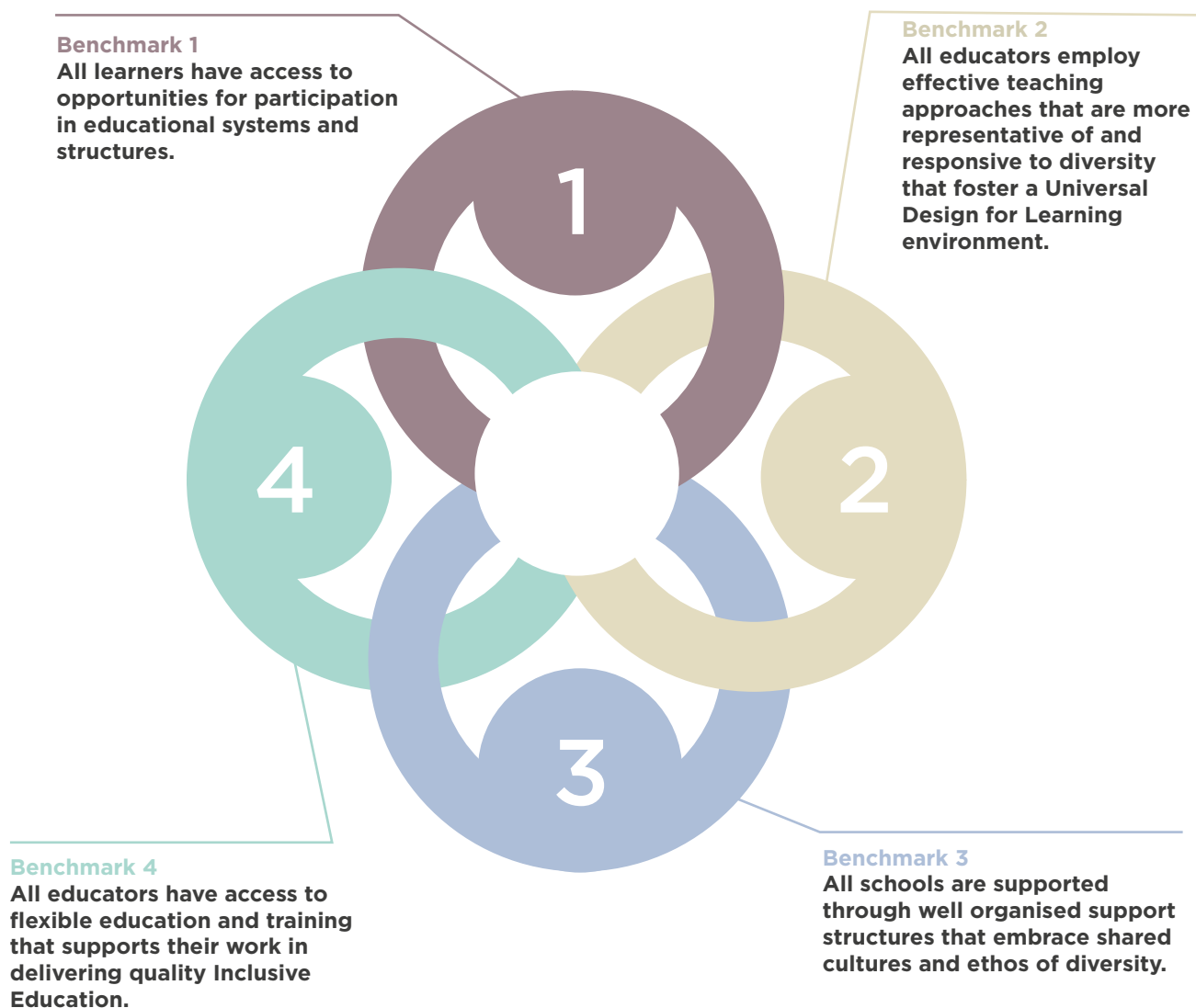
1. Diversity in learners is viewed and valued as integral to the human being and be considered as source of richness.
2. Schools have an inclusive orientation to eradicate discrimination, racism and exclusionary practices.
3. Learners have the right to quality education with equitable opportunities to access education.
4. Learners should not be excluded or discriminated against on the grounds of race, sex, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, colour, religion, ethnic origin, disability, learning preferences or other status.
5. Learners are recognised that they possess learning potential that should be upheld in the best conducive learning environment, therefore rejecting ability-labelling in teaching.
6. An educational system that adapts to the learners' needs (learner centred approach) rather than the learner adapting to the education system.
7. Educators are supported to engage with theories of learning with an understanding of how children learn and enhance learning by providing multiple means of engagement, representation of content, action and expression. A true differentiated curriculum which aslo has UDL principles as its foundation, seeks to create a flexible curriculum through which it is possible to accomodate every learner within an inclusive learning-friendly environment.
8. A wide and flexible range of responses are allowed in order to address the diverse needs of the learning community as well as patterns of development in learners.
9. Fulfill the responsibility that college/school resources have to be utilised exhaustively to support learners with diverse needs rather than over reliance on statementing procedures.

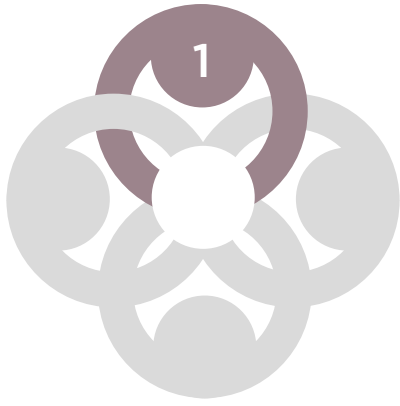
Policy Benchmarks

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2009, p.14) highlighted various recommendations for policy setting in quality Inclusive Education; it highlights three propositions on Inclusive Education which are

1. Inclusion and quality are reciprocal.
2. Access and quality are linked and are mutually reinforcing.
3. Quality and equity are central to ensuring inclusive education.

These main propositions are enshrined in this Inclusion policy and are reflected in the following benchmarks and respective explanation.

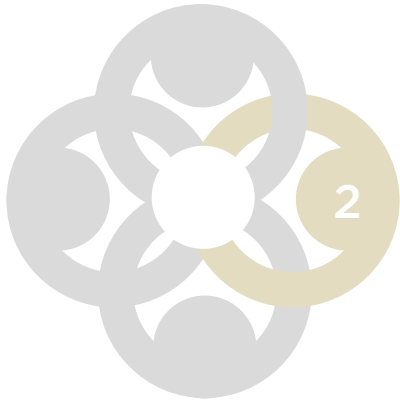




Benchmark 1

All learners have access to opportunities for participation in educational systems and structures.

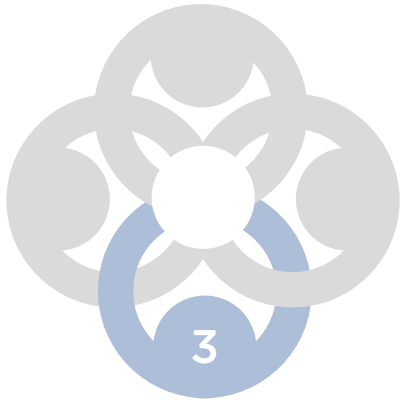
- 1.1. School communities to regard inclusion for a wider range of learners than those with disabilities. Learners who might be at risk of exclusion from educational opportunities need to be ensured equally meaningful learning access.
- 1.2. Specialised Centres, ideally within mainstream schools to serve as support particularly for learners with more challenges and at risk of exclusion. This includes support given by educators in Specialised centres to educators in mainstream schools.
- 1.3. Physical infrastructure of educational institutions are modified to be fully accessible and properly equipped to enhance opportunities for all learners, but above all to be built or modified on the principles of universal design.
- 1.4. Mobilising and ensuring resources for targeted excluded groups which also include supporting families to be part of the school and local community.



Benchmark 2

All educators employ effective teaching approaches that are more representative of and responsive to diversity that foster a Universal Design for Learning environment.

- 2.1. Co-operative teaching and learning whereby a team approach is used. Teachers work with learners and together with other educators, parents and multidisciplinary professionals and learners support each other through peer tutoring.
- 2.2. Regular review national syllabi and learning outcomes to ensure that content is sensitive, flexible and representative to the diversity of the Maltese society in its coverage.
- 2.3. Ensuring that assessment methods are aligned to ensure equity for all learners.
- 2.4. Ensuring that equipment and assistive devices required for learning are available to the learning community.
- 2.5. Ensuring deployment of HoD Inclusion in classrooms to promote and support diversity in the broad meaning.
- 2.6. Ensuring that educators are oriented in assessing the potential of the learner and detecting early signs of difficulties. It needs to be ensured that enough complementary support services are available to efficiently and effectively assess and provide strategies according to the needs. These include School psychologists, Occupational therapists, amongst others.
- 2.7. Identification of barriers to learning (be it short-term or more substantial, educational and/or social) may occur at any stage in the learner's time at school. Once those barriers are identified, it is imperative that appropriate support is provided to mitigate the difficulties.
- 2.8. Referral to Statementing Moderating Panel should only be carried out after the resources of the school have been exhausted and all recommendations given by professionals implemented and recorded. Referral shall be carried out according to the Criteria for Referral for Additional Support.



Benchmark 3

All schools are supported through well organised support structures that embrace shared cultures and ethos of diversity.

- 3.1. Coordinated support structures within the education sector as well as between different sectors (mainly education, health and social services) in order to promote inter-sectoral approach to facilitate linkage between them.
- 3.2. Coordinated support structures to prepare learners for transitions especially in Preschool, Primary, Secondary, Post-secondary, tertiary and employment.
- 3.3. Interdisciplinary approach employed in order to integrate knowledge of professional expertise to support learner's needs holistically.
- 3.4. The role of support services is not to provide support for learners with individual needs but to provide support to parents/guardians, educators and schools. Screening and needs assessment processes are implemented as intervention and preventative rather than a compensatory approach.



Benchmark 4

All educators have access to flexible education and training that supports their work in delivering quality Inclusive Education.

- 4.1. Educators would be prepared to work in Inclusive Education. This is also applicable to pre-service teachers training courses which should include training on inclusive education to deal with diversity in the classroom. Training should focus on providing a flexible learning environment that allows learners to engage in meaningful expert learning through multiple means of engagement, representation of content, action and expression. Training should also encompass working collaboratively with parents and families as well as working within a class team. This training will equip educators with relevant teaching and learning competencies and strategies to meet the needs of the learners.
- 4.2. Teacher training should include Disability Equality Training and also focus on specialisation in areas of diversity e.g. multiculturalism, profound and multiple difficulties etc. to maintain and develop specialist human resources to support educators in the mainstream classes. In addition, training should also be given to support teachers and LSEs in team work for full possible inclusion.
- 4.3. Designing and delivering practical and relevant CPD to educators to promote quality inclusion.
- 4.4. Ensuring that organisational and school leadership teams are sensitised and trained to understand and respond to diversity in order to develop their leadership skills and vision in line with promoting inclusive values.
- 4.5. Effective and collaborative use of support services including allied health practitioners, social workers, school psychologists, counsellors, youth workers and career advisors to identify needs and support learners and ensure that they are encouraged to perform to their full potential.
- 4.6. Educators are supported in applying concept of learner-centredness whereby emphasis is placed on more personalised approaches to teaching and learning.

6

Related Legislation and Local Documentation

6.1

European Convention on Human Rights' (1950). -The protocol outlines the right to education and the right to fair procedures to all, which the State has to guarantee.

European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe

DIRECTIVE (EU) 2016/2102 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 26 October 2016 on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies

DIRECTIVE (EU) 2017/1564 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 13 September 2017 on certain permitted uses of certain works and other subject matter protected by copyright and related rights for the benefit of persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print- disabled

Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning Text with EEA relevance.

6.2

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

The convention was ratified by Malta in 1990 and requires that the voice of the child is heard no matters that affect him, having regard to the age and maturity of the child.

6.3

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994).

The framework pointed out that educational change and progress in favour of inclusive education is more likely to occur if we recognize that difficulties experienced by pupils result from the way in which schools are currently organized and from rigid teaching methods.

6.4

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability

The Convention upholds and safeguards the inherent dignity of all persons with disabilities. It protects the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons with disabilities and is binding upon those countries which have ratified it.

6.5

UNESCO:

Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (2009).

The Right to Education: Law and Policy Review (2014).

Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (2015).

Global Citizenship Education. Topics and learning objectives (2015).

A Guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education (2017)

6.6

International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 13).

As a State party, Malta is required to ensure that all have access to education without any distinction. Education shall aim at fully developing the human personality, sense of dignity as well as strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Furthermore, Malta should promote understanding and respect for different sectors of society.

6.7

The Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2012 – 2015) and the Council of Europe Programme ‘Building a Europe for and with Children’ (2006 – 2008; 2009 – 2011).

Both the strategy and the programme recognised the need for support systems, including prevention programmes within school set up.

6.8

The Education Act (Cap. 327 of the Laws of Malta)

The law binds the Directorate for Educational Services with the duty to provide quality education to all learners irrespective of their age, gender, sex, ability, economic status, nationality, ethnicity, religion or faith, disability and/or political affiliations.

6.9

The Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act (Cap. 413 of the Laws of Malta)

The law states that all environments are to work towards the elimination of discrimination against people with disabilities, and that it is expected that schools make reasonable adjustments to accommodate such students, making sure they are not being discriminated against.

6.10

The Equality for Men and Women (Chapter 456 of the Laws of Malta).

The law provides protection against discrimination on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.

6.11

The Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act (2015).

The law provides for the recognition and registration of the gender of a person and regulates the effects of such a change, as well the recognition and protection of the sex characteristics of a person.

6.12

Gender Mainstreaming (OPM Circular No.15/2012)

6.13

The Child Protection (Alternative Care) Act (Act No. III of 2017)

This Act safeguards, protects and gives priority to the best interest of the child in all instances and to guarantee permanency of the children's future in the shortest possible time.

6.14

Tomorrow's schools. Developing Effective Learning Cultures (Ministry of Education 1995)

The National Minimum Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999)

Creating the Future Together (Ministry of Education, 1999)

The National Curriculum Framework (MEDE, 2012)

6.15

Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014 -2024: Sustaining foundations, creating alternatives, increasing employability (MEDE, 2014)

6.16

Respect for All Policy Framework (MEDE, 2014)

Addressing Attendance in Schools (2014)

Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools (2014);

Managing Behaviour in Schools (2015)

Whole School Approach to Healthy Lifestyle: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Policy (2015)

Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy (2015).

6.17

Education for All. Special Needs and Inclusive Education in Malta – External Audit Report. European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2014) on behalf of the Ministry for Education and Employment, Malta (MEDE, 2014).

6.18

A Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving in Malta (MEDE, 2014)

6.19

Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 (MEDE, 2014)

6.20

A National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo 2014-2019 (MEDE, 2014)

6.21

My Journey: Achieving through different paths

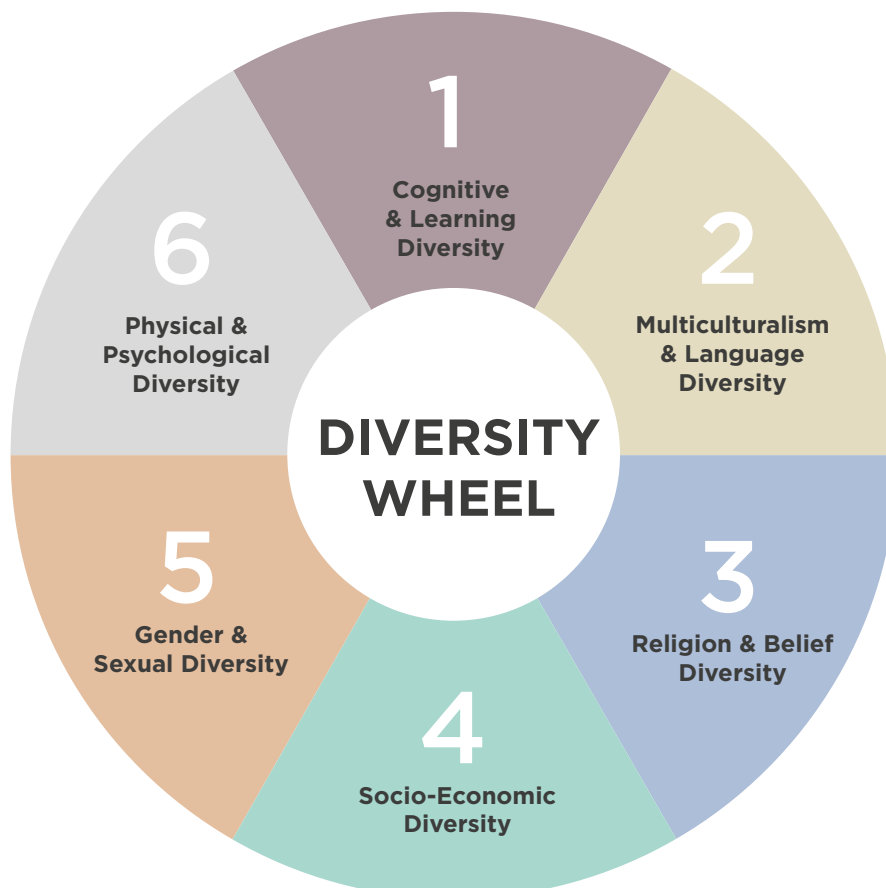
Cultivating Inclusive Education in our Schools

A definition of inclusion adopted in this policy is from UNESCO (2012, par.1) as it is consistent with the conceptualisation in the literature and enjoys wide international consensus.

“Education is not simply about making schools available for those who are already able to access them. It is about being proactive in identifying the barriers and obstacles learners encounter in attempting to access opportunities for quality education, as well as in removing those barriers and obstacles that lead to exclusion”

Besides adapting features of inclusion, schools need to be available to dismantle mechanisms and practices which are exclusionary in nature (Forlin, 2013). Inclusive Education has broadened in meaning, no longer concerning the learner, but how the system itself was constructed and what barriers could hinder the learner to access learning opportunities in the class. Once these multitude of barriers are identified mainstream education systems needs to establish environments and a school culture that is barrier free (Kiuppis, 2014).

In the local education system colleges and respective schools are transforming into inclusive settings with a required shift from a ‘one size fits all’ educational model towards a socially just education that aims to increase the system’s ability to respond to all learners’ diverse needs, as evident in the Diversity Wheel below:





Cognitive & Learning Diversity

- › **Learners with intellectual disability**
- › **Learners with Profound and Multiple Learning difficulties**
- › **Learners who are gifted, talented or manifest high ability**



Multiculturalism & Language Diversity

- › **Learners from ethnic minorities**
- › **Learners who need support to learn English and/or Maltese as an additional language**
- › **Asylum seekers**



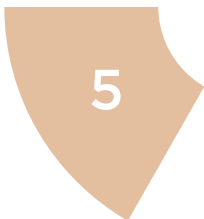
Religion & Belief Diversity

- › **Learners with different religions**
- › **Learners with various religious beliefs**



Socio-Economic Diversity

- › **Looked after children**
- › **Learners who are at risk of disaffection or exclusion**
- › **Learners at risk of poverty due to socio economic difficulties**



Gender & Sexual Diversity

- › **Learners of different genders**
- › **Learners with different sexual orientations**
- › **Learners of different gender identities and expressions**
- › **Learners with LGBTIQ parents**



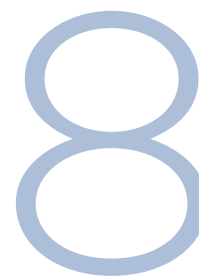
Physical & Psychological Diversity

- › **Learners with physical impairments**
- › **Learners with sensory impairments**
- › **Learners with emotional and behavioral challenges**

THEMES

The policy views inclusive education as a continuous developmental process focused on understanding of how children learn, identification and removal of barriers to learning and participation in all schools by facilitating organisational renewal and strengthening internal capacities. The transformation process is founded on 10 pillars/themes which are discussed in detail in *A National Inclusive Education Framework*. It aims at supporting school leaders to monitor the quality and standards in inclusive practice and identify strengths, school development priorities, staff training, improvements in teaching/learning strategies *etc.* for all identified themes and ways to enhance the inclusion process in schools. The following diagram shows the ten pillars/themes that will address the creation of a better inclusive learning friendly environment in schools:





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