

Guidelines on 'Hubs of Learning' through Cluster Approach consisting of Schools & Higher Education Institutions

INTRODUCTION

Peer learning and mentorship are two time-tested and established strategies for success. Adopting these methods at the institutional level can lead to holistic development of students and improvement in the quality of education. By establishing a face-to-face relationship among educational institutions (schools and higher education institutions) that are geographically closely situated, the teaching-learning ambience of all institutions across all the districts in the state can be greatly improved with uniformity and equity.

The concept of 'Hubs of Learning' through a cluster approach promises to be the platform for implementing this vision through a cluster approach.

The idea of clustering of schools and HEIs is aimed at ensuring collaboration and hand-holding among educational institutions across the state, at the school, undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Under this model, a few leading educational institutions, in terms of infrastructure and human resources, from different subdivisions in a district have been designated as 'Hubs', and a number of other institutions in geographical proximity to these 'Hub' schools and higher education institutions (HEIs) have been designated as 'Spoke' institutions.

Under this model, horizontal collaboration will take place among the 'Hub' and 'Spoke' schools/HEIs whereas vertical collaboration will take place among schools and HEIs of a particular cluster to facilitate exchange of infrastructure and human resources to facilitate the interest of students. The Hub institutions shall provide adequate leadership and academic mentorship to the Spoke institutions to facilitate a cooperative effort among the Spoke institutions for improvement of their educational and administrative standards. In this way, the Spoke institutions shall learn from each other's experiences and share their best practices, resources and infrastructure in the better interest of all stakeholders. Clusters of institutions would enable the partnering institutions to progressively share existing infrastructure and human resources and create new common facilities. Each cluster can have common research laboratories and libraries, research collaborations amongst the students and faculties, add-on courses, common cultural activities, common game and fitness facilities, residential camps, workshops, national international seminars, common book publication centres and so on. Higher education institutions as a cluster will be able to perform higher academic functions more effectively than what individual institutions can with limited investment and distributed resource allocation. While the Hub institutions are poised for leadership under

this setup, there may be certain instances under which they can benefit from the practices being adopted in the Spoke institutions. Thus, such a platform can be symbiotically beneficial for all institutions involved.

OBJECTIVES

1. Partnership among schools and higher education institutions
2. Sharing of infrastructure and human resource
3. Collaborative learning and capacity-building for faculty as they can teach, train and research in multi-disciplinary academic programmes
4. Improving efficiency of teachers and quality of school administration and governance
5. Rejuvenating single-stream higher education institutions with poor enrolment
6. Providing better opportunities and facilities to students and faculty of all educational institutions in the state
7. Effective coverage of student related services as cultural activities, social service platforms and sports and game facilities
8. Enabling useful relations with the industry, financial and funding agencies
9. Effective use of CBCS (Choice Based Credit system) in the educational institutions with expanding the number of disciplines and subjects: Flexible cafeteria approach to curriculum with ample freedom to choose the course and subject of study
10. Promoting solidarity by facilitating joint conduct of various student and staff activities

SALIENT FEATURES

Formation of HUB and SPOKE clusters

- Composite clusters consisting of one university and several general degree colleges, technical colleges and schools shall be formed spanning the entire state. Initially, one cluster may be formed in each education district, to ensure better supervision and monitoring. A list of proposed initial clusters is developed along with this guideline. This list covers at least one cluster per district. District authorities may add additional clusters if necessary.
- The composite cluster shall consist of three Hub and Spoke networks: one for general degree colleges, one for technical colleges, and one for schools. Each of these three Hub and Spoke networks shall be mentored by a university.

District			
Cluster 1			(Cluster 2)
Mentoring University			
Hub College (General Degree College)	Hub College (Technical College)	Hub School	
Spoke College 1	Spoke College 1	Spoke School 1	
Spoke College 2	Spoke College 2	Spoke School 2	
...	

- The ‘Hub’ and ‘Spoke’ institutions of the different districts have to identify Nodal Officers in charge of this process of collaboration and mutual exchange.
- Each ‘Hub’ and ‘Spoke’ institution has to undergo the process of self-appraisal to evaluate their resources and capabilities in this exchange programme and map definite areas of strengths and weaknesses. Thereafter, through a process of mutual co-ordination between the District Administration, the ‘Hub’ and the ‘Spoke’ institutions, particular programmes of collaboration and mutual exchange—both vertical and horizontal—may be identified.
- The institutions around the Hub may be selected by the District Level Committee keeping in mind certain pre-specified criteria as stated below:
 - For schools, a State Government School should preferably act as the Hub school in every district. In the absence of a government school in the district, a reputed or renowned government sponsored/aided school may be considered as the Hub school. The Hub school should preferably be a higher secondary school and not below a secondary school. The Spoke schools should be Higher Secondary/Secondary schools with good performance either in Madhyamik/Higher Secondary examinations or favourable PTR or having relatively good infrastructure like, library, laboratory, e-learning etc.
 - Both General Degree Colleges and Technical Colleges of different districts can consider signing MOUs between themselves to facilitate mutual sharing of resources and infrastructure, including human resources essential in the teaching-learning process. These MOUs are very significant as they also contribute in improving the NAAC Accreditation Scores and NIRF Rankings of these colleges.
 - Medical Colleges, B.Ed. and Teachers’ Training Colleges, as well as Physical Educational Colleges and Vocational Colleges may be made part of this model of sharing of resources and infrastructure. Considering the fact that the emphasis in the current educational system is on acquiring multidisciplinary knowledge and industry-specific skillsets, this model can prove itself as effective in addressing the gap that exists between higher secondary schools, colleges and university-level education and the market-based skills essential for employability.
- All required administrative support shall be provided to the schools in the loop by the District level Committee.
- A school/HEI shall remain as the Hub school for at least two years. After which one of the Spoke schools/HEI shall become the Hub. Rotation of the Hub institutions shall be determined by the District level Committee.

Illustrative List of Activities that may be taken by the Hub & Spoke institutions

- **Exposure Visits**: Exposure Visits may be organised for furthering the process of vertical collaboration, where students from Secondary and Higher Secondary classes from schools of a particular cluster may visit the ‘Hub’ General Degree Colleges and Technical Colleges to provide themselves with preparatory exposure to the needs and demands of Higher

Education. These visits may introduce the different aspects of Undergraduate education to school students and allow them to familiarise themselves with libraries, laboratories playgrounds, infrastructure for organising co-curricular activities and events, etc.

- **Seminars:** Seminars may be organised by General Degree Colleges and Technical Colleges, both towards meeting the demands of the teaching-learning process and the purpose of developing awareness and sensitization about emergent sub-fields, specific domains of application, preliminary knowledge of the demands of industry, etc, particularly aimed at outgoing batches of schools students at the higher secondary level. Lecturers from HEIs may conduct such seminars in the Hub school and all Spoke schools may attend the same.
- **Career Counselling Sessions, Vocational Courses, Soft Skills:** To improve the scope of employability of students enrolled in Higher Education and in the final phase of School education, career counselling sessions, vocational courses and activities for imparting computer knowledge and Soft Skills (such as fluency in spoken English, Computer Knowledge) must be encouraged.
- **Training for Competitive Examinations:** The 'Hub and Spoke' model may be utilised to promote workshops for training for different State and National level competitive examinations such as Civil Service (WBCS/IAS) Training, training for Joint Entrance Examination/ NEET, training for NET/SET Examinations, etc.
- **Projects:** Initiatives aimed at furthering co-ordination and camaraderie between Schools and HEIs of a particular cluster may also include shared assignments and projects. This activity may assist in properly gauging the varying standards of education among institutions of a particular cluster and be of help to those students who are lagging behind. For example, the Hub and Spoke institutions could collaborate to publish a shared e-magazine.
- **Sharing of Institutional Infrastructure:** Schools and HEIs of a particular cluster may share their infrastructure such as libraries, laboratories, playground, amenities of sports and games among themselves to extend their benefits to all students of the said cluster.
- **Teacher/ Faculty Exchange Programmes and Collaboration in Teaching-Learning:** To address the problem of widely varying student-teacher ratios across different Schools and HEIs, faculty exchange programmes where the best teachers of particular subjects/ disciplines in specific institutions may impart their knowledge to students of other institutions within the same cluster. In this regard, schools and HEIs have to identify specific subjects/ areas of strength and weaknesses to facilitate this exchange. Hub and Spoke schools may run teacher exchange programmes and collaborate on organising workshops for teacher capacity building.
- **Research Collaboration:** As the quality of research is an important criterion for improved NAAC-Accreditation Scores and NIRF Ranks, Hub and Spoke institutions of a particular cluster may collaborate towards the overall improvement of the same.
- **Refresher Courses:** Suggestions were received from some of the participating Schools (in a manner similar to the quality monitoring standards in Higher Education introduced by

the UGC) to initiate, if possible, a system of Refresher Courses at the school level to assess and improve the standards of teaching.

- **Community Knowledge Sharing Programmes:** The clusters may organise programmes where local experts from the community can share their knowledge and expertise with both teachers and students from other institutions.
- **Evening Courses:** Suggestions were received from some of the participating Technical Colleges to introduce Evening Courses for meeting the educational needs of students enrolled in Higher Education, who have to work during the day to earn their livelihood.
- **Motivational Talks/ Mentoring Sessions:** 'Hub' Schools and HEIs from a particular cluster can consider organising Motivational Talks/ Mentoring Sessions by successful students in competitive examinations such as JEE/NEET/GATE to students (aspirants) enrolled at the Higher Secondary level in schools from the same cluster.
- **Value Education:** Schools and HEIs of different clusters ought to include compulsory courses on Value Education to impart ethical and moral values among students at school, college and University levels towards making them better citizens of the country.
- **Promotion of Games and Sports, Cultural Activities, Workshops and Exhibitions:** Besides meeting the educational needs of students, the system of clustering may also be effectively used to promote inter-school and inter-college Games and Sports, as well as NSS and Cultural Activities. Quiz competition, debate competition, awareness and sensitisation programmes on issues of general and civic importance such as health, environmental awareness and ecological conservation, workshops, Joint Exhibitions etc. are some of the suggestions received from the participating schools and HEIs.
- **Promoting Industry-Academic Partnership:** Strong suggestions were received, particularly from a few General Degree and Technical Colleges for organising collaborative workshops and internships aimed at imparting essential industry-oriented and marketable skills among students enrolled in Higher Education.
- **Promoting Skill Development Courses and Vocational Learning:** Schools and HEIs of a particular cluster may consider offering Skill Development Courses and Vocational Learning initiatives such as organising/offering certificate and diploma courses on emerging areas of future employment and self-employment such as Cloud Computing, AI and Machine Learning, Yoga, Physiotherapy, Lifestyle, Tourism, Nutrition, etc.
- **Peer Learning:** Interaction of the School Management Committee/ Child cabinet/ Staff Council/ Academic Council to share and learn the best practices/ efforts/ initiatives of one another. Co-planning of curricular transaction, preparation of common question papers and evaluation of answer scripts by subject teachers of other schools of the Hub.

MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEES

Monitoring and implementation shall be done by the committees and task forces formed at different levels.

- The State level Committee shall provide overall guidance for the programme.
- The District level Committees shall oversee the policy level issues of the programme within their districts.
- The Cluster level Task Forces shall handle the implementation of the programme for all institutions within their clusters.
- The Hub level Task Forces shall handle the day-to-day implementation of the programme for hubs of HEIs and schools respectively.

State level Committee

The state level committee will guide the district level committees on the implementation of the program and develop a mechanism for monitoring the progress. The committee will meet once every quarter.

Members

1. ACS/Principal Secretary/Secretary, School Education Department
2. ACS/Principal Secretary/Secretary, Higher Education Department
3. Commissioner, Directorate of School Education – *Member Convenor*
4. State Project Director, Paschim Banga Samagra Shiksha Mission
5. One officer of Higher Education Department, not below the rank of Joint Secretary – *Jt. Member Convenor*
6. Vice Chairman (Academic), West Bengal State Council of Higher Education (WBSCHE) – *Member*
7. President, West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education (WBCHSE)
8. President, West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE)
9. 1-2 Vice Chancellors of State Aided Universities to be nominated by HED/ State Government
10. 1-2 Principals of Government/Govt. Aided Colleges to be nominated by HED/State Government
11. 1-2 Principals of Government Model Schools to be nominated by SED/State Government
12. 1 senior officer from School Education Department
13. 1 representative from Health and Family Welfare Department, not below the rank of Joint Secretary
14. 1 representative from Agriculture Department, not below the rank of Joint Secretary
15. 1 representative from Fisheries Department, not below the rank of Joint Secretary
16. 1 representative from Rural Development Department, not below the rank of Joint Secretary
17. 1 representative from Technical Education Department, not below the rank of Joint Secretary

District level Committee

The district level committee shall guide the cluster level committees and task forces at the HEI and School level. The committee shall take policy decisions on issues raised in the monthly report and

forward a compiled monthly report of the district to the state level committee. The District Level Committee may include other members, if they feel so. The committee will meet initially once in a month, later on, every quarter.

Members

1. District Magistrate /Additional District Magistrate-in-charge of Education- Chairman
2. Registrar/VC nominee of University within the District,
3. Joint DPI, nominated by DPI – *Member Convenor*
4. Chief Medical Officer (CMO), or their representative, not below the rank of Deputy CMO
5. Superintendent of Police (SP), or their representative, not below the rank of ASP
6. 3/4 Principals/ HOIs of Govt / Govt Aided/ Private General Degree/ Technical College,
7. District Inspector of Schools (SE)
8. District Inspector of Schools (PE)
9. District Education Officer, SSM
10. Heads of the Institutions of Hub Institutions

Suggested Responsibilities

- Selection of Hub and Spoke institutions with reasoning
- Appointment of Nodal person at each Hub
- Approval of areas of exchange in Hub & Spoke institutions
- Identification of further details of activities at Hub & Spoke Schools

Cluster level Task Force

The Cluster level task forces shall handle the implementation of the programme for all institutions within their clusters. It shall lead all activities pertaining to contextualisation of the programme for their cluster's needs. The task force shall meet at least twice a month, or more, as necessary.

Members

1. Vice Chancellor or their representative
2. Registrar of the mentor university
3. Joint DPI, nominated by DPI – *Member Convenor*
4. Heads of Institutions of Hub HEIs and schools
5. 2-3 representatives from the Spoke HEIs and schools

Suggested Responsibilities

- Identification of HEIs for clustering.
- Identification of subject areas for clustering.
- Identification of infrastructure requirement.
- Sending reports to the District Level Committee.
- Coordinating with other University/ Lead and other HEIs within the cluster.
- Coordination and facilitation of interaction, as per the guidelines
- Identification of issues and problems
- Developing a strategic plan for addressing the identified issues, and also referring the issues to the higher level for timely intervention.

- Interacting with the student/ guardians.
- Organizing exposure visits to Universities/ other HEIs/ Research institutions.
- Weightage of Credit point in the Syllabus / Curriculum may be introduced by the University for the students who will participate in the knowledge sharing process from HEI level to University.
- Guide the Hub and Spoke institutions to identify activities, monitor progress and extend assistance as may be required in achieving targets.

Hub level Task Forces (One for Schools and One for HEIs)

Two separate Hub level task forces shall be made, one for HEIs and for schools within the same cluster. These task forces shall handle the day-to-day activities and implementation of the programme for all institutions within their hubs. It shall also surface any requirements from the Spoke schools to the Cluster level task force. The task forces shall meet at least twice a month, or more, as necessary.

Members (College Task Force)

1. Principal / Head of Institution of Hub college
2. Heads of Institutions of all member Spoke colleges
3. Joint DPI, nominated by DPI – *Member Convenor*
4. 2-3 senior faculty from the Hub college
5. 4-5 representative members from Spoke colleges
6. 2 senior student members nominated from either Hub or Spoke colleges

Members (School Task Force)

1. Principal / Head of Institution of the Hub school
2. Heads of Institutions of all member Spoke schools
3. DI (Secondary Education) – *Member Convenor*
4. 2-3 senior teachers from the Hub school
5. 4-5 representative members from Spoke schools
6. 2 senior student members nominated from either Hub or Spoke schools

Suggested Responsibilities (for both School and College Task Force)

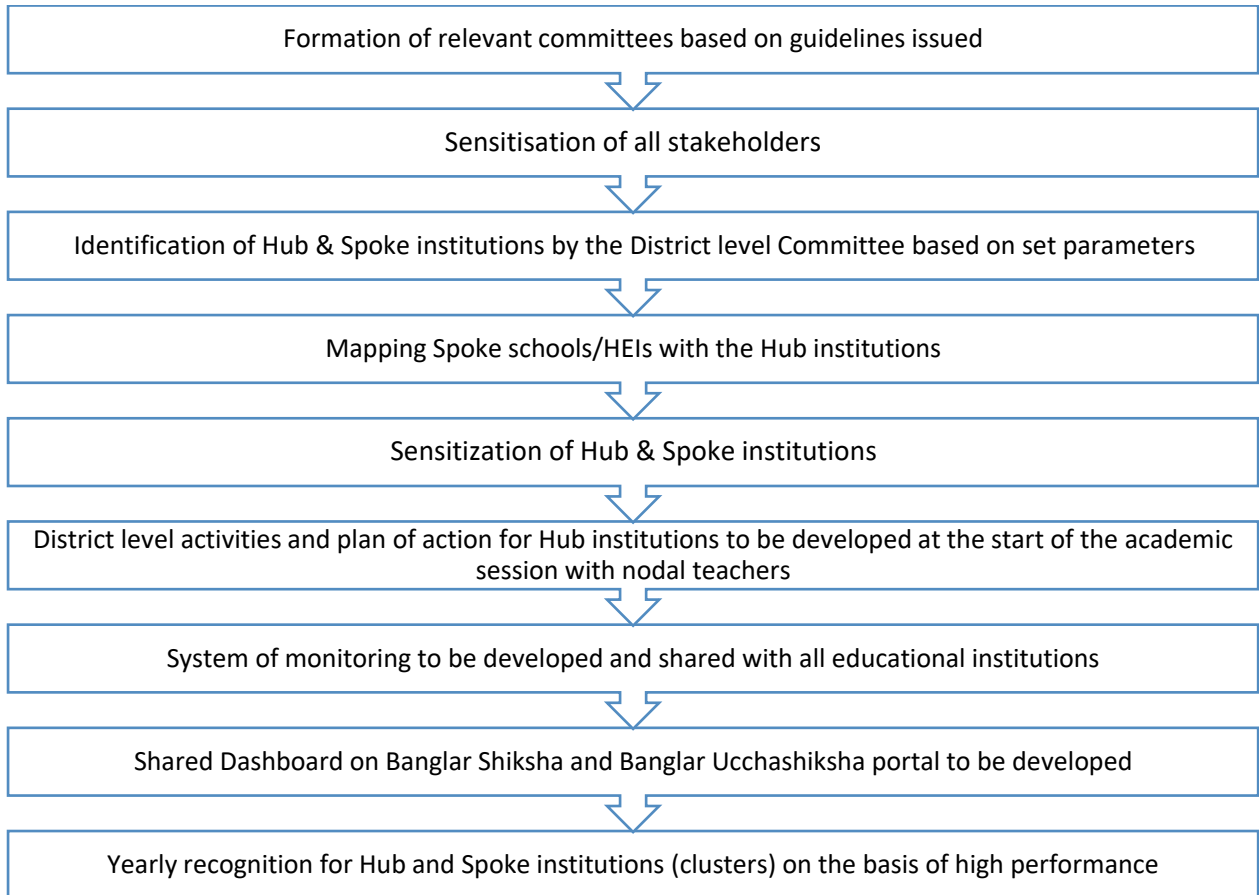
- Feedback sharing process with students through focus group discussions
- Identification of areas where strengthening is required
- Identification of detailed items where intervention of Hub school shall be required
- Actively participating in the programme for optimal utilisation of resources and better future of the students

FUND PROVISION

- **For schools:** An annual monitoring fund from PBSSM may be used in favour of the Hub school for meeting miscellaneous expenses for carrying out different functions of the cluster at school level.
- **For HEIs:** Funds shall be provided under a similar head of account by Higher Education Department.

- The District level committee may also explore other available alternate sources of funding.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



MONITORING FORMATS

The following monitoring formats need to be developed:

- On a bi-weekly frequency: At the Hub level, for Hub schools and colleges to share the activities conducted by them.
- On a fortnightly frequency: At the Cluster level, a compiled report from all the Hub institutions as well as detail of activities planned by the cluster in the coming weeks.
- On a monthly frequency initially, then quarterly: At the District level, a compiled report from all the Clusters, as well as a detail of activities of any policy level activities planned in the district such as setting up of new clusters or addition/replacement of Hub and Spoke institutions

Format 1: Bi-Weekly Reporting Format for Hub level Task Force(s)

The format below is to be filled during the meetings of the hub level task force. The task force shall meet at least twice a month.

District: _____

Mentor HEI of Cluster: _____

Name & address of Hub School/HEI: _____

No. of Spoke educational institutions: _____

Date: _____

S. No.	Activity Conducted	Name of Organising Institution	No. of Participating Spoke Institutions	Major Achievement/ Highlight (Max. 2 points)	Remarks (if any)

S/d
HOI of Hub School/HEI

Format 2: Fortnightly Reporting Format for Cluster level Task Force

The format below is to be filled during the meetings of the cluster level task force. The task force shall meet at least once a month, or more, as necessary.

District: _____

Mentor HEI of Cluster: _____

Names & Addresses of Hub School/HEI (with No. of Spoke Institutions):

- _____ (____)
- _____ (____)
- _____ (____)

Date: _____

S. No.	Major Activity Conducted (Max. 5 only)	Name of Organising Institution	No. of Participating Spoke Institutions	Major Achievement/ Highlight (Max. 2 points)	Remarks (if any)
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

Major Upcoming Activities Planned in the Cluster

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

S/d

Chairperson of Cluster level Task Force

Attached: Bi-weekly reporting formats from each Hub college and school in the cluster

Format 3: Reporting Format for District level Committee

The format below is to be filled during the meetings of the district level committee. The committee shall meet on a monthly basis during the initial stages of the programme, thereafter, it shall convene on a quarterly basis.

District: _____

No. of Clusters: _____

Name(s) of Mentor HEI of Cluster:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Date: _____

S. No.	Major Activity Conducted (Max. 5 only)	Name of Organising Institution	No. of Participating Spoke Institutions	Major Achievement/ Highlight (Max. 2 points)	Remarks (if any)
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

Policy Resolutions by Task Force for next month/quarter

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

S/d

Chairperson of District level Committee

Attached: Monthly reporting formats from each cluster task force