



## NEP 2020: TEACHER PREPAREDNESS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper presents a thematic discussion on teacher preparation in India for Inclusive Education. It is viewed in the light of NEP 2020 and teacher preparation in the mainstream education system. Though India is very progressive in the policies and intent to include the excluded, there are gaps at the implementation level. As we know teachers shape nations so a lot of emphasis in the policy is on capacity building of the in service and pre service teachers.*

*Inclusion of children with disabilities requires a large vision and specific competencies for all teachers. A teacher with an orientation towards inclusive education should be able to provide equal learning opportunities to all learners; offer functional and meaningful learning environment; and respond to the needs of children with disabilities.*

*There are several researches and evidence based practices in order to foster learning for all. This paper attempts to put forth the strategies for teacher training to enhance the possibilities of inclusion. Education is the fundamental right as per the mandate of right to education policy and NEP 2020. A radical change in the curricular transaction and teaching method is needed to realise this mandate for every child.*

**Keywords:** *Teacher Training, Education, Disability, Inclusion*

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### **Introduction:**

Inclusion is a philosophy for attaining social justice and equitable opportunities for all. 'Inclusive Education' has been addressed in The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 that reaches out to the unreached in the realm of education. India has been progressive in formulating the policies right from Kothari commission (1964-66) to NEP 2020. India has come a long way from segregation to integration and now inclusion. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 of the 2030 agenda; adopted by India in 2015 seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. "Needless to say that India is a signatory to International policies like UNCRPD, Salamanca Declaration, UNESCO, World Education Forum and Dakar Framework which mandates right based approach towards disability and recognizes that children with disabilities should have full enjoyment and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children. Nevertheless approaches to education have undergone changes vis-à-vis the policies formulated from time to time.



### **Over view of policies in India:**

Kothari commission (1964-66) lays emphasis on the need for development of an effective education programme for people with disability, to ensure equalisation of opportunities. It was a welcome move post-independence. In 1980s the Ministry of welfare, Govt. of India, realized the crucial need of an institution to monitor and regulate programmes in the field of disability rehabilitation. The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and the Programme of Action (POA), 1992 stresses the need for integrating children with special needs. The Govt. of India has launched schemes like Integrated Education for The Disabled Children (IEDC) to put forth the idea of integration into action. Also, the Project Integrated Education for the Disabled (PIED) was meant to increase enrolment of children with disabilities in the neighbouring schools.

In 1990s the District Primary Education Project (DPED) added to the philosophy of inclusive education. Sarva Shikshan Abhiyan (SSA) for universalization of elementary education was launched by Govt. of India which emphasised education for all. The Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992 initiated a training programme for the development of professionals to respond to the needs of students with disabilities. The National Policy for Persons with Disability, 2006, which attempts to clarify the framework under which the state, civil society and private sector must operate in order to ensure a dignified life for persons with disability and support for their caretakers.

In 2000s the Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary Stage (IEDSS), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and right to education was enforced to ensure education as a fundamental right of every child in India. National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 has laid down a clear context of inclusive education and the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) implemented a national action plan for the inclusion of children with special needs. In 2018, Samagrah Shiksha Abhiyan was launched by MHRD which merged three schemes SSA, RMSA and Teacher Education (TE). All this leading to the integrated schemes for school education.

### **NEP 2020 and Teacher Education:**

The National Education Policy 2020 based on the recommendation given by Kasturirangan Committee (2019) is committed to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities. It is in consonance with RPwD Act 2016 which states that children with benchmark disabilities will have choice of regular or special school. Further it recommends that adequate infrastructural facilities should be provided to ensure safe and inclusive learning environment for person's with disability. NEP 2020 is a land mark policy and a very comprehensive policy covering all the levels of education. It will be game changer in the years to come provided it is implemented in the right spirit. It can transform the educational system. Policy makers have done a fine job but to realise it is very challenging where implementation is concerned. A lot of emphasis has been laid to empower the classroom teachers with the right kind of training at in service and pre service.

The implementation of policies at grass root level has never been easy especially in a country as diverse as India. The reality is far more complex thus posing challenges at every step. There is a chasm between the policy and the social reality. In order to overcome these challenges capacity building programmes are already in place and



now it is for the higher education institutes to view the various models to enhance the knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers in teacher education programmes.

### **Teacher Education in Indian Context:**

The current scenario of teacher education programme is that we are working on the infusion model that intends to incorporate certain aspects of the course and teacher trainees opt for one or two courses that cover inclusion. In this model there is disconnect with the practical work in mainstreamed schools. And the emphasis predominantly is on the theoretical development of knowledge. Most teacher training courses at the Diploma, B.Ed. and M.Ed. levels fairly comprehensive but none is geared to adequately prepare teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms. In general education programme, a student could opt out of special needs education paper. Now there is an inclusive education paper in the syllabi which is mandatory but the information is theoretical. The curriculum does not make practical experience mandatory for teachers to be in mainstreamed classrooms. There is negligible input on curriculum adaptations, universal designs of learning and differentiated instruction. The lesson planning towards inclusive education requires a practical exposure and using of all the above mentioned strategy in order to achieve inclusion. The accessibility document prepared by NCERT spells out these strategies as a pathway to bring the NEP 2020 actionable. The accessibility to curriculum can be achieved only when the teachers are prepared to implement inclusive strategies in the mainstream classrooms. It is a fact that both general and special education teachers receive inadequate teaching experience in mainstream classrooms as a part of practice of teaching. There is compartmentalization within the teacher education programmes. In general education the emphasis is on preparing pedagogy teachers to teach vast content in the curriculum. On the contrary, the special education programs focus on teacher preparation for teaching children with disabilities. Further, the special education teacher training programs prepares teachers with a single specialisation focus and therefore the maximum hours are devoted toward a single disability as compared to the others albeit inclusive classroom teaching is there but limited. Nonetheless neither programme is well suited for mainstream inclusive classrooms.

There is a need to harness the collaborating training model whereby the expertise of the general education teachers and special education teachers come together and deal with inclusion and teaching in inclusive classrooms. Another way to approach is to practise the unification model that entails students to study the same curriculum that trains them for teaching in mainstream education. The models can be implemented in various phases.

A good teaching requires a coherent conceptual framework which is underpinning factor to improving teacher quality of pre service training programme. Hoban (2004) suggests four key dimensions:

- Conceptual link across university curriculum: The program must be based on the rationale behind organization of the subjects the way they are.
- Theory-practice link between the university and school programmes: There has to be a connection between the concept and practice embedded in the program.
- Sociocultural links among the participants: There has to be a shared vision the academician, student



teachers, and teachers. This will foster social interaction.

- Personal links that shape the identity of a teacher: The perception about the teacher's own attitude towards their role, their concept of teaching and inclusion.

According to Hoban the socio-cultural interaction is overarching the other three since it is dynamic and modifiable according to relevant cultural or political needs. And communication is at the heart level of teacher education program.

### **Transforming teacher education programmes: NEP 2020**

According to the European Agency for Development of Special Needs Education (2009) teachers have a key role to play in preparing pupils to take their place in the society and in the world of work. This concept is spelled out in NEP 2020 as making 'lifelong learners'. The teacher competencies and skills necessary for inclusive teachers are that the teacher should be able to:

- Identify the needs of the learner and respond to them by using appropriate strategies.
- Support the development of young learners into fully autonomous lifelong learners.
- Possess pedagogical skills as well as specialist knowledge of their subjects.
- Work in multicultural settings understanding the value of diversity
- Work in close collaboration with colleagues, parents and the wider community.
- Engage in reflective practice
- Be autonomous learners in their own career long professional development.

The roadmap to successful inclusion of special needs in mainstream schools requires a synergy of political will and trained human resources. The NEP 2020 has the political commitment and the higher education institutes are working towards it. Now the onus is on training institutes to overcome the paradoxical nature of separate provision that leads to the development of separate training. Special education teachers and general school teachers are the pillars for the successful implementation of inclusive education. In order to make the teacher education programmes more responsive the training programmes should be more robust. The implementation of an interdisciplinary collaborative teaching environment will motivate the trainee to develop an inclusive and an all-round approach. The course content and the curriculum transaction at the training institutes must be geared towards building expertise in practical knowledge. It should not be fragmented, uncoordinated and inadequate. It must be approached to realise the inclusive classroom teaching and assessment. Therefore the strategies based on universal designs and differentiation must be made mandatory in the training programmes. The practical use of curriculum adaptation and skill development for it should percolate down in the schools. The 'disconnect' between the school subjects and the training programmes at university should be reduced. In the school curriculum the emphasis on content memorisation should now shift to the accessibility and use of knowledge in practical life to make it relevant. There is plethora of technological options to digitalise it and present the information. The transformation of teacher education programme has become reality and it has been well established in the NEP 2020 policy document. The NCERT has already put out the e-books accessible to all. Besides the NCERT manual on accessibility speaks volumes to realize this dream of transformation and



Undoubtedly there will be paradigm shift.

### Conclusion:

Inclusion is a process and not a program which can be achieved by gradually but continuously and consistently eliminating the barriers in education system.

For effective inclusion in education, there is a need to have proper teacher training about inclusive education for preparing them. The teachers need to have knowledge of content and best practices. The curriculum of pre-service teachers regarding Inclusive Education must be revamped to undertake certain issues such as inclusive education concept, its training, sensitization, types and level of disability, causes of disabilities, teaching techniques, learning disabilities, and rules & regulations for individual with special needs. The National Knowledge commission in 2009 has also emphasized that training of teachers should not be understood in finite time period terms whereas it should be considered as a process; due to that the teaching quality as well as learning in regular classroom could be improved frequently. Along with this, there is need to strengthened teachers' training programmes regarding inclusive education.

For developing human resources in education field, pedagogy training and training to teach diverse learners need to be done at the pre-service as well as in-service levels both. The 'Inclusive Education' should be made a compulsory subject for all teachers as an integral part of teacher training curriculum. To the in-service teachers, need based training should be provided on inclusive education and strategies on curriculum and essential modification with respect to nature and types of disabilities need to be demonstrated in the classroom only for making it easy for teachers to understand its application. The principles of Inclusive Education needs should be incorporated into all teacher training courses. The fundamental knowledge and skills of inclusive education should be provided extensively to teachers. There is a need to reinforce the modifications required in the existing curriculum of diploma and bachelors in education with respect to inclusive education courses with focus on its practical aspects. There should be collaboration of educators that could facilitate inclusion by understanding the needs which could be promoted in the Teacher Training Programme. Hence, teachers' preparation for Inclusive Education at the pre-service levels as well as their continual improvement at the in-service levels is important for achieving the goal of 'Education for All' envisioned in NEP 2020.

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