



ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE CONTEXT TO NEP 2020 : EQUALITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of the present research article is to critically explore about the need and relevance of National Education Policy 2020. The various policies which has been launched so far with context to equitable and inclusive education specially in context to the education of deprived and disadvantaged group including Divyangjans. Since we all are well aware of importance of imparting education and as it is also one of the fundamental right of each child to provide equal and assessable education including the special need children therefore it was the need of the hour to launch such an important and unique National level policy in our country which has so many variations such as minority, geographical constrains, special or disadvantaged group of population. Therefore, the present paper tries to critically evaluate the need, importance and successful implementation of NEP 2020 in our country.



KEYWORDS: NEP, ICT, Integrated, Inclusive Education, UNCRPD, SDG's.

INTRODUCTION:

As we are already aware that proper education improves people's understanding of the world around them, making them less susceptible to the influence of others. Proper interpretation of information requires education, as it improves knowledge. An educated person better understands their own and others' purpose in society, and their rights. This leads to a better understanding of people, fewer conflicts and more tolerance for differences. Educated persons are harder to manipulate, which is conducive to the development of a more responsible society with fewer conflicts. All this creates an environment where social justice can thrive, which entails: Equal rights, Equal opportunity and Equal treatment.

The contribution of education in life is obvious when we consider its direct impact on the quality of life. This does not encompass only career success, hard work and economic status, but also the ways one spends their free time. Educated people possess a number of skills that let them enjoy life to the fullest extent. There is no better investment than an investment in knowledge. Modern society is aware of this; this is why education and the proper schooling of children is among today's top priorities. From an early age, children are preparing to become full-fledged members of society. The quality of education is one of the main reasons why the National Education Policy 2020 has been launched in the country so that it can provide the richest possibilities for personal development.

LAUNCH OF NEP 2020:

The National Education Policy was released by the Government of India's Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) on 30 July 2020 with the motto to educate, encourage and enlighten. This is the first education policy to be released in the last 34 years in India. The policy is laid down on the three pillars of research, innovation, and quality.

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE:

The National Education Policy, 2020 has conveyed the structural change in the education system which aims to make India the global knowledge superpower ensuring equity and Inclusion. The aim of equity and inclusion is now at the heart of new NEP. In the fields of higher or school education, inclusion involves restructuring the whole system with the aim of ensuring the wide range of educational opportunities; this includes curriculum, pedagogy and recreational opportunities, etc. The policy is designed to avoid segregation and isolation of ethnic and linguistic minorities, those with disabilities and also those who face learning difficulties due to language barriers and are at the risk of educational exclusion. NEP 2020 has set the goal for all to be authoritative with the command of different languages at different levels of education.

INCLUSION OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION :

An attempt has been made to develop conscious awareness of roles and duties and inclusion of community participation which would minimize the exclusion of students on the basis of language and disability. This will motivate students to learn more about the diverse culture of India, its knowledge system and tradition and also to sensitize them on human values, empathy, tolerance, human rights, gender equality, inclusion, and equity which will develop respect for diversity. Beyond all, equal respect for all religions with the idea to develop or bring back creative human endeavor, required for the 21st-century education system, has been the main focus of NEP 2020.

GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION :

NEP aims to ensure equity and inclusion in and through education by addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparity, vulnerability and inequality in education access, participation, retention and completion and in learning outcomes. Gender equality and inclusion are vital in achieving these aims and leaving no one behind. Education needs a greater focus on accessibility, equity and quality. Remarkable signs of progress have been noticed in the past few years in respect of female participation up to secondary level. Such progress could be because of Government's policies and programmes run for girl child-like "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao", "Sukanya and Balika Samridhi Yojana" and many more but still girls' enrolment is lower than that of boys at upper secondary education. Gross Education Ratio during 2015-2016 stands only 23.4% against 25.4% for boys in higher education and the gap is visible at all the social categories.

Now, NEP's biggest effort is to bring gender sensitivity as an integral part of curriculum and gender inclusion fund to be raised up to class 12 which covers all the socio-economically disadvantaged groups and also the transgender. The condition of the primary education at government schools, the dropout rates of girls has put the country on the back foot in education. But the new NEP has given more focus to school learning with a new way of coping multi-disciplinary programs and focuses on the 21st-century skills in teaching, learning and assessment. Alternative and innovative education centers will led to multiple pathways of effective learning and widespread participation of students of different groups.

INCLUSION OF NEW PEDAGOGICAL SYSTEM FOR EARLY CHILD CARE EDUCATION :

Early Child Care Education (ECCE) is not available to most young children, particularly children from economically disadvantaged families. Almost 85% of a child's cumulative brain development and growth occurs prior to the age of 6. Inclusion of this system will help children of early age to attain optimal outcomes in the domains of physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-

emotional-ethical development, cultural/artistic development, and the development of communication and early language, literacy, and numeracy. The division of Pedagogical system has been done with an intension to include the children of early education with the age group 3-5 into Formal education and also to include this stage of education into the school curriculum as per Global standard which was not done earlier.

INCLUSION OF SKILL COURSES :

Other focus has been given to make student learn life skill when they complete their schooling so that they can be self-reliant by then. By including contemporary subjects, vocational courses and extra curriculum activities from the school level will pull back students towards their schools. "Bal Bhavans" as a special daytime boarding school, will be established to support mechanisms tailored to suit their needs and vitalize students to participate in art-related, career-related, and play-related activities.

THE MAIN HIGHLIGHTS OF THE POLICY ASCERTAINS;

- The policy seeks to restructure school curricula and pedagogy in a new '5+3+3+4' design, so that school education can be made relevant to the needs and interests of learners at different developmental stages – a 'Foundational Stage' (five years), a 'Preparatory Stage' (three years), a 'Middle Stage' (three years) and the 'High Stage' (four years, covering grades nine, 10, 11 and 12).
- It aims to achieve 'universal foundational literacy and numeracy' in primary schools by 2025. For this, the Ministry of Human Resource Development shall set up a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.
- Public and private schools – except the schools that are managed, aided or controlled, by the central government – will be assessed and accredited on the same criteria, benchmarks, and processes.
- The Gross Enrolment Ratio from preschool to secondary education should be 100 per cent by 2030. (GER is defined as the ratio of the total enrolment in education – regardless of age – to the official population in a given school year, expressed as percentage.) The policy states that universal participation in schools shall be achieved by tracking students and their learning levels to ensure they are enrolled and attending school, and have suitable opportunities to re-join or catch up at school in case they have dropped out or fallen behind.
- The medium of expression until at least grade five – but preferably till grade eight or beyond – shall be the student's mother tongue, or the local or regional language. The 'three-language formula' will continue to be implemented in schools, where two of the three languages shall be native to India.
- The policy seeks to standardize the school curriculum for Indian Sign Language across the country.
- The government of India shall constitute a 'Gender-Inclusion Fund' to provide equitable and quality education to all girls and transgender students. States shall use this fund to implement the central government's policies for assisting female and transgender students, such as provisions for toilets and sanitation, conditional cash transfers and bicycles. The fund will enable states to support 'community-based' interventions.
- The policy suggests establishing 'school complexes' consisting of a secondary school and other schools offering lower grades of education – including *anganwadi* centers – in a radius of 5 to 10 kilometers. Such a complex will have "greater resource efficiency and more effective functioning, coordination, leadership, governance, and management of schools in a cluster."
- All education institutions shall be held to similar standards of audit and disclosure as a 'not-for-profit' entity, says this policy. If the institution generates a surplus, it shall be reinvested in the educational sector.
- The policy says that all 'higher education institutions' (HEIs) shall aim to be multidisciplinary by 2040. By 2030, there shall be at least one multidisciplinary HEI in or near every district. The policy aims for the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education to increase to 50 per cent by 2035 from 26.3 per cent in 2018.

- HEIs shall have the flexibility to offer Master’s programmes of two years for those who have completed a three-year undergraduate programme, of one year for students who have completed a four-year undergraduate programme, or five-year integrated Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes.
- M.Phil. programmes shall be discontinued.
- The policy says that ‘high performing’ Indian universities shall be encouraged to set up campuses in other countries. Similarly, selected universities – such as those from among the top 100 universities in the world – shall be encouraged to operate in India.
- A National Research Foundation shall be established to facilitate “merit-based but equitable” peer-reviewed research funding.
- The policy says that the centre and states shall work together to increase public investment in education to 6 per cent of the gross domestic product, from the current 4.43 per cent.

SHIFT FROM INTEGRATED TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

As per Census 2011, in India, out of the 121 Crore population, about 2.68 Crore persons are ‘disabled’ which is 2.21% of the total population. As per mandate of NEP 2020, in this era where ‘inclusive development’ is being emphasized as the right path towards sustainable development, focused on taking initiatives for the educational rehabilitation of disabled persons. While integration could be called as an extension of special education in the sense that it intended to shift children with special needs from segregated special schools to regular schools, inclusion is not an extension of special education or integrated education in respect of its principles and practices. In integration, the ‘assessment of students’ is under ‘specialist factors’ resulting in ‘diagnostic /prescriptive outcomes’ calling for ‘student program’, while under the ‘inclusionary approach’ the focus is to ‘examine teaching /learning ‘resulting in ‘collaborative problem solving’ and strategies for teachers’. Inclusion means removing barriers and increasing participation of all students in ‘broad social and academic life’ I.e. the cultures, curricula and communities. Inclusion benefits all children, including non-disabled in schools as it calls for improved pedagogy and teaching-learning processes. Inclusion is a process, and not a state or an end product. The process begins when a school initiates responding to all pupils as individuals with zero rejection.

NEED OF THE HOUR: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION :

The NEP asserts that children with disabilities will have opportunities for equal participation across the educational system. A major change is the recognition of the 2016 Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD) and its provisions for inclusive education, defined as a system of education where students with and without disabilities learn together. These recommendations include non-discrimination in schools, accessible infrastructure, reasonable accommodations, individualized supports, use of Braille and Indian Sign language in teaching, and monitoring among others. The policy has provisions for recruitment of special educators with cross-disability training and incorporates disability awareness within teacher education.

NEP (2020) advocates that learners with special needs should be educated with other learners in “Inclusive schools.” It further visualizes the creation of Inclusive schools wherein learning is child-centered, catering to the needs & requirements of each individual child. Now, we see the child as a constructor of his/her own knowledge & move away from traditional teacher dominated “chalk-talk-text” based teaching towards child centered education that makes use of child centered pedagogy. It is worthwhile, to mention here, that Inclusion is a process & not a method or condition which ultimately leads to the empowerment of the learners with special needs, in an environment of self- motivated, self – actualizing and self - monitored learning.

WHY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION ?

- Accessible to the disabled in all parts of the country.
- Use of existing infrastructure and resources possible with some modification.
- Least cost solution.

- Reduces segregation of the disabled at early age.
- Respect of disabled.
- Makes the families of disabled more “Mobile”.
- Localized models of special education.

Inclusive education has been an extensively talked about issue. However, the progress in this direction has been insignificant. As per the BIWAKO Millennium framework for Action towards an inclusive, barrier free and rights-based society for persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, early intervention and education is one of the 7 priority areas to be focused during the second Asian and Pacific decade of disabled persons (2003-2012). The recommendation made during National Consultation (Oct. 2003) regarding education, the focus was of enrollment of Children With Special Needs (CWSN) as schools are resistant to admitting most (CWSN). A/c Encyclopedia of Special Education - “Inclusion refers to the placement and education of students with disabilities in general education classrooms with the students of the same age who do not have disabilities”

“Inclusive education is a system of education where students with special needs including disabilities are educated in neighborhood schools in age appropriate regular classroom settings with non-disabled peers & are provided with supports & instructions that meet their individual needs”.

“Providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with needed supplementary aids and support services, in age-appropriate classes in their neighborhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society”

The idea of inclusive education is gaining ground all over the world . It was further given impetus by UNESCO World Conference on, Special Needs Education held in Salamanca, Spain in1994. The conference specially examined how far Special Education is part of this “Education For All” , movement.

NEED FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA

Education is a human right issues and children with special educational needs should be the part of schools. The PWD Act 1995 clearly explains “the appropriate govt. and local authorities shall (a) ensure that every with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till he attain age of 18 years, (b) endeavor to promote the integration of students with disabilities in normal schools (article 26 a &b). When more than 90% of disabled children are found in the rural areas and majority of special schools and integrated education programs are located in cities. Therefore, inclusive education is very necessary for India.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL INCLUSION:

According to Das & Das there is a need for exchange of manpower & material resource, parents & communities participation, Peer tutoring, and there should be adequate provision in budget for inclusion. Govt. and NGO's should create public awareness specially in rural areas and in the identification of different disabilities. Providing need based services and for providing guidance and counseling. Networking with other NGOs. Providing economic rehabilitation through various activities and facilitating through career counseling and guidance for finding employment opportunities for PWDs. Enhancing PWDs to avail concession and benefits available from the GO and NGO sectors. Creating attitudinal change in the society and establishing Multi Sectorial Linkage, Community, Convergence. and prompt use of affordable, , available accessible and appropriate technology.

CONCLUSION:

The global report on inclusive education presents the work and views of the International Disability Alliance (IDA) on how to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) – *ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all* – in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), especially

respecting its Article 24 on the rights of all learners with disabilities. A critical message of this report is that an inclusive education system is *the only way* to achieve SDG 4 for *all* children – including children and youth with disabilities – whomever and wherever they are.

As India has always placed education at the centre of its development agenda and with bridging the gender, social, regional gaps with community participation it will raise the spirits towards equal opportunities to all ensuring equity in this policy. Implementation of NEP 2020 is going to be the beautiful blend of both ancient and modern knowledge system which not only inculcate to acquire knowledge but also helps in integrating Indian culture and ethos.

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