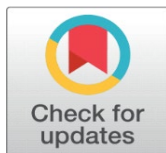# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Nothing can be more disastrous especially to disabled or for that any abled person, to be rejected or neglected by the families or peers or educational institutions etc. because he or she is different in some attributes whether in terms of gender, socio-economic background, language, caste, religion etc. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 strives to address the growing inequality aggravating country's educational system. Inclusive education is a fundamental principle ingrained within NEP 2020, reflecting the commitment to provide quality education to every child, regardless of their background, abilities, or needs. However, towards achieving this goal there are certain issues, obstacles and challenges which need to be address through collaborative efforts of all. This paper attempt to highlight some of the key components of inclusive education as outlined in the NEP 2020, the potential challenges and strategies to implement NEP effectively for inclusiveness.

Keywords: Inclusive, Education, National Education Policy (2020)

1. INTRODUCTION

Every individual has the right to education, which has been recognized since the Universal Declaration of Human Right (UDHR) in 1948. Education for all suggests that "Education is for all and not for selective few". Education is the birth right and that every individual should have access to high quality education appropriate as per the need of the diverse population. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims at making India a global knowledge superpower ensuring inclusive

and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all involving restructuring the whole system with the aim of securing wide range of educational opportunities including curriculum, pedagogy, recreational opportunities etc. Chapter 6 under National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 dealing with Equitable and Inclusive Education: Learning for all, is designed to avoid segregation and isolation of ethnic and linguistic minorities, those with disabilities and those facing with language barriers etc. amongst many other features.

UNESCO defines inclusive education as, the process of reinforcing the capacity of education systems to welcome and reach out to all learners. It promotes inclusive education that remove the barriers limiting the participation and achievement of all learners, respect diverse needs, abilities and characteristics and that eliminate all forms of discrimination in the learning environment.

Inclusive education aimed at creating a learning system whereby all children regardless of their strengths and weaknesses are given equal ground to play, learn and grow in regular schools. It brings all children in the same roof to participate fully in the educational process and to make the most out of it, to be equal partners in all spheres of life.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective is to study the potential challenges hindering the effective implementation of inclusive education in the context of NEP 2020 and suggest some strategies. This paper also tries to outlines some of the key component of inclusive education under NEP to support and achieve the goal of inclusive teaching, learning and education.

3. NATURE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study is descriptive in nature. The necessary secondary data was collected from the website including those of book, journals and other publications etc.

4. KEY COMPONENTS OF NEP 2020 ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1) Universal access to education- NEP 2020 envisions universal access to high quality education for all ensuring that every child, including those with disabilities, has the right to quality education from preschool to secondary levels. To address the learning needs of the varied learners, this entails providing the required infrastructure, support services, qualified and trained teachers among other things. It seeks to lessen inequalities and barriers to learning.

2) Focus on underserved section of the community- NEP 2020 recognizes the need to address educational disparities faced by Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) including female and transgender individuals, scheduled tribe (ST), scheduled castes (SC), differently abled children, orphans, migrant communities and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The policy talks about how to increase their enrolment and success rate with strategies tailored to meet their needs viz. appropriate infrastructures, suitable technological interventions, well trained counselors' or social workers to connect and work with students, teachers a, schools etc.

3) Early childhood care and education (ECCE) - The NEP emphasizes the value of early childhood care and education which is especially crucial for children with disabilities by providing them with early intervention and support services.

4) Education for children with special needs - National Education Policy mandates that children with special needs should be enrolled in the regular schools. It demands for the creation of a suitable support network that includes trained special educators, assistive devices and tools, home based education, financial support and scholarships and more.

5) Redesigning curriculum- The policy advocates the adoption of flexible curriculum that cater to the diverse learning needs enabling for adapted teaching methods and curricula customized to different abilities and learning preferences.

6) Professional development and training of teachers- NEP 2020 discuss teacher education programs and emphasizes the importance of training and equipping educators with necessary skills, competencies and knowledge to assist children with disabilities. Implementing inclusive practices requires early intervention, support and special pedagogy and sensitization.

7) Special education zones- NEP 2020 suggested that special educational zones be established in regions where there are significant numbers of underprivileged groups in order to guarantee focused interventions.

8) Assessment and learning objectives- The policy advocates for inclusive assessment methodologies and learning outcomes that take into account various learning requirements.

9) Resource assistance- for inclusive education, more funds and resources are being allocated to the development of infrastructure, materials and support system.

10) Promotion of local language- Stressing the usage of mother tongue/local language in the classroom to improve unbder4satanding and promote inclusivity for all students.

5. CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1) Lack of awareness and understanding- Limited awareness and understanding among educators, parents and stakeholders about the principles and practices of inclusive education may result in opposition or misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the significance of inclusion.

2) Structural/architectural barrier- The initiative to implement inclusive education can be hampered by financial constraints. It may be difficult for institutions to find funding for training and support services which will have an impact on the enrollment and attendance of students as well as the quality of educators who can create an inclusive environment. Though provision have been made under the Persons with Disabilities Act (PWD) Act 1995 and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016), for creation of architectural barrier free environment for PWD, those are hardly implemented fully in most part, and hence have an adverse effect on the integration of children with special needs (CWSN) in the regular schools

3) Cultural attitude and stigma- The idea that educating disabled children is futile, they have little to offer to the society and nation, it is not appropriate

to accommodate children with disabilities in the mainstream schools since it could interfere with the education of the normal children etc. are cultural attitude and stigma. Persistent social stigma and attitude associated with disabilities and marginalized groups may discourage parents from enrolling children in the mainstream schools.

4) Insufficient policy coordination-Effective implementation of inclusive education necessitates collaboration across multiple sectors like health, social services, education etc. A lack of coordinated policies and initiatives can create gaps in support for inclusive education.

5) Untrained teachers- Lack of adequate teachers training will result in inadequate support for children. A teacher may find it tough to teach a child with disabilities, to manage classroom and fail to assess, reveal the ability and progress of students with special need and may even fail to give the needed attention due to lack of necessary knowledge, skills, educational backgrounds and not having a proper idea of the condition of the child.

6) Curriculum inflexibility - Inclusive education calls for flexible and adaptable curriculum that can be modified to meet the diverse needs of the students. Unprepared curricula like inflexibility, lack of differentiation, use of outdated teaching methods, general assessment methods, focus only on learning outcomes, etc., are a few areas that need to be addressed.

6. STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1) **Awareness programs-** Conducting and promoting awareness programs and campaigns that involve parents, teachers and educators can help everyone understand and support the importance of inclusiveness. Making the parents and community members' equal partners in the process of inclusive education and involvement in decision making is crucial for bringing meaningful and productive changes.

2) **Development of infrastructure-** Investing in the necessary infrastructure like assistive technologies, ramps, accessible restrooms, resource center etc. is crucial so that every learner feels welcomed and supported. Government and other agencies should prioritize funding for such improvement to make institutions more accommodating for everyone.

3) **Inclusive classrooms-** Education is a fundamental right so is inclusive education. Schools and must create and provide an environment where all the student are welcomed, their opinions, views are respected and valued, supported and encouraged to succeed regardless of the back ground, abilities etc.

4) **Teachers training-** Organizing and conducting sensitization and training programs, orientation, refresher course, workshops etc. for teachers is essential to equip with the needed skills, knowledge and expertise to meet the needs of diverse learners.

Teachers and educators also need to update and upgrade their ICT skills to embrace and use ICT for effectively implementing inclusive education.

5) **Designing inclusive curriculum-** In line with the NEP 2020, developing a flexible and adaptable curriculum that honor and address the needs of all learners is the need of the hour. Education is more than just academics; it should also focus on social and emotional learning, personality

development and fostering connection among students from diverse backgrounds.

6) **Policy coordination-** Collaborative effort among the health, education and social service is vital if we are to make inclusive education a reality. Co-ordinated policies that involve all stakeholders can effectively the various challenges to achieving inclusivity in education.

7) **Integration of artificial intelligence (AI) -** Artificial intelligence (AI) has vast potential for effectively implementing inclusive education. The integration of AI offers the potential to create an adaptive and personalized learning experiences fostering accessibility and addressing individual learning styles.

8) **Community involvement-** Involving parents, local organization, Governmental bodies and various stake holders is vital in creating a holistic and supportive educational environment and for creating and implementing inclusive education strategies effectively.

9) **Monitoring and evaluation-** Regularly assessing and evaluating inclusive education practices and open to feedback from all the stakeholders is essential. This helps to recognize what's working and identify areas for improvement.

7. CONCLUSION

Within the framework of NEP 2020, implementing inclusive education offers both opportunities and challenges. Notwithstanding obstacles such as insufficient training of teachers, lack of resources, societal attitude, and lack of awareness etc., the NEP highlights the significance of fairness and accessibility in education. However strategic interventions such as teacher's trainings, integration of ICT, use of assistive technologies and establishing community partnership among others can facilitate this process. A collaborative and a committed approach are essential to ensure that the objectives of NEP 2020 are effectively realized.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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