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## NEP 2020 – A Road to Inclusive Education

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### Abstract

Inclusive Education is a learning environment that involves teaching students with disabilities, special needs, or learning disabilities alongside their peers to foster success for all. Inclusive education, as defined by UNESCO, involves reducing learning obstacles and ensuring participation of all pupils, specifically those at risk of exclusion. This concept has been reinforced by India's Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPWD Act) of 2016 and is in line with the National Educational policy (NEP 2020). Various education commissions and policies in India have laid the foundation for inclusive education. The NEP 2020 places a significant emphasis on inclusive education and addresses various aspects of the education system. The policy highlights the importance of ICT infrastructure, gender-inclusion funds, free accommodations, and equitable, high-quality education for all. It acknowledges the diversity of students and promotes flexible learning pathways. The NEP 2020 represents a promising blueprint for inclusive education in India. In short, National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to fix today's education system as a result of the increasing inclusivity and equity.

*Keywords:* NEP 2020, national education policy, inclusive education, inclusion

### Introduction

"Inclusivity and equity in education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all" (NEP, 2020, p.2), is the aim of Goal 4 of the 2030 global Agenda for Sustainable Development, which India embraced in 2015.

UNESCO Section for Special Needs Education (2000) states Inclusive education deals with removing all barriers and let everyone to come and learn. It is a planned idea made to make possible learning outcomes for all children. It basically deals with removing all exclusion from the education at least at the elementary level, and promoting participation and learning success in basic education for all (Panigrahi, & Malik, 2020). Teaching students that are disable and are of special needs, or learning disabilities in the same classroom as their peers is known as inclusive education. It's a calculated tactic meant to help every kid succeed in their education. It suggests to eliminate all kind of exclusion related human rights to education ,starting at the elementary school level, and enhancing everyone's ability to get, participate in, and complete a basic education of the highest caliber. As to the RPWD Act of 2016, an inclusive education system comprises of both disabled and non-disabled students attending the same courses, and the teaching and learning methodology is appropriately modified to cater to the individual learning requirements of the disabled students. It specifically deals with the inclusion of disabled pupils in regular classrooms. NEP 2020 has endorsed every suggestion made by the RPWD ACT 2016 regarding school instruction. It suggests that action should be taken to provide this targeted group's members with the opportunity to enrol in and thrive in the educational system. All members of marginalised or lower-class groups are to receive high-quality education, according to the recently enacted education policy (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020).

### **Historical Background**

There have been various recommendations given by different education commission. The Kothari Education Commission (1964-66) addressed the importance of developing an effective education program for people with disabilities in order to offer equal educational opportunities (Alur, 2002).

Children with exceptional needs were given access to education through the 1974 launch of the Integrated Education for Disabled Children project. The National Policy on Education (1968) and NPE (1986) emphasised compulsory education for all the children upto age of 14 years. National policy on education (1968) and national policy on education (1986) states “to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped with general community as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence” (*National Policy on Education, 1968*).

In September 1992, the Rehabilitation Council of India Act was passed. This act was enacted to govern rehabilitation professional training and the preservation of a Central Rehabilitation Register (RCI ,1992).

The Person with Disabilities Act, 1995 guaranteed the basic rights of disabled people to full participation, protection of their liberty, and equal chances for success.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2000) is Government of India flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Elementary Education & Literacy, April 2004).

Most recent advancement is the Right of Children for Free and Compulsory Education (2009) which guarantees right to free and compulsory education to all children between ages six to fourteen years (Article 21A).

According to Act No. 49 of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016), The United Nations has established the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) as a global agreement on human rights with the aim of safeguarding the rights and dignity of individuals with disabilities.

The Rights of Person with Disability Act 2016, replaced the PwD Act of 1995. The action was in alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). It includes 21 conditions as disable (Kumar, 2016).

Considering the work done in past on inclusive education, the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 emphasized, "The most effective means of attaining social justice and equality is education," a statement that has significance for the growth of inclusive communities and society at large. Educational challenges, facilities, and services for Children with Special Needs (CwSN) must be addressed if policy is to be enforced.

### **NEP 2020 and Inclusive Education**

According to the National Education Policy (2020) Education is the single device for achieving social justice and equality. The development of inclusive communities and society at large will be impacted by this. If policy is to be implemented, educational barriers, resources, and services for children with special needs must be addressed. According to the policy, total school enrolment declines gradually from Grade 1 to Grade 12, it is noticeably more severe for several socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (women and transgender people, minorities, OBCs, SC, and ST, place-based identities, learning disabilities, immigrant populations, low-income families, vulnerable youngsters, victims or the offspring of human trafficking, orphans, urban child beggars, etc.). The policy also acknowledges the significance of setting up supportive systems to give children with special needs also known as "Divyangjan", the same chances to receive high-quality education as any other child. It will also be crucial to consider research that identifies which actions are most successful for achieving particular Sustainable Development Goals.

NEP 2020 is a holistic document which has emphasised on various aspects of education system and has given emphasis on inclusive education likewise. Some recommendations for inclusive education as per NEP 2020 are:

*Access to all:* All educational levels, from Early Childhood Care and Education to higher education, should have universal access to high-quality instruction, according to the NEP. The NEP recognises the importance of ECCE as an element of learning. It works to eliminate shortages in educational access with special focus on marginalised and underrepresented populations (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020).

*ICT Infrastructure:* In order to guarantee that teachers and students have access of all resources they need for successful technology based learning. The policy stresses the implementation of information and technology infrastructures in schools. NEP focuses the utilization of digital resources, videos and interactive learning materials. These all resources are designed according to diverse learning needs of child (National Education Policy 2020, Part 3).

*Gender-Inclusion Fund:* The Indian government plans to set "Gender-Inclusion Fund" in order to enhance the country's ability to offer outstanding fair education to all girls, including transgender students. Funds will also allow States to support and scale up successful community-based interventions that address local context-specific barriers to female and transgender children's participation in and access to education. The grant will be distributed to States with the aim of executing Central government initiatives, which are essential in enabling female and transgender children's access to education. Initiatives like providing bicycles, toilets, sanitary facilities, and conditional cash transfers are among these goals. For additional socioeconomically disadvantaged groups comparable "Inclusion Fund" programmes will also be created to address related access

concerns. This policy seeks to remove any lingering discrepancy in access (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020).

*Free accommodations:* Free boarding facilities will be set up at schools in locations that need students to travel considerable distances, with an emphasis on serving students from low-income families. Sufficient protocols will be implemented to guarantee the security of every pupil, with a particular focus on the welfare of females. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas are set to undergo renovations and extensions in order to increase the number of girls from economically disadvantaged families enrolled in top-notch schools through Grade 12. In addition, more Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Kendriya Vidyalayas will be built in the country in order to improve the availability of exclusive educational opportunities, with an emphasis on aspirational districts, special education zones, and underprivileged areas. Kendriya Vidyalayas and other elementary schools around the country will introduce pre-school sections that will provide minimum one year of early childhood care and education.

*Education that is Equitable and of High Quality:* NEP 2020 emphasises the importance of equal education. It means that every child in India, regardless of socioeconomic situation, caste, gender, or skills, should have access to a quality education. The policy seeks to remove past inequities and impacts in the educational system. This involves ensuring that children from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds have equal access to school as others.

The policy seeks to upgrade the curriculum, methods of teaching, and evaluation structures in order to provide students with a valuable and timely education. It encourages critical thinking, problem solving, and the development of practical skills, providing students for the challenges of the modern world.

*Diverse Routes:* The NEP recognises student variety and promotes a flexible, multi-disciplinary approach to education. It promotes a variety of learning pathways including formal as well as non-formal education, e-learning, vocational and skill based education, open and distance learning and multilingual and multidisciplinary approach.

***Special Education:* The NEP recognizes the need for additional special educators, especially at middle and secondary school levels, to support children and disabilities (Divyang children). It emphasizes all- inclusive education, special teachers and support personnel, subject instruction for students with disability, unrestricted learning space or barrier free environment and adaptable courses and evaluations.**

*Indian Sign Language (ISL):* To meet the standards of students with hearing impairments, the NEP emphasises how crucial it is to establish Indian Sign Language (ISL) across the nation. Standardisation involves creating a set of standard signs and gestures that can be understood and utilised across the country. Additionally, accepted and encouraged are regional sign languages.

*Language Inclusion:* The policy emphasises the need of breaking down language barriers between students and educational media. When possible, it encourages the use of students' mother tongues and home languages in the educational process. It recognizes that India is a linguistically diverse country with numerous languages. It also supports for language learning, and also encourage respect for local languages.

*Curriculum pedagogy:* According to the policy, the curriculum and teaching strategies must be updated to be more inclusive, culturally sensitive and flexible to the different requirements of pupils. This entails incorporating historical and significant contributions from marginalised communities into curriculum to provide students with a more representative and equitable

education(National Council of Educational Research & Training, Delhi. Equitable and Inclusion: Learning for all).

*Social justice and equality:* The best single instrument for improving equality and social justice is education. In addition to being a worthwhile goal in and of itself, inclusive and equitable education is essential to establishing a society in which everyone is given the opportunity to pursue their goals, grow, and positively benefit the nation.

*Establishments of Special Education Zones:* Among the significant recommendations made by NEP is the proposal to create Special Educational Zones in areas where a sizable portion of the population is from socio economically disadvantaged groups and in districts with high aspirations. The primary objective is to provide education to India's most isolated and rural areas. To transform these underdeveloped areas, more resources would be allocated, and various centre and state plans and programs would be harmonized (National Council of Educational Research & Training, Delhi. *Equitable and Inclusion: Learning for all*).

NEP 2020 offers an amazing and innovative strategy for inclusive education. Through the implementation of modifications to educational programmes and facilities, our new education policy places a great deal of weight on fostering an inclusive education culture and structure within our educational system. The purpose of these adjustments is to facilitate the inclusion of resources that advance fundamental human values including empathy, compassion, tolerance, respect for all people, nonviolent protest, global inclusion, equity, and equal opportunity. In light of India's abundant diversity, inclusive education emphasises valuing and celebrating its difference. It strives to guarantee equal access to high-quality education for all pupils, irrespective of their language background, gender, social situation, physical or cognitive abilities, or any other personal attributes. The NEP 2020 has the ability to propel a paradigm change in inclusive education if it is

carried out with meticulous preparation and execution. However, strong collaboration between stakeholders and policymakers is necessary to enable the realisation of the inclusive education vision in order to properly put these ideas into practise. If this strategy is implemented well, it would not only change the educational landscape but also build a more inclusive and equal society where everyone has the chance to prosper and advance the country.

### **Conclusion**

The National Education Policy, 2020 promises a number of exciting possibilities for inclusive education in India. It places a strong emphasis on early childhood care, flexible curricula, and universal access to quality education. Remedial education, vocational training, and special assistance for learners with disabilities are indispensable aspects. In order to establish an inclusive educational ecosystem, the policy emphasises teacher development, technological Edu integration, and cooperative collaborations. The goal of NEP 2020 is in order to guarantee that every kid has access to an excellent educational opportunities and can realise their full potential by eradicating inequalities and offering equitable educational opportunities. A progressive approach to inclusive education in India is outlined in the National Education Policy 2020, with a focus on equity, quality, and accessibility. It will take unified efforts and resources to successfully implement these policies and practises, but the result could be a more diverse and inclusive education system that better prepares students for the possibilities and challenges of the twenty-first century.

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