



Reformations in Inclusive Education - NEP 2020

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Abstract: *Inclusion in education is the belief that every individual child has the potential to learn if equal opportunities are provided to participate in schools, supported with the required resources as per his or her needs. The term 'inclusive education' goes beyond children with disabilities and refers to an education system that accommodates all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. The paper aims to find out the areas of inclusion for education according to policy perspectives NEP 2020, to find out the role of teachers in implementing inclusive education, to find out the issues and challenges of inclusive education, to suggest measures for improvement in implementing Inclusive Education. Information presented in the current study has been collected from various reports of National Educational Policies. Some journals and e-contents relating to the inclusion in education are also referred. Policy perspective of NEP 2020 with regard to inclusion has been discussed, issues and challenges of inclusive education are discussed and some suggestions are made for the improvement of implementing inclusive education.*

Key words: *Inclusion, equity, special needs, challenges.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Inclusion in education is the belief that every individual child has the potential to learn if equal opportunities are provided to participate in schools, supported with the required resources as per his or her needs. Inclusion is a fundamental human right. The term 'inclusive education' goes beyond children with disabilities and refers to an education system that accommodates all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions.

Inclusive education is based on the international understanding on the rights of all children to a common education in their locality regardless of their background, attainment or disability. It aims at providing good quality education and a community-based education for all. An inclusive classroom will consist of children with disability or gifted children, street or working children, children from remote or nomadic populations.

Inclusive education challenges traditional prejudice and stereotypes and promotes diversity and mutual understanding, thereby preventing further disagreement and conflict. Inclusion is a deliberate process towards a society where individuals respect differences and where they are able to enjoy full participation as equal members of the society. Inclusive education is concerned with reducing all exclusionary pressures based on disability, gender, race, class, family structure and lifestyle. In inclusive education, mainstreaming and integration are viewed as intermediate steps to the ultimate goal of teaching students with and without disabilities and students from all kinds of backgrounds together in the same classroom. In inclusive education program specialized education and support are provided to any student who is in need of support without labeling him or her as disabled. Inclusive Education is about restructuring the practices, cultures and policies in schools so that they respond to the diversity of the students. India's agenda of sustainable development goal 4 of 2030 is to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (NEP2020). Creating an inclusive environment to accommodate all for learning will create equity in education.



2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To find out the areas of inclusion for education according to policy perspectives NEP 2020.
2. To find out the role of teachers in implementing inclusive education.
3. To find out the issues and challenges of inclusive education.
4. To suggest measures for improvement in implementing inclusive education.

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

This is a review article based on the policy perspectives of policies like National Policy of Education 1968, National Policy on Education 1986; Plan of Action 1992 and National Education Policy 2020 with regard to inclusion in education. Research articles, policies and documents related to inclusion in education have been reviewed.

AREAS OF INCLUSION ACCORDING TO NPE 1968 AND NPE 1986

With regard to inclusion in education, it becomes pertinent to look into the previous education policies as to what their recommendations are. The recommendations of the above two policies have been presented below.

The first National Policy on education 1968 emphasized on the education for girls. It recommended for the development of education among 'backward classes. A special mention about the tribal people has been made in the policy. Expansion of educational facility for physically and mentally handicapped children also finds a place in the policy. It suggested "...integrated programme for handicapped children to study in regular schools" (NPE 1968). Thus, this policy aimed to equalize educational opportunity.

The second National Policy on Education 1986 proposed to include girls, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe children, Other Educationally backward sections and minorities in education. The policy focused on women education for uplifting the status of women and women empowerment.

POLICY PERSPECTIVE OF NEP 2020 WITH REGARD TO INCLUSION

National Education Policy 2020 is the first educational policy of the 21st century which redefines the education system through its wide areas of recommendation. One of the criteria of equity in education is inclusion. Inclusivity will create equity in education which in turn will create a society in which every citizen has the right to learn, prosper and contribute for the nation. The policy perspectives of NEP 2020 with regard to inclusion in education have been presented below.

In order to facilitate equity and inclusive education, the policy focuses on bridging the gender and social category gaps in all levels of school education, curtailing dropout rates and ensuring Universal access to Education at all levels and to facilitate learning for all students, with special emphasis on SEDGs by recommending the following recommendations:

- Bridging the gap-

NEP 2020 aims to bridge the gap that existed in the previous policies towards gender and other disadvantaged groups that are deprived of the facilities in education. Gender inequalities in terms of female and transgenders are mentioned in the document. The disadvantaged groups take into account 'STs, SCs, OBCs, minorities, students from villages, small towns and aspirational districts, disabilities, migrant communities, low-income households, children in vulnerable situations, victims of or children of victims of trafficking, orphans including beggars in urban areas and the urban poor' (NEP 2020).

- Quality education for Children with Special Needs-

The policy recommends that the children with special needs will receive quality education which will be at par with other children. Mechanisms will be created for implementation of educational facilities for the Divyang.

- Support for students with special talents-



The policy focuses the need to support students with special talents so that their talents can be developed and they can express themselves in their fullest capacity.

- Recruitment of special educators-

The policy emphasizes the need for appointment of special educators for the successful implementation of inclusive education. Educators who are specialized in teaching the disabled children would require not only subject-teaching knowledge and understanding of subject-related aims of education, but also the relevant skills for understanding of such special requirements of children.

- Incentives for children-

The policy perspectives of NEP 2020 recommend the strengthening of various types of incentives like scholarships, cash transfers, bicycles which have proved to be successful.

- Special drive towards girls' education-

The role played by women in the society is widely acknowledged in NEP 2020. Considering this, the policy emphasizes the education of girls to increase the educational levels of women.

- Allocation of Gender- Inclusion Fund-

For providing quality education of girls and transgender, the policy mentions about the creation of Gender-Inclusion Fund. The Central government with the help of the States will assist the education of the disadvantaged groups and ensure that they have an access to quality education.

- Free boarding facilities-

There will be provisions of free boarding facilities for disadvantaged groups and also students who are from distant places. Schools like Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya and Kendriya Vidyalaya will be built for providing quality education for all with special emphasis on the disadvantaged groups.

- Participation of Children with disabilities in regular school-

NEP 2020 ensures that children with disabilities will be taught in regular schools and will participate fully in educational activities.

- Availability of resources for the disabled-

In order to support education of the disabled children, NEP 2020 will make sure that resources are made available to the children with disabilities- severe or multiple. The categories of disabilities differ and so also their needs. Teaching- learning aids, hearing aids, technology-based assistance etc. will be available for the support of the disabilities. NIOS will prepare modules for imparting Indian Sign Language.

- Home based education -

For students with severe disabilities, home-based education is recommended. To ensure quality in home-based education, there will be an audit.

- Establishment of PARAKH-

NEP 2020 proposes the establishment of Performance Assessment Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development for quality evaluation in education. It will also 'ensure equitable access and opportunities for all students with learning disabilities' (NEP 2020).

- Single- window system for Socio- Economically Disadvantaged Groups-



For students belonging to Socio- Economically Disadvantaged Groups, a single- window system will be made available in the website so that all the schemes, scholarships, and any such facilities are available in that window system. This will create opportunities for the SEDGs to apply for the facilities in a hustle free manner.

- Value embedded curriculum-

For strengthening value-based education, curriculum will focus on human values and diverse cultural knowledge of India will be given to the students.

- Open and distance mode of learning-

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Programs offered by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) will be expanded and strengthened for meeting the learning needs of young people in India who are not able to attend a physical school.

- The policy also recommended two overall initiatives that will be undertaken in order to bring children who have dropped out back to school and to prevent further children from dropping out.

- a. To provide efficient and adequate infrastructure so that all students have right of entry to safe school education at all levels. This will be made possible by upgrading the schools that already exist, building additional quality schools in areas where they do not exist, and providing safe and practical conveyances, especially for the girl children, and hostels so that all students have the opportunity to attend a quality school. Innovative and alternative education mechanisms and systems would be placed to ensure that dropout students will be brought back into mainstream education.

- b. The second is to achieve universal involvement in school by carefully tracking students, as well as their learning levels, in order to continually work towards ensuring that they are enrolled in and attending school, and have suitable opportunities for remediation and re-entry in case they have fallen behind or dropped out. For providing equitable and quality education until Grade 12 to all children up to the age of 18, suitable facilitating systems shall be put in place.

4. DISCUSSION :

The groups discussed in the document that needs to be brought in the mainstream line of education include the Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) which are broadly categorized based on gender identities-female and transgender; socio-cultural identities-STs, SCs; geographical identities-students from villages and rural areas; students with disabilities; and socio-economic conditions such as children of migrants, children from low income households, children in vulnerable situations, children of victims of trafficking, orphans including child beggars in urban areas and the urban poor, Divyang children.

The policy also emphasized on support for students with special talents. Every student has innate talent that must be discovered, nurtured, fostered, and developed. These special talents may express themselves in the form of varying interests, dispositions, and capacities. Students that show particularly high performing strong interests and capacities in a given dominion must be encouraged to pursue that area beyond the general school curriculum.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

For the successful implementation of Inclusive education in school system, it becomes imperative to train the teachers in the field. “The awareness and knowledge of how to teach children with specific disabilities including learning disabilities will be an integral part of all teacher education programs, along with gender sensitization and sensitization towards all underrepresented groups in order to reverse their underrepresentation” (NEP 2020).

NEP 2020 recommends one-on-one teachers and tutors and peer tutoring facilities to be available for children with disabilities. Special educators will be appointed for supporting the educational needs of the learners with severe or multiple disabilities. For these types of disabilities, there will be provision of quality home-based schooling which will be audited. This will guide the parents or the guardians for home- schooling of such kind of disabled children.



Identification of children with disabilities is a herculean task for the teachers. Therefore, NEP 2020 suggests training of teachers so that they are able to identify such children who are in need of help. High quality teachers will be appointed so that they can set an example for their students.

For realizing the proposed idea of supporting gifted students in expressing themselves in various forms, the policy recommended Teacher education to include methods for the recognition and fostering of such students' talents and interests. The policy suggested NCERT and NCFTE to develop guidelines for the education of gifted children. The policy also suggested B.Ed. programs to allow a specialization in the education of gifted children.

ROLE OF TEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1. Early identification: Teachers play an important role in identification of the children with special needs in the classroom. They play a crucial role in inclusive classroom by involving all the students in all the curricular and co-curricular activities according to their needs and interests.
2. Referring the identified children to the experts for further examination and treatment according to their needs.
3. Helps develop positive and healthy attitude among the normal children and children with special needs.
4. Placing the children with special needs in the classroom in proper places according to their requirements so that they feel comfortable and are benefited by the classroom interaction.
5. Making suitable adaptation in the curriculum transaction so that the children with special needs can learn according to their abilities and providing remedial teachings to the children who require it.
6. Preparations and adaption of various teaching aids and ICT tools which will help the children with special needs learn.
7. Collaborating with parents and social workers in educating and spreading the awareness of the rights of every individual student to an inclusive education.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF INCLUSION

Inclusive education faces umpteen numbers of issues and challenges. They are-

1. Non-readiness of the regular schools to facilitate children with disabilities is one of the main problems.
2. Parental attitude of sending their non-disabled children to schools with disabled children.
3. Lack of parental awareness, support and cooperation
4. Socio-cultural attitudes about disability
5. Inadequate school facilities and resources
6. Inability of the teachers to identify children with special needs.
7. Insufficient teacher training in inclusive techniques and thinking.
8. Rigid curriculum that offers no accommodation, modification, or personalization.
9. Lack of funds
10. Misuse of funds
11. Lack of guidance and counseling cell in schools
12. Inappropriate pupil-teacher ratio.

5. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF INCLUSION

1. Awareness programs should be organized in schools and communities in order to spread the awareness about right to Education.
2. The infrastructure of the schools should be disabled friendly and easily accessible by students with special needs.
3. For inclusive education schools need to have the supportive materials like proper teaching aids, technology enhanced teaching aids.
4. Sitting arrangements should be properly arranged taking into consideration the needs of the children with disabilities.
5. Special educators should be appointed in all the schools.
6. The school should have the entire required resources (both human and physical) for assisting in educating children with special needs.



7. School should involve parents and the community actively in the process of children learning. Parent Teacher Association (PTA) should be formed in every school.
8. Teachers should be trained to deliver differentiated instruction and curriculum.
9. Proper integration of the subjects and learning areas has to be made.
10. Establishment of guidance and counseling cells in the schools.
11. Teachers should be trained to use variety of techniques and resources to connect with individual learning styles. Appropriate activities should be planned and each student's personal needs should be taken into consideration.
12. Classrooms should be made up of students with diverse abilities. No children should be separated from main groups based on discrimination on any grounds. Support system should be provided to all students to help and allow them to reach their full potential.

6. CONCLUSION

Inclusive education which provides all children a fair chance to learn from schools irrespective of their backgrounds can play a huge role in the life of every learner and society in general provided it is successfully implemented. Spreading awareness about the importance of inclusive education is the need of the hour. Awareness programs like workshops, seminars, special talks by eminent personalities will have to be organized from time to time. All the stakeholders in education need to cooperate for the cause. For successful inclusive education, teachers must be properly trained so that they can accept, understand and reach out to students' differences and diversities. Proper infrastructural facilities which include accessible learning materials should also be at disposal so that all learners are equally benefitted. Also, effort made by Centre /States/UT's to ensure access and opportunity to all children of the country to obtain quality education will make a huge difference towards inclusive education. Education is a fundamental human right of every child therefore any barrier which hinders the child from learning should be identified and proper measures should be taken so that children's interest and needs are fulfilled.

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