

MOVING TOWARDS EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY, 2020

Ratan Sarkar

Assistant Professor of Education, Department of Teachers' Training (B.Ed.), Prabhat Kumar College, Contai (Affiliated to Vidyasagar University) Karkuli, Contai, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal-721404 (India)

Sk. Parvej Ahammed

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Research Centre in Humanities & Social Sciences, Prabhat Kumar College, Contai (Affiliated to Vidyasagar University), Karkuli, Contai, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal-721404 (India)

ABSTRACT

Education aids in the development of a nation's correct and advanced thinking consciousness. If we search for education in the Gita, it is said that education helps us go from ignorance to knowledge. Education is a universal human right because if a society cannot properly provide education for every individual or group, then that society or nation can never be properly developed. In India, education up to a certain age has been identified as a universal fundamental right. A long 34 years have passed since the formation of the National Education Policy of 1986, and the National Education Policy of India was formed in the year 2020 under the chairmanship of Prof. K. Kasturirangan. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 provides a clear outline for the rights and development of children with special needs in India. The National Education Policy 2020 provides a definite outline for the development of a child with special needs, which is based on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016. The purpose of this paper is to discuss various aspects of the National Education Policy 2020 in order to promote equitable and inclusive education for individuals with disabilities.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, NPE 2020; Persons with Disabilities; RPwD Act, 2016.*

INTRODUCTION

“One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world. Education is the only solution. Education first.”

MalalaYousafzai

The term “inclusive education” refers to a methodical approach to education that includes students from every group in a community, from the poor and marginalized to those who have emotional, behavioural, or physical problems, disabilities and offers equal educational opportunities to all of them. In response to diversity, inclusive education entails listening to unusual views, being open, empowering all participants, and celebrating ‘difference’ in appropriate ways, according to Barton (1997). This viewpoint asserts that keeping people out of school is not the objective. The inclusive experience is about learning to live with one another. No state or country can achieve its prime developmental goals without equitable and quality inclusive education, and thus ‘universal access to education’ for all is regarded as the first and foremost requirement for success and sustainable development of a country. The noble aspirations of a state or country can only be properly realized if we are able to achieve the right to education for both children with and children without Disabilities (CwDs). Inclusive education is an educational practice in which CwDs are fully integrated into the

mainstream classroom with their same-age peers at the local schools (Ainscow, 2005). This also emphasizes on the importance of exposing CwDs to all types of curricular and extracurricular activities in order to ensure their full participation in the educational process (Panigrahi and Malik, 2020).

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: DEBATE AND DISCOURSE

Inclusive education is a novel and evidence-based approach to educating children with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers. This approach ensures that the educational needs of all children are catered to, with particular attention given to those who are most susceptible to marginalization and exclusion. It posits that all students, regardless of their disabilities, have the capacity to learn together in various educational settings such as preschool programs, schools, and community-based programs, provided that these settings are equipped with the necessary infrastructure, appropriate policies, and adequate support services. It should be noted that the goal of inclusion can only be realized through a flexible educational system that accommodates and adapts to the diverse needs of learners. Inclusion is not merely an experiment to be evaluated, but rather a value that must be upheld. All children, regardless of their disabilities, have the right to be included and valued within the mainstream education system. Furthermore, inclusivity in education extends beyond the realm of schooling and education. It encompasses the aspiration to foster a society that is anti-racist, anti-sexist, democratic, non-discriminatory, and based on the principles of democracy, social justice, and human rights. Additionally, the Salamanca Statement (1994) recognized that schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, fostering inclusive communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all. The statement further argued that "inclusive education" is the most viable approach to building an inclusive society. Thus, the concept of inclusivity has a broader scope than inclusive education, which specifically focuses on schooling and education. However, if we aspire to create an inclusive and equitable society, it is imperative that we make our education system inclusive.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL POLICY PERSPECTIVE

Multiple international legislations, policies, treaties, declarations, proclamations, and programs, including the World Declaration for Education for All (1990), the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993), the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994), the Darter Framework for Action (2000), United Nations Conventions on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), and so forth, have placed significant emphasis on the assurance of "equal access" and the establishment and advancement of inclusive education for all, with particular attention given to individuals with disabilities (CwDs). The research and historical advancements in the field of inclusive education propose four concepts: "revisioning, re-righting, redefining, re-researching" the education system (Slee, 2011).

According to Chatterjee (2003), the Indian Constitution is heavily influenced by the principles of social justice and equity. This sentiment prompted the Constitution's mandate that, rather than endorsing an exclusive system, India's substantial population of CwDs must be ensured access to quality and inclusive education until the age of 18. In accordance with the ethos and responsibilities outlined in the Constitution, the Government of India has undertaken numerous initiatives to educate and integrate CwDs into the mainstream education system. Key initiatives such as the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC, 1974), the Kothari Commission (1964-1966), the National Education Policy (1986),

Ashok Mitra Commission (1991-1992), the Rehabilitation Council of India Act (1992), the Programme of Action (1992), the District Primary Education Project (DPEP, 1994-95), the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act (1995), the National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation, and Multiple Disabilities Act (1999), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA, 2001), Inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (IECYD, 2005), the National Policy for Persons with Disability (2006), Inclusive Education of the Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS, 2009), the Rights of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE, 2009), and the Rights of Person with Disabilities Act (2016) have either directly or indirectly highlighted the necessity for the revision, reform, and restructuring of social, cultural, healthcare, economic, and educational policies, practices, and systems in the country to ensure meaningful inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities (PwDs) in all aspects of life, particularly in educational environments (Panigrahi and Malik, 2020).

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA: A REALITY CHECK

Despite the existence of numerous policies, legislations, and affirmative programs, children with disabilities (CwDs) in India continue to face a multitude of challenges in regular schools. While inclusion remains a key focus in India's current education policies and programs, it is important to recognize that there is a distinct disparity between the law and its actual implementation (Deepa, 2006). Furthermore, it has been observed that a majority of schools lack special educators or counseling programs, even when they have CwDs enrolled, despite the Rehabilitation Council of India Act (1992) stipulating that CwDs have the right to be taught by qualified special teachers (Deepa, 2006). According to Kumar (2007), the Indian Parliament officially acknowledges the right of access to education, vocational training, and employment for persons with disabilities (PwDs) based on the 2009 statistics. However, a significant number of these CwDs continue to be marginalized, discriminated against, and excluded from the education system due to various factors including inadequate policy, lack of appropriate support systems, poverty, gender, disability, religion, caste, and geographical constraints.

Chatterjee (2003) highlights that the parental community also opposes the concept of inclusive education. Their limited awareness, lack of sensitivity, and insufficient knowledge about inclusive education have had a detrimental impact on its implementation. Despite extensive research on this subject worldwide and the development of methodologies for introducing inclusive education in classrooms, proponents of inclusive education emphasize the need for these methodologies to align with culturally appropriate practices and precepts (CAPP) (Chatterjee, 2003).

In addition, Lakshmi (2003) points out that approximately 10% of the Indian population has some form of disability, with approximately 75% of PwDs residing in rural areas. Das, Kuyini, and Desai (2013) conducted a study in Delhi, India to assess the current skill levels of regular primary and secondary school teachers in teaching students with disabilities in inclusive education settings. Their findings reveal that nearly 70% of regular school teachers have not received any training in special education and have no experience teaching students with disabilities. Furthermore, 87% of teachers do not have access to support services in their classrooms. These findings are consistent with the report published by Myreddi and Narayan (2000, as cited in Singh, 2016). Despite various efforts to promote inclusive education in India, approximately 94% of CwDs still do not receive adequate educational services (Singh, 2016).

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY, 2020: INCEPTION AND BACKDROP

Despite the considerable progress made in recent years in the field of education and the concerted efforts to ensure universal literacy, the issue of educating children with disabilities (CwDs) in mainstream schools is still in its nascent stage, as noted by Lakshmi (2003). Throughout India, there has been a long-standing history of both direct and indirect discrimination against CwDs in various levels of the schooling system. However, the most recent educational policy in India, namely the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, places a strong emphasis on providing inclusive and equitable education for all CwDs. The primary objective of the NEP 2020 is to transform the educational system and bridge the gap between desired and current learning outcomes. The NEP 2020 proposes that the purpose of the education system should be the cultivation of well-rounded individuals capable of rational thinking and action, possessing qualities such as compassion, empathy, courage, resilience, scientific acumen, and creative imagination, while adhering to strong ethical principles and values (NEP draft, 2020). This statement acknowledges the imperative of keeping pace with the rapidly changing world and the knowledge landscape. In order to realize the vision of our constitution, which envisions an equitable, inclusive, and pluralistic society, the NEP 2020 aims to foster active, productive, and participatory citizens.

After a span of 34 years, the NEP 2020 stands as a remarkable exemplar within India's education system. This policy has laid down specific guidelines to ensure that all children, including those with special needs, receive equal and up-to-date education in addition to the general education system. The recently implemented Indian NEP 2020 has been widely commended for its commitment to providing equal access to education for all children across the nation. As asserted by the government, it not only dispels the darkness of exclusion but also ushers in a new era of inclusivity in the educational landscape. In the context of India, the NEP 2020 has established a set of comprehensive guidelines for children with special needs. The recommendations outlined in the NEP 2020 for special children will continue to play a pivotal role in their integration into Indian society in the coming years.

OBJECTIVE

- To explore and understand the blueprints of Inclusive Education in National Education Policy, 2020.

METHODOLOGY

This study is purely on a theoretical aspect. Content analysis is based on the available documents, different books, the NPE 2020 draft, articles published in journals, and other sources.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND NPE -2020

Education serves as a crucial instrument for attaining social justice and equality. To ensure that the education system in all developed nations remains relevant, various modifications are periodically implemented. The concept of inclusive education for students with special educational requirements has gained wider acceptance in educational institutions, partially attributed to the influence of UNESCO (1994). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) has established inclusive education as a means to guarantee the right to quality education for all students. Despite its foundation in rights, the implementation of inclusive education necessitates a transformation in the perspectives of school administrators and educators (Shamari, Faulkner, and Forlin, 2019).

The term "inclusive education" encompasses the integration of students who require special education services with those who do not. Inclusive education enforces appropriate educational practices within mainstream educational institutions, offering a range of educational services to facilitate effective learning for all children with special needs, by their abilities and requirements. It is a philosophy that engages stakeholders to foster a school environment based on inclusivity and acceptance, both within the school and the broader community (Shamari, Faulkner, and Forlin, 2019).

After a lengthy wait of 34 years, the NPE 2020 was formulated under the leadership of esteemed scientist Dr. K. Kasturirangan. This draft was subsequently approved by India's current NDA government, to address the timeliness of the Indian education system and ensure equal and equitable access to education for all. The NEP 2020 encompasses the right to education for all individuals up to the age of 18 and places special emphasis on the education of children with special needs. The NEP 2020 includes significant recommendations to enhance the education of children with special needs and empower them within society, which are broadly aligned with the RPwD 2016. Noteworthy recommendations concerning the education of special children were deliberated upon during the NEP 2020, which will be explored below.

SCHOOLING

The primary focus of the new NEP is currently directed towards achieving equity and inclusion. To ensure a comprehensive array of educational opportunities encompassing curriculum, pedagogy, recreational activities, and more, the entire educational system must undergo a restructuring process to facilitate inclusion in higher education or schooling. The overarching intention of this strategy is to prevent the isolation and segregation of racial and ethnic minorities, individuals with impairments, as well as those who face challenges in language-related learning, thereby safeguarding their access to educational possibilities. The utilization of language as a means to comprehend the world enables us to establish and dismantle power, authority, and legitimacy. The key objective of NEP 2020 is to equip individuals with competence in multiple languages across various educational levels (Anuja, 2020). Recognizing the importance of fostering support systems, the NEP acknowledges the need to provide Divyang, also known as children with special needs (CwSN), with equal opportunities to receive a high-quality education comparable to their peers. From the foundational stage through higher education, children with disabilities will be fully integrated into the standard educational process. The significance of an inclusive education system, where children with and without disabilities learn side by side, cannot be overstated. NCERT will ensure that consultations are carried out in collaboration with professional organizations like the National Institutes of DEPwD during the development of the National Curriculum Framework. According to NEP 2020, schools and school complexes will be provided with resources to facilitate the inclusion of students with impairments.

SCHOOL COMPLEX

Besides introducing school complexes and school rationalization policies, the NEP complicates the concept of school choice for children with disabilities. Schools within a 5- to 10-kilometer radius will be consolidated into a single school complex under this plan. According to the document, this will help ensure that there are adequate resources for children with disabilities, such as resource centers and special educators. This aims to address a critical issue for children with disabilities: a severe shortage of special educators. Block-level special educators are frequently required to cover children from 150 schools and travel long distances to ensure that all disabled children are catered to in their blocks.

However, parents often take travel time into account when choosing a school. Parents of disabled children worry about their children's safety when traveling; in some cities, mothers frequently accompany their children to school to ensure their safety and well-being; they typically foot the bill on their own. Although the RPwD offers transportation services for children with high support needs and their companions, evidence shows that these services or allowances are frequently not provided. There is a serious risk that school complexes could unintentionally reduce the enrollment and attendance of children with disabilities in their efforts to rationalize resources and offer higher tailored resources and support. The possibility that resources centers and school complexes may separate children with impairments is another worry with regard to these structures (Sarkar, 2020).

With a view to integrating Special children, clear strategic steps will be taken from the point of view of increasing the resources of the school premises. Special attention has been paid to NEP 2020 In line with the NEP 2020, exactly RPwD act 2016 the provision in the school premises has given special importance to the appointment of teachers with knowledge about the special needs of the children. 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 (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.11).

With a view to integrating special children, clear strategic steps will be taken from the point of view of increasing the resources of the school premises. Special attention has been paid to NEP 2020. In line with the NEP 2020 and the RPwD Act 2016, the provision in the school premises gives special importance to the appointment of teachers with knowledge about the special needs of the children. The school must also ensure the recruitment of special educators with cross-disability training. The school will be supported to provide individualized accommodations and support mechanisms in order to fulfil the needs of the child with disabilities and to ensure barrier-free access (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.11).

SPECIAL SCHOOL

According to the RPwD Act, the NEP offers the opportunity for children with cognitive disabilities to attend special schools. However, it remains uncertain whether special schools will be regulated by the Ministry of Education as regular schools or if the Ministry of Social Justice and Welfare will continue to supervise them under a new name. The lack of clear requirements for special schools in terms of facilities, curricula, and quality results in the suffering of disabled children who are not recognized as legitimate educational institutions. This supports the notion that not all children should be part of the same educational system, and instead, some should be in separate parallel systems. As a consequence, social inclusion moves further away from a constructive form of social isolation due to this division.

The RPwD has limited authority to enforce requirements, as only education authorities have the power to decertify non-compliant schools. Therefore, the current systems for regulating special schools often fall short. Thus, the progressive measures for children with disabilities in the NEP may not be applicable to special schools. For example, it is unlikely that information regarding facilities, supplies, and academic requirements in special schools, all of which the NEP claims will transform regular schools into vibrant institutions, will be publicly accessible. Moreover, without the Ministry of Education overseeing special schools, it is uncertain if this would extend to schools for deaf children, where lip-reading and speech therapy are often prioritized over teaching. The NEP also advocates for the standardization of Indian Sign Language as a means of instruction for deaf children (Sarkar, 2020).

The NEP (2020) places emphasis on special schools for children with special abilities. The policy aims to develop these abilities through specially trained teachers and establish special schools for children who face difficulties in general schools. Additionally, the new policy supports the standardization of Indian Sign Language for teaching deaf children. However, it remains unclear if this standardization would be implemented in schools specifically designed for deaf children, where speech therapy and lip-reading are preferred methods of instruction. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the policy framework inadequately addresses the regulation of special schools for disabled children and does not contribute to the creation of an inclusive environment. In fact, these deficiencies in the NEP further reinforce the idea of regular schools being the only "vibrant institutions of excellence".

HOME SCHOOLING

According to the National Education Policy (NEP), the evaluation of home-based education will be conducted in accordance with the standards outlined in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD). There are concerns regarding the selection process for children receiving home-based education and the quality of instruction they receive. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to conduct an examination of this system. Special educators at the block level have identified several challenges they face when delivering home-based instruction, including a lack of clearly defined curriculum and assessments, constraints in terms of time and resources, adherence to cultural norms, and ensuring safety.

Conversely, the educational requirements of the RPwD Act place significant emphasis on establishing an inclusive educational system that provides accessible classrooms and structures, while also offering personalized support for complete inclusion. It remains unclear how these criteria would be implemented in a home-based education setting, as the RPwD Act does not endorse such an approach. Moreover, this raises questions about whether the educational system considers certain disabled children as undeserving of inclusion, as it promotes home-based education instead of addressing the necessary measures to make classrooms and schools inclusive for children requiring additional support (Sarkar, 2020).

Under the NEP 2020, children with special needs will have the opportunity to pursue home-based education, either through general schools or specialized institutions, based on their own preference. The NEP 2020 specifically emphasizes that resource centers will cater to the educational needs of rehabilitated children with severe or multiple special needs by employing specialized teachers. Significantly, the focus is placed on enabling children with special needs to effectively engage in home-based learning and facilitate the proper development of their abilities. The NEP 2020 underscores the importance of providing necessary support to parents and guardians in assisting children with special needs in managing their education at home.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Large disparities continue to exist, particularly at the secondary level, particularly for socioeconomically disadvantaged groups that have historically been underrepresented in the field of education, notwithstanding the progress made by the Indian education system and successive government policies in bridging the gender and social category gaps across all levels of schooling. In a broader sense, socio-cultural identities (such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, and minority groups), geographical identities (such as students from rural areas, small towns, and underprivileged districts), disabilities (including learning disabilities), and socioeconomic conditions (such as migrant communities and low-income households) serve as categories for socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.2). The Policy also recognizes the importance of establishing support

systems to provide equitable access to quality services within the mainstream educational system for Divyang children, i.e., children with special needs.

Furthermore, utmost attention will be dedicated to ensuring the inclusion and equal participation of children with disabilities in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and the overall educational system. From the foundational stage to higher education, children with disabilities will be fully integrated into the regular schooling process. In accordance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, inclusive education refers to an instructional system wherein students with and without disabilities are educated together in the same classroom, while the teaching and learning approaches are appropriately tailored to address the diverse learning needs of disabled students. This Policy fully adheres to the provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 and supports all its recommendations regarding schooling. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) will ensure that these principles are reflected in the development of the National Curriculum Framework.

To achieve this goal, resources will be allocated to schools and school complexes to facilitate the integration of students with disabilities, the recruitment of special educators with comprehensive training in different types of disabilities, and the establishment of resource centers wherever necessary, especially for children with severe or multiple disabilities. According to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, all children with disabilities should have unobstructed access to services. The needs of different groups of children with disabilities may vary. Schools and educational institutions should strive to provide appropriate accommodations and support systems to meet the requirements of all students with disabilities, thereby enabling their full inclusion and engagement in the classroom. This includes the provision of assistive devices, technological tools, and relevant educational resources in appropriate languages (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.11).

The policy states that all children of all levels will have equal access to education and in order to achieve that objective, a parallel education system has been mentioned in the policy, from pre-primary to class twelve. The creation of a digital repository of resources known as 'Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing' (DIKSHA) would also increase the access to learning resources for children with disabilities through assistive technological aids. Nevertheless, it should be realized that the optimum utilization of these resources by the target section is incomplete until they are completely aware of it, and have the requisite technological devices for its access. The document is silent on how it will be ensured that even child with disabilities, living in a village, would reap the benefits of digital learning with the lack of resources and awareness on the part of their parents. It just mentions that ensuring the inclusion and participation of children with disabilities would be the highest priority without much elucidation on how it would make children with disabilities reaps the benefits of innovative learning.

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ensuring the inclusion and participation of children with disabilities would be the highest priority, without much elucidation on how it would make children with disabilities reap the benefits of innovative learning.

CURRICULUM

From the foundational stage on, all curriculum and pedagogy will be completely revised to be deeply rooted in the Indian and local context and ethos in terms of culture, traditions, heritage, customs, language, philosophy, geography, ancient and contemporary knowledge, societal and scientific needs, indigenous and traditional ways of learning, etc. This will ensure that education is as relatable, relevant, interesting, and effective for our students as possible. In as much as it is possible, topics such as tales, the arts, games, sports, problems, and instances will be chosen to have a strong Indian and local geographic context. When learning is firmly anchored, ideas, abstractions, and creativity will in fact blossom the most (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 4.29).

The NEP 2020 has modified the curriculum and pedagogy of school education to a 5 + 3 + 3 + 4 design in order to make them more responsive and applicable to the interests and needs of children at various stages of development. However, no equivalent modifications will need to be made to the physical infrastructure. The approach aims to produce engaged, productive, and helpful citizens who will contribute to building the pluralistic, inclusive, and equitable society that our Constitution envisions (NEP draft, 2020).

The overarching goal of curriculum and pedagogy reform at all levels will be to shift the education system away from rote learning and toward learning how to learn. The goal of education will be more than just cognitive. Development, but also character development and the creation of holistic and well-rounded individuals with critical 21st-century skills.

Each subject's curriculum content will be pared down to the essentials in order to make for critical thinking and more holistic, inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based, and analysis-based learning. The required content will concentrate on key concepts, ideas, applications, and problem-solving techniques. Teaching and learning will be more interactive; questions will be encouraged, and classroom sessions will include more fun, creative, collaborative, and exploratory activities for students to engage in deeper and more experiential learning (NEP draft, 2020).

Art-integration is a cross-curricular pedagogical approach that uses various aspects and forms of art and culture as the foundation for learning concepts from multiple disciplines. As part of the emphasis on experiential learning, art-integrated education will be integrated into classroom transactions not only to create joyful classrooms, but also to improve academic performance.

During Grades 6-8, every student will participate in a fun year-long course that provides a survey and hands-on experience of a sampling of important vocational crafts as determined by states and local communities and as mapped by local skilling needs. All textbooks must include the essential core material (along with discussion, analysis, examples, and applications) deemed important at the national level, as well as any desired nuances and supplementary material based on local contexts and needs (NEP draft, 2020).

NEP 2020 highlights NCERT will be collaborating with various expert bodies like DEPWD to develop the National Curriculum Framework for Special-Needs Children. The curriculum will be flexible according to child strength, which will allow the children to work at 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 that are

adequate and language-appropriate, such as large print textbooks and Braille, will be made available in school (Panigrahi and Malik, 2020).

SPECIAL TEACHER

The NEP discusses a number of issues related to teacher preparation, service requirements, and education that are important for kids with disabilities. These include modules on teaching children with disabilities inside current programmers and short-term specialist courses to teach children with impairments. Additionally, teachers won't be compelled to complete non-teaching chores and will have more freedom in choosing pedagogical tools appropriate to their classroom settings. Teachers will receive training on how to spot disabilities, especially particular learning disorders. Children with disabilities often appear to be a burden and a distraction in the classroom because of non-teaching responsibilities and teacher shortages that frequently prohibit teachers from performing their teaching obligations towards children without disabilities.

These policies' significance cannot be overstated. Teachers in India do not consider themselves qualified to be inclusive and lack enough training, infrastructure, institutional support, or peer support for inclusive education, according to several studies that have documented teacher issues and concerns in teaching inclusive classrooms. Teachers frequently lack knowledge of inclusive education policy provisions and have difficulty implementing inclusive education policy in the classroom. The presence of teacher educators is necessary for the policy to be successful, nevertheless (Sarkar, 2020).

Education system can move forward properly without the cooperation of teachers. NEP 2020 is therefore correctly talking about reforms in teacher training. Additional special teachers are required for specific areas of school education. NEP 2020 will emphasize the school has recruited a special teacher to teach all the children who have difficulty in learning general or special subjects. Special focus NEP in order to teach children with special abilities, teachers need not only knowledge of the subject matter and the objectives of the subject education, but also relevant skills to understand the special needs of the children. Arrangements could be made to develop such areas as a subsidiary for teachers or general teachers during the preparation of Pre-service teachers or at a later time for the teaching of children with special abilities in NEP 2020. In order to educate children with special abilities, teachers need to expand their knowledge through pre-service and in-service modes, in whole or in part, through a combination of college and university certificate courses. The NCTE and RCI curriculum will be further coordinated to provide qualified specialized teachers who will be able to teach the subject for Special Teacher (as cited in NEP draft, 2020).

ASSESSMENT

Our schooling system's assessment culture will shift from one that is summative and primarily tests rote memorization skills to one that is more regular and formative, competency-based, promotes learning and development for our students, and tests higher-order skills such as analysis, critical thinking, and conceptual clarity. The primary goal of assessment will be to help teachers and students, as well as the entire school system, continuously revise teaching-learning processes in order to optimize learning and development for all students. This will be the underlying principle for all levels of education's assessment (NEP draft, 2020).

Under the direction of the proposed National Evaluation Centre, NCERT, and SCERTs, States/UTs would entirely revamp the progress card of every student for school-based assessment, which is reported by schools to parents. The progress card will be a

comprehensive, 360-degree, multidimensional report that accurately reflects each learner's development in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains as well as their individuality. Along with teacher evaluation, it will incorporate peer and self-evaluations, the child's progress in inquiry- and project-based learning, tests, role plays, group projects, portfolios, and other activities.

Assessment is a very important lesson in any education system. Special emphasis has been placed on NEP 2020 assessment system. Special attention has been paid to evaluation in special education system along with general education system NEP 2020. 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 (as cited in NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.13).

The NEP 2020 is a milestone in India's education that will provide equal access to education to all students in parallel to the country's education system for decades to come. Along with the education of normal children, NEP 2020 has been playing an important role in the education of children with special needs in India for the last few decades. NEP 2020 will guide normal children as well as children with special needs to participate in the basic structure of society with equal opportunities.

The aspects that we can see for the development of children with disabilities when we observe NEP 2020 in particular are discussed below:

Positive Thinking Attitude

The administrator's positive attitude is critical in providing parallel facilities throughout the country. To properly implement NEP 2020 for the benefit of all students in India's largest country, everyone, especially teachers, must have a positive attitude. Teachers are the cornerstones of NEP 2020, as they will be able to properly support general education, special education, and the right to equal education. The NEP 2020 calls for reform of the teacher education system, which is entirely appropriate. The NEP 2020 has prioritized education with appropriate values and skills in order to ensure the success of special education.

Development of School Structure

Special Education can be successfully implemented only by creating proper and good schools and structures. NEP 2020 places special emphasis on building well-structured schools for Special Needs Children. NEP 2020 has a special focus on each school complex through the Resource Center Special Educator Recruitment and Student Support Program. For the past few decades, NEP 2020 has been leading the way in the development of children with special abilities, including those with special needs, by providing all kinds of facilities suitable for special children.

School sizes have made it economically and operationally difficult to run good schools, both in terms of teacher deployment and the provision of critical physical resources. Teachers frequently teach multiple grades and subjects at the same time, including subjects in which they may have no prior experience; key areas such as music, arts, and sports are too often simply not taught; and physical resources, such as lab and sports equipment and library books, are simply not available across schools. School Complex Management Committees (rather than just School Management Committees) for stronger and more effective governance, Local stakeholders' monitoring, oversight, innovations, and initiatives constructing such larger structures school communities, school leaders, teachers, students, support staff, parents,

and local government Citizens would energies and empower the educational system while conserving resources (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 7.7).

The following are the key principles and recommendations of this Policy concerning the State school education system, independent responsibilities within that system, and the approach to its regulation:

- The Department of School Education, as the apex state-level body in school education, will be responsible for overall monitoring and policymaking for the continuous improvement of the public education system; it will not be involved in the provision and operation of schools, nor in school regulation, in order to ensure proper focus on the improvement of public schools and to eliminate conflict of interests (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 8.4).
- The Directorate of School Education (including the offices of the DEO and BEO, among others) will be in charge of educational operations and service provision for the entire State's public schooling system; it will work independently to implement educational operations and provision policies (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 8.4).
- To ensure compliance with essential quality standards, an effective quality self-regulation or accreditation system will be implemented for all stages of education, including pre-school education - private, public, and philanthropic. States/UTs will establish an independent, state-wide body called the State School Standards Authority to ensure that all schools adhere to certain minimum professional and quality standards (SSSA). The SSSA will establish a minimum set of standards based on fundamental parameters (namely, safety, security, basic infrastructure, number of teachers across subjects and grades, financial probity, and sound governance processes) that all schools must follow. The SCERT will develop the framework for these parameters in collaboration with various stakeholders, particularly teachers and schools (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 8.4).

Resource & Support Material

According to the RPwD Act 2016, children with benchmark disabilities have the option of attending regular or special school. In collaboration with special educators, resource centers will support the rehabilitation and educational needs of students with severe or multiple disabilities, as well as help parents/guardians in reaching optimum home schooling and skill training for such students as needed. For children with severe and profound disabilities who are unable to attend school, home-based education will remain an option. Children enrolled in home-based education must be treated the same as any other child in the general system. Home-based education will be audited for efficiency and effectiveness using the equity and equity The majority of pupils in classes struggle with specific learning issues and need constant support (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.12).

According to research, timely assistance enhances the likelihood of progress. Teachers must get assistance in the early identification of these learning issues and the creation of mitigation strategies. One specific step done to assist youngsters will be the use of appropriate technology. Utilize flexible curriculum to maximize each student's abilities, allow them to go at their own pace, and foster an atmosphere to guarantee accurate certification and evaluation. Organizations for assessment and certification, with assistance from the anticipated new National Assessment Center, PARAKH, and guidelines will be created. There will be guidelines and standards for homeschooling. Offer appropriate tools for conducting these evaluations, from the elementary level to higher education, including exam prep, is necessary

to ensure that all students have equitable access to educational opportunities (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.13).

The establishment of school complexes/clusters and the sharing of resources across complexes, there will be a number of other benefits, such as improved support for children with disabilities, more topic-centered clubs and academic/sports/arts/crafts events across school complexes, better incorporation of art, music, language, vocational subjects, physical education, and other subjects in the classroom through the sharing of teachers in these subjects and better student support, enrolment, attendance, and performance through the sharing of social workers and counselors, and School Complex Management Committees (rather than simply School Management Committees) for more robust and improved governance, monitoring, oversight, innovations, and initiatives by local stakeholders. Building such larger communities of schools, school leaders, teachers, students, support staff, parents, and local citizens would energize and empower the educational system while conserving resources (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.13).

The NEP 2020 focuses on good resources and supportive materials to improve the education of children with special abilities, which will play an important role in the learning of Special Needs Children. In order to improve the education of special children in the school, special resource material support material etc. must be provided in an important way otherwise there may be difficulties in the education of special children so special emphasis has been given on this subject in this policy. 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 (NEP draft, 2020).

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

The NEP 2020 mandates the creation of an individualized programme to enhance the unique characteristics of children with special needs, which is a crucial role for teachers to play. Over the past few decades, the Individualized Program has been crucial in revealing the unique skills of children with disabilities. Just as no two children are alike, neither are any two children with disabilities. As a result, each challenged child has distinct needs depending on their disability. The secret to success in designing an educational curriculum for these kids is that no one size fits all. The school is required by NEP 2020 to offer these kids personalized services (Panigrahi & Malik, 2020).

CREATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION ZONE

One of the NEP's most notable recommendations is the suggestion to establish Special Educational Zones (SEZs) in areas with sizable populations of members of socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and in those districts. The main goal is to bring education to India's most rural and far-off regions. In order to transform these underdeveloped regions, additional funding will be pumped into numerous centre- and state-level programmes and schemes (Khan & Sahoo, 2020).

Geographical areas that have been designated as 'aspirational districts' need unique interventions to support their educational growth. Therefore, it is advised that areas of the nation with sizable populations from SEDGs should be designated as Special Education Zones (SEZs), where all programmes and policies are implemented to the fullest through additional concerted efforts in order to significantly alter their educational landscape (as cited in NEP 2020, Part I, Section 6.6).

The policy hasn't specified what the criterion for these zones would be or how they will be distinguished in urban and rural landscapes, despite the fact that this novel idea has the potential to transform educational access in inaccessible areas of the country (such as urban ghettos with substantial minority populations). The policy doesn't state explicitly what would count as the deciding considerations.

CONCLUSION

After 34 long years since 1986, the NEP 2020 will be a watershed moment in the field of education in India. NEP 2020 provides a special outline for the first complete and comprehensive improvement in education in India. NEP 2020 Special attention has been given to the general students as well as the children with special needs, and specific outlines have been given to the special needs students for their advancement in the field of education. The NEP 2020 focuses on the overall development of students, not just education opportunities, which have played a significant role in the overall development of education in India over the past few decades. Special attention has been given to NEP 2020 children with special needs to help them develop their specific abilities like normal children. This special education policy has monitored the special needs of children and the unveiling of their special abilities in the NEP, which will play a very important role over the next few decades. The NPE 2020 focuses on high-quality research for the betterment of children with special abilities, as well as providing educational resources, a curriculum, a well-equipped classroom, various adaptive devices, etc. that will play a vital role in educating children with special needs. We need to pay special attention to ensure that all the recommendations made for the great purpose of NEP 2020 can be properly implemented. If NEP 2020 and all its suggestions can be properly implemented in various fields of education, it is to be hoped that the last few decades will see a radical change in the field of education in India.

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