

## **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN VIEW OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: A REVIEW**

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### **Abstract:**

*The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), which was approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020, outlines the vision of India's new education system. The new policy replaces the previous National Policy on Education, 1986. The policy is a comprehensive framework for elementary education to higher education as well as vocational training in both rural and urban India. The policy aims to transform India's education system by 2040. Inclusive education is no longer a privilege, it is the need of the hour. For a developing country like India, education is the topmost aspect of growth. We will fail as a country if education is still not being accessible to each and every individual in every corner of the country.*

*All the policies emphasized the right of the child from diverse backgrounds and abilities to access formal education but still, the disparities continued. After 34 years, finally we have our long awaited National Education Policy. This paper is an attempt to discuss the new provisional changes for Inclusive Education in NEP 2020.*

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Education, Inclusive education, NEP 2020.*

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### **Introduction:**

“A nation is advanced in proportion to education and intelligence spread among the masses.” Swami Vivekananda

After Independence the Indian Education System goes through various changes, in order to make it accessible to the masses. India has witnessed visible improvement in education especially with regard to education infrastructure and student's enrolment in the recent years. In particular, the Right to Education Act 2009 has successfully managed to increase enrolment in the upper primary level (Class 6-8). Nationally, between 2009–2016 the number of students in the upper primary level increased by 19.4 percent.

Implementation of schemes of sanitation and safety has also helped sustain this enrollment in The Census 2011 recorded literacy of women at 65.5%, for Muslims it had risen to 68.5 percent and for Schedule Caste communities it had climbed to around 66 percent. Despite significant improvements in many crucial areas, Indian education systems continue to grapple with challenges of inequity and exclusion.

The definition of inclusive education is given by UNESCO's Section for Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 2000) as, “Inclusive education is concerned with removing all barriers to learning, and with the participation of all learners vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization. It is a strategic approach designed to facilitate learning

success for all children. It addresses the common goals of decreasing and overcoming all exclusion from the human right to education, at least at the elementary level, and enhancing access, participation and learning success in quality basic education for all.”

Inclusive Education refers to an educational practice, wherein child with disabilities will be fully included in the mainstream classroom with same age peers in the local school. This also emphasized that the child with disability must exposed to all the curricular and co-curricular activities in order to ensure his full participation in the educational process.

Inclusive Education for Children with Disability Keeping in view the large population and diversity of the country, inclusion in every aspect is undoubtedly the most challenging job. Inclusive education in India has come a long way through segregation and integration.

The National Educational Policy (NEP), 2020 attempts to address the growing inequality and inequity plaguing the country's education system today. Among others, the NEP 2020 recognizes high dropout rates among socio-economic strata and vulnerable minorities. It also recognizes the unmet educational needs of children living in geographically difficult regions. The analysis piece takes a quick tour of key recommendations on inclusive education and records some of the key challenges that the NEP has to take head on.

#### **Inclusive Education for Children with Disability:**

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#### **International Scenario:**

In the International scenario, the emphasis on education as a right of every individual started 60 years ago with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and World Declaration for Education for All in 1990. Various International Conventions pronounced the need equality of opportunity such as Convention against Discrimination in 1960, Convention on Rights of Child in 1989 which was the first treaty that was developed for the child rights and the united conventions of Rights of Person with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2006. Two very important International Framework for awareness of Inclusive educations are Salamanca Framework (1994) and Biwako Millennium Framework of Action (2002) (Schuelka, Johnstone 2012).

“Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education. system.”(Salamanca Statement, Spain 1994)The Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action on Special Needs Education.

#### **Inclusive Education in NEP 2020:**

Based on the recommendation given by the Kasturirangan Committee (2019), the National Education Policy has been brought out after 34 years. This is a very comprehensive policy covering all levels of education. The policy spread into four parts. Equitable and inclusive education is covered under school education

(NEP,2020).

NEP 2020 is in line with the RPwD act 2016. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016 defines inclusive education as a “system of education wherein students with and without disabilities learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities “(RPwD Act, 2016). The RPwD act also affirmed the provision of free education for the child with disability upto the age of 18 years in an adequate condition (Banga, 2015). The RPwD act also increased the 3% reservation to 5% for the people with benchmark disabilities in all government institution for higher education. Any person with at least 40% of the listed 21 disabilities in the RPwD act is known as the person with benchmark disability. The act also emphasized on the barrier free access as a non-discrimination measure.

**a) Schooling:**

NEP 2020 affirm all the recommendation given by RPwD Act 2016, regarding school education. The policy has given highest priority to enabling regular schooling process from foundational stage to the higher education, for the children with disability. Children with moderate to severe disabilities will have the option of regular or special schooling (NEP 2020).

**b) School Complex:**

School complex will be provided with a resource centre inside the complex itself and other resources. School also must ensure the recruitment of special educators with cross-disability training. The school will be supported to provide individualized accommodations and support mechanism in order to fulfill the need of the child with disabilities and to ensure barrier free Access.

**c) Curriculum, Supportive Devices and Assistive Devices:**

NCERT will work with expert bodies like DEPwD to make national curriculum framework (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.10). NIOS is responsible for developing high-quality modules to teach Indian Sign Language and through this to teach other basic subjects. The curriculum will be flexible according to child strength, which will allow the children to work on their own pace. To integrate and engage the child in the classroom activities, appropriate technology- based tools and other assistive devices, as well as teaching-learning materials which are adequate and language-appropriate such as large print textbooks and Braille will be made available in school.

**d) Teacher:**

NEP 2020 talks about reform of teacher education programmes. Sensitization, early intervention, support and special pedagogy to teach children with disability, to be an integral part of teacher education programmes.

**e) Assessment:**

National Assessment Centre, PARAKH, will formulate the guidelines and recommend tools for the assessment of the child with disability. This will be for all the exams including the entrance test from the foundational stage to higher education.

**f) Home Schooling:**

The home-schooling option will be available like before for children with severe and profound disabilities. The resource centers and special educators will provide support for home- schooling. For home-schooling all the guidelines and standards will be developed as recommended in the RPwD Act 2016. The Orientation of the parents will be done through the technology-based solution for enabling the parents to meet the diverse educational need of their child.

The New Education Policy is a comprehensive plan. It includes all those aspects that will lead to full inclusion of the children with disability in the education system. The following five aspects are an attempt to give a structure to all the points included in NEP 2020.

NEP 2020 focused on positive attitude, school preparedness, resources and support, individualized program and flexible curriculum.

**Highlights of policies in view of Inclusive Education:**

**Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs):**

The NEP 2020 recognises that certain groups are grossly underrepresented in the existing educational systems. To specially address their educational needs, the NEP has clubbed gender identities, sociocultural identities, geographical identities, disabilities, and socio-economic conditions to create a new social group called SEDGs. The policy bases most of its objectives on creating inclusivity around these groups.

Recognising their special needs, the NEP 2020 recommends a series of policies and schemes such as targeted scholarships, conditional cash transfers to incentivize parents to send their children to school, providing bicycles for transport that have worked in the past to increase enrolment, to create more representation.

**Recognition of gendered identities:**

The NEP 2020 recognises that female and transgender individuals across all the groups and socio-economic categories are the worst affected people. There are plans to implement schemes of giving out bicycles to form cycling groups and creating walking groups to schools to include community participation and make safety nets for these vulnerable students. Further, recognizing critical needs of education of the girl child, the new policy proposes the creation of a ‘Gender-Inclusion Fund’ to create better educational spaces for women and transgender individuals.

Despite these innovative ideas and proposals, the NEP is far from addressing core issues of inclusivity and conversations that are missing in the existing schooling systems. Historically, school curriculums have remained silent on discrimination based on sexual identification and orientation of individuals and specific discrimination that transgender individuals face in workspaces. These individuals are not accorded the basic respect that citizens deserve, and even though there has been a judicial abolishment of Article 377, conversations around identity are still considered a taboo and have led to multiple cases of discrimination in the past against these individuals.

**Creation of Special Educational Zones:**

One of the standout recommendations of the NEP is the proposal to set up Special Educational Zones (SEZs) in regions with significant populations belonging to Socio Economically Disadvantaged Groups and in those

aspirational districts. The key purpose is to spread education in the remotest and farthest places in India. This will be done by pumping extra resources and aligning multiple schemes and programmes of Centre and states to transform these backward regions. While this idea is novel and holds promise to transform educational access in inaccessible areas of the country (such as urban ghettos with substantial minority population), the policy hasn't specified what the criterion for these zones would be and how will they be distinguished in urban and rural landscapes. The policy has no clear indicator of what would be the determining factors.

Recognition of individuals with special needs The policy recognizes children with special needs and believes in incorporating them into the mainstream education systems. It broadly aligns with the objectives of The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016. The policy also aims to recruit special educators in all school complexes to make sure that teaching is more inclusive and cognizant of the needs of children. Children with benchmark disabilities will be allowed to opt for home schooling and would be provided with skilled home schooling educators so that they can still learn and acquire the best educational facilities.

The new policy fails to specify a roadmap of how it will make sure that education is made accessible to these individuals. It also doesn't specify what the change in the curriculum would be to make sure that children with learning disabilities don't feel excluded in the extremely competitive environments that Indian schools operate in today.

### Conclusion:

According to the national education policy 2020, Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities at par with the IITs and IIMs will be set up in the country. These are scheduled to be set up for introducing multidisciplinary academic. The same list of accreditation and regulation rules will be used for guiding both the public and private academic bodies. Phased out college affiliation and autonomy will be granted to colleges. By the year 2030, it will be mandatory to have at least a four year B. Ed degree for joining the occupation of teaching. For making the students prepared for future pandemic situations, Only placement of the child with disability will not help. If we want to grow as a country, it's our moral duty to make education accessible to every child regardless of their disability. India as a country of diversity, always see these diversities as an opportunity similarly now it's time that the mindset of people to change and see every disability as a special ability. That is to focus on what these children can do better rather than merely focusing on things that they cannot do. From segregation to inclusion, the inclusive education system in India goes through several hurdles. To look at the disability as a special ability, it's required a change in the mindset.

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