

**AN EXHAUSTIVE ANALYSIS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN
ACCORDANCE WITH THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020.**

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ABSTRACT:

Education is considered a fundamental right in India, and the country recognizes that it should be accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or abilities. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) was approved by the Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020, to promote inclusive education. This is particularly important for a developing nation like India, where there are various marginalized groups.

NEP 2020 provides recommendations for various marginalized groups like SCs, ST students, OBCs, minorities, women, transgender individuals, and the Single Window System. The policy outlines a vision to transform India's education system by 2040, with a strong emphasis on language inclusivity to ensure that no one is excluded based on their language preferences. The implementation strategies based on NEP 2020's recommendations are crucial for promoting equitable and inclusive education for all learners in India.

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is a significant step towards ensuring inclusive education in India. It recognizes that education is a fundamental right for all individuals, regardless of their background or abilities. NEP 2020 replaces the previous policy from 1986 and provides recommendations to address the needs of various marginalized groups. The policy sets a vision to transform India's education system by 2040, with a strong emphasis on language inclusivity. We ensure that education is accessible to everyone, regardless of their language preferences. The government has made it clear that no one should be excluded based on language inclusivity. By implementing the strategies outlined in NEP 2020, India can work towards achieving equitable and inclusive education, creating a society where every individual has the opportunity to thrive.



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KEYWORDS: Gender equality, inclusive education, RPwD Act 2016, education for all, Indian education system, and NEP 2020.

INTRODUCTION:

“Knowledge always has the potential to be dangerous. It is a more powerful weapon than any sword or spell.”

Margaret Rogerson

Access to quality education is a fundamental right that should be available to every child, regardless of their personal or social circumstances. Discrimination should not be allowed in any form in the education system or society as a whole. It is important to have a flexible educational system that can cater to the diverse needs of all learners. Inclusive schools that promote diversity and equality are the most effective means of achieving this goal. Equity is about fairness and ensuring that every child has the opportunity to reach their full educational potential.

Although there has been progress in increasing access to education in India, there are still many children who are unable to attend school or drop out early. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act recognizes the importance of inclusive education, where students with and without disabilities learn together and the teaching and learning process is adapted to meet the needs of all students. To achieve an equitable and inclusive society, a strong national policy is needed to guide reforms in school education at all levels. Various laws and regulations have been put in place to support the education of children with special needs, and it is important to continue implementing programs that promote inclusive education for all.

By 2030, the National Education Policy aims to provide inclusive and equitable quality education and encourage lifelong learning opportunities for everyone.

All independent India commissions and committees have recommended various provisions for the education of children with special needs.

1. Indian Education Commission or Kothari Commission (1964-66)
2. National Policy on Education (1968)
3. National Policy on Education (1986)
4. Project Integrated Education for The Disabled (1987)
5. Revised National Policy on Education, Programme of Action or POA (1992)
6. Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation Act, 1995.
7. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan or SSA (2000)
8. The new Article 21A (Right to Education) of the 86th Amendment to the Constitution of

India was passed in 2002.

9. National Policy for Persons with Disability (2006) 10. Right to Education Act (2009)

The National Education Policy 2020 also emphasizes inclusive education and offers crucial recommendations.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN NEP 2020

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) recognizes education as a powerful tool for achieving social justice and equality. The NEP emphasizes the need for the education system to ensure that every child has equal opportunities to learn and succeed. It has put forth important recommendations at different levels of the education system to ensure that education is accessible to all.

- Chapter 6 of the NEP 2020 focuses on inclusive education in school education and provides recommendations to promote inclusivity and equality in schools. Titled "Equitable and Inclusive Education: Learning for All," this chapter highlights the significance and benefits of even-handed and comprehensive instruction in schools. It discusses various reforms and plans that have the potential to transform the Indian school education system to be more impartial and comprehensive.
- Chapter 14 of the NEP 2020 focuses on inclusive education in higher education and provides recommendations to ensure equity and inclusivity in higher education institutions.

The NEP 2020 is a significant step towards building a more inclusive and equitable education system in India.

TARGET GROUPS AS PER NEP 2020

The target groups have been classified according to NEP 2020 in the following manner.

- Based on sex characters, - basically female and transgender people
- Based on Socio-cultural personalities - Planned Castes, Planned Tribes, Minorities, and OBCs.
- Based on topographical characters - Village Students, Students from small towns, Students from aspirational districts
- Based on Inabilities - Physical Disabilities, Mental Disabilities, and Various Learning Disabilities
- Based on Socio-Economic Conditions - Migrant Communities, Low-income households, Children in vulnerable situations, Children of victims of trafficking, Orphans, Child beggars in urban areas, Urban Poor's, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS (SDGs)

- NEP 2020 aims to address underrepresentation in education by introducing a new social group called SEDG. The group includes gender identity, socio-cultural identity, geographic identity, disability, and socio-economic status. The policy emphasizes inclusivity for these groups, as they often face high dropout rates due to limited accessibility and historical exclusion.
- NEP 2020 proposes targeted scholarships, cash transfers, and bicycles to cater to diverse needs based on gender, socio-cultural, geographical, disability, and socioeconomic factors.
- NEP 2020 prioritizes inclusivity and addressing the needs of underrepresented groups to ensure access to quality education, benefiting both individuals and overall development.
- NEP 2020 aims to promote fair and inclusive education by providing opportunities and support to marginalized groups. Strategies include hostels, bridging courses, tuition fee waivers, and scholarships to encourage enrollment and academic achievement.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL EDUCATION

The NEP 2020 confirms all the recommendations of the RPwD Act 2016 on school education. This policy prioritizes ensuring that children with disabilities have access to regular school education from primary school to higher education. Children with moderate to severe disabilities can choose between regular education and special education (NEP 2020, Part I, Section 6. 10)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCS, STS STUDENTS

- Tribal children face unique challenges that impede their progress. Continuous programmatic interventions are necessary to uplift them and make education relevant to their lives.
- Efforts will be made to ensure that Scheduled Caste children have access to quality education to improve their enrollment and retention rates. To increase the participation of SC and ST children in schooling, special hostels have been set up in specific areas.
- Bridging courses are being established in school education to increase their participation.
- Financial support is provided in the form of scholarships and fee waivers to bright and talented students, especially those at the secondary level. Such financial support will also be provided for proper admission to higher education.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OBCS AND MINORITIES

- It is crucial to prioritize the educational needs of socially and educationally disadvantaged Other Backward Class (OBC) children, as they form a significant target group. This will help

improve their educational opportunities, engagement, and academic achievements.

- Programmatic initiatives in educational institutions are crucial in promoting the educational growth of marginalized communities and minority groups. The aim of these initiatives is to address the educational disparities faced by these groups. It is important to consider gender when addressing these issues and ensure that educational opportunities are provided equally to all genders.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING WOMEN EDUCATION

According to the National Education Policy 2020, recommendations regarding women's education have been proposed. These are:

- Female students will receive bicycles for easier school commutes, reducing the financial burden on parents and increasing school participation.
- The Government of India will establish the Gender Inclusion Fund to ensure fair and quality education, with priorities set by the central government and available to all states.
- The Gender Inclusion Fund aims to provide schooling access for all girls, improving education for present and future generations.
- Policies and plans will keep up with educational progress, ensuring uninterrupted quality education for students.
- Kasturba Gandhi Girls' School will be strengthened to increase the participation of disadvantaged girls in quality education up to grade 12, with standard and free boarding facilities for safety, following Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya standards.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (CWSN)

All children, including those with special needs or disabilities, have the right to receive a quality education that meets their unique requirements. This policy aims to provide equal opportunities for all children to improve their education by taking proactive measures. The objective is to ensure that children with special needs receive the same level of education as their peers without disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRANSGENDER STUDENTS

The "Gender-Inclusion Fund" policy aims to eliminate gender-based inequalities in educational access, including for female and transgender students. Both groups will receive funds to ensure equal access to quality education.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

- The policy emphasized the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPWD)

and reaffirmed inclusive education for all children.

- Adopting appropriate teaching strategies is vital for diverse learning needs. Inclusion of disabled children in ECCE and school systems is a priority. Full participation of disabled children is crucial from primary to tertiary education.
- RPWD (2016) Act to ensure barrier-free access for all children with disabilities.
- In order to guarantee an inclusive classroom environment, it is crucial to develop advanced and relevant technology-based tools and devices. Additionally, it is important to have teaching and learning materials that are appropriately developed and language- specific, such as textbooks in accessible formats like large print and braille, to ensure that students can effectively communicate with their teachers and peers without any hindrances. Hiring trained educators for diverse disabilities, with a focus on cross- disability training for inclusive education and accessibility.
- NIOS will develop a high-quality module to teach Indian Sign Language and basic subjects using it. Special attention should be paid to the safety and security of the children. Children with disabilities have the option of attending either a mainstream or a special needs school. If they cannot attend school, home education is available as an alternative, which is equivalent to the general education system. RPWD Act, 2016 policies and standards will be audited as needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SCHOOL CENTRIC EDUCATION

This policy advocates tailored education approaches based on the nature and characteristics of the school. To achieve quality education, it is recommended that teacher capacity be developed through customized teaching practices. In addition, libraries should be fortified with quality reading materials, while laboratories ought to be augmented and modernized. The policy encourages schools to preserve their traditions and teaching techniques. To enhance the education of these students, the National Curriculum Framework for Secondary Education (NCFSE) would integrate subjects and learning areas, providing easier access to higher education. Financial support would be allocated to these schools based on their needs for introducing languages, sciences, social sciences, mathematics, and other related subjects. Furthermore, students of such schools should be encouraged to sit board or state examinations conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) to facilitate easy admission into higher education.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING CURRICULUM

- While developing the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) consultation program with expert organizations like the National Institute of DEPwD (Department of Empowerment of

Persons with Disabilities), must be organized which will be confirmed by NCERT.

- More knowledge of different cultures, religions, languages, gender identities, etc" must be included in the school curriculum to develop respect for diversity.
- The school curriculum should be free from any form of bias, ensuring that it provides more inclusive and relevant materials that benefit all communities.
- With the help of well-trained teachers, social workers, and counselors, students will be sensitized to the new school culture and an inclusive school curriculum will be developed. This curriculum includes humanitarian values such as "respect for all people, compassion, tolerance, human rights, gender equality, non-violence, global citizenship, inclusion, and equality".

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING TEACHER EDUCATION

- Teacher education programs are responsible for developing teaching strategies that cater to different groups of students, ensuring their improvement.
- In addition to this, teacher education programs also include gender and underserved group sensitization programs.
- These programs should also incorporate awareness programs about children with specific disabilities and specific learning disabilities.
- The teacher plays a crucial role in implementing educational policies.
- The policy places significant emphasis on training teachers, both pre-service and in- service, to effectively address specific disabilities and work in inclusive settings. It also highlights the importance of gender sensitization and awareness of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in all teacher education programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CHILDREN WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES

- Equitable guidelines and tools will be developed by assessment and certification agencies like the National Assessment Center and PARAKH to ensure access and opportunities for children with disabilities.
- "Assessment and certification systems will be implemented from primary to higher education, providing equal opportunities for children with disabilities. Continuous support will be offered to children with specific learning disabilities from the beginning of their education." "Teachers identify disabilities early & provide continuous support to students with learning disabilities in classrooms.
- The newly proposed National Assessment Center and PARAKH will develop equitable

guidelines and tools to conduct assessments for children with disabilities.

- Teachers should help mitigate learning disabilities in children with specific needs, while offering continuous support for their educational progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

- Quality education for all students is a top priority.
- The policy emphasizes higher education enrollment and community development.
- Equitable access to quality higher education, with focus on SEDGs.
- Financial assistance and scholarships will be provided to students of public or private higher education institutions, particularly SEDGs.
- Govt. to improve access to higher education for SEDGs using outreach programs, technology, funding & clear targets.
- HEI admissions to be regulated for gender balance.
- More HEIs to be established for SEDGs in aspirational districts & special education zones.

Some steps must be taken by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

HEIs will offer bridge courses & counseling/mentoring programs, strictly prohibit discrimination, prioritize employability, expand degree courses & invest in accessible infrastructure. They'll engage in outreach programs, adopt inclusive admission procedures & revise curriculum for inclusivity. Financial burden on students will be reduced by lowering fees and providing financial aid.

Proposed Strategies for Implementation:

To ensure equal access to education for all learners, policymakers, educators, parents, and stakeholders must work together. Achieving this requires reforms at all levels.

The policy not only recommends achieving equitable and inclusive education, but also stresses the crucial need for a coherent and systematic implementation of these recommendations. The involvement of various organizations at both central and state levels, including MHRD, CABE, NCERT, SCERT, NTA, State Governments, State Education Departments, Ministry of Education, Boards, HEIs, Regulatory Bodies of Schools, and Higher Education Regulatory Bodies is indispensable to achieve the goal of ensuring quality education for all learners.

- **Infrastructure**

Educational institutions must adapt infrastructure for accessibility, provide necessary equipment and training for teachers, offer support services, and foster collaboration between special and regular educators.

- **Identification of barriers and their removal**

Quality education faces obstacles from various factors, and overcoming them requires planning and collaboration. Identifying and eliminating barriers is crucial for inclusivity and dismantling exclusionary practices. Mainstream education should cater to diverse learners and provide equitable resources. The NEP 2020 includes provisions for disadvantaged communities, and schools should optimize resources.

Institutional Policy Principles

- Institutions must prioritize equity, value diversity, and support unique learning potential. Schools should adapt to individual needs and teachers should be equipped for inclusive practices. Collaboration among schools should be encouraged to promote inclusivity.
- **Teaching Methods**
Personalized learning and collaboration are crucial for achieving classroom inclusion. Effective teaching approaches that embrace diversity should be used to create a universally designed learning environment. Peer tutoring should be encouraged, and student participation should be prioritized to improve the learning experience for all students.
- **Assessment Strategies**
Continuous assessment is essential for personalized learning. Inclusive systems need professional development, collaboration with specialists, and alternative assessment methods. Early identification and intervention through periodic screening, regular monitoring, and adapted exams ensure student success.
- **Community Participation**
Fullan (2007) highlights that educational change is technically simple but socially and politically complex, especially in segregated contexts. To promote equity and inclusion, involving parents and community members and fostering partnerships between schools and civic society is essential. Social agents of change can raise awareness, while support agencies can enhance parent capacity through training and support groups.
- **Training, Capacity Building and Professional Development**
Teacher training is crucial for inclusive education, with four key values: diversity, learner support, collaboration, and professional growth. In-service teacher development should promote classroom collaboration and idea-sharing, while personalized professional development can improve skills and foster a more inclusive education system.

CONCLUSION

Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam stresses the importance of equal opportunities for individuals to develop their talents, regardless of disability. However, merely placing disabled children in schools is not enough; ensuring every child can access education is a moral responsibility. Society should acknowledge the unique abilities of disabled individuals rather than focusing solely on their limitations. Transitioning from segregation to inclusive education, India's efforts have progressed. Mindset change towards viewing disability as a special ability is necessary. With the potential to revolutionize inclusive education and bridge the gap between expectations and reality, NEP 2020 is a critical step. To effectively meet diverse learners' needs, schools must alter their policies, beliefs, attitudes, and teaching methods through collaboration from all education system stakeholders.

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