National Education Policy-2020: A Road Map for Inclusive Learning

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> "If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way that they learn"
>
> Ignacio Estrada

Abstract- A significant turning point in the history of Indian education is the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which embraces inclusivity through revolutionary changes and signals a break from the past. This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the fundamental ideas of National Education Policy-2020, inclusive education, features of National Education Policy-2020 promoting Inclusive Learning, implementation mechanism, role of stakeholders, aim and objective of inclusive education as a driving force behind the creation of inclusive learning environments.

Index Terms- Disability, Inclusive Education and National Education Policy-2020

I. INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of India ensures equality, freedom, justice and dignity of all individuals. The constitutional obligations of an equitable, inclusive, and plural society are guiding the Indian education system to be equitable and inclusive in nature. The National Education Policy, 2020 has a vision of transforming India by providing high-quality equitable and inclusive education to ensure that all students with diverse learning needs are able to thrive in the education system with equal learning opportunities in an inclusive environment to realize their full potentials. As stated in the National Education Policy 2020, "the aim must be for India to have an education system by 2040 that is second to none, with equitable access to the highest-quality education for all learners regardless of social or economic background". The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 states that education is a human right and a force for sustainable development and peace. Ambitions for education are essentially captured in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) of the 2030 Agenda which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030.

As the cornerstone of India's educational landscape undergoes a paradigm shift, the nation braces itself for a future where inclusivity and adaptability take centre stage. For more than thirty years, the 1986 policy had a significant impact on how Indian education was shaped. But the dynamic character of today's world demands a new outlook, one that not only builds on the successes of the past but also successfully negotiates the complex obstacles and goals of the present. The NEP 2020 is a new calibration of India's educational a map, not just a change. The NEP 2020 as an instrument for promoting inclusive learning and offers a creative road map for addressing the needs of a rapidly changing future.

2.Foundation of NEP-2020:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a significant reassessment of the fundamental ideology guiding the Indian education system, marking an evolution from the educational theory of 1986. This section delves into the fundamentals of NEP 2020, elucidating the fundamental goals and tenets that have guided this forward-thinking policy's development.

This change is being driven by a growing realization that education is not a separately but rather a necessary part of society's advancement. NEP 2020 adopts a comprehensive approach, realizing that societal demands are dynamic and reflect the constantly shifting global environment. It is an intervention that anticipates the needs of the twenty-first century and matches with them rather than just a reaction to current issues.

The foundation of NEP 2020 is a determination to raising a new generation of students who are not only highly proficient academically but also have a deep awareness of the society they live in. This policy's guiding principles reflect the concepts of relevance, adaptability, and inclusivity. Beyond just providing access to education, inclusivity is a concept that takes into account the various requirements, capacities, and goals of each and every learner.

Another pillar of NEP 2020 is flexibility, which incorporates every aspect of the educational ecosystem rather than just the curriculum. Since every learner is different and progresses at their own rate, the policy aims to create a flexible framework that can be adjusted to meet the changing demands of the class. This flexibility cuts beyond established disciplinary lines, opening the

door for a more interdisciplinary and interconnected learning experience.

Thus, the fundamental ideas of NEP 2020 are fundamentally a creative reimagining of education, one that goes beyond the confines of traditional pedagogy to envision a system that not only imparts information but also fosters holistic development. Examining these foundations reveals a well-planned policy intended to generate a generation of resilient, imaginative thinkers who can influence the future, in addition to meeting the demands of education today.

3.Concept and Meaning of Inclusive Education

Many notions and terminology that have been employed in the field of education over the past few decades have frequently led to a great deal of confusion. Included in them is inclusive education.

When we talk about inclusion in education, we mean that every student should have equal access to and opportunities for learning. A welcoming and supportive learning environment that accommodates all students regardless of their learning preferences, skill levels, or disabilities is what inclusive education broadly refers to.

"Inclusive Education is defined as a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners irrespective of all learners, irrespective of race, class, colour, gender, disability, sexual preference, learning styles and language."

Inclusion offers a different perspective on the education of child with disabilities in ordinary schools. Inclusion means all children are welcome regardless of differences. In this system the emphasis is not on treating the deficit but on adapting the environment to accommodate the disability perceiving it as a normal difference. Within the inclusion model there is less emphasis on trying to make the child as much like a seeing child as possible. The differences are not only to be accepted and respected but also to rejoice to the fact that no two human beings are same or equal.

Inclusion in RPWD ACT 2016-A system of education where students with and without disability learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different type of students with disabilities.

MHRD (2003) uses the following definition: "Inclusive education means all learners, young people - with or without disabilities being able to learn together in ordinary pre-school provisions, schools and community educational settings with appropriate network of support services."

Every child has the right to education. That includes children with disabilities. The **CRPD** goes further to stress that inclusive education is a fundamental human right for every child with a disability. An inclusive education system is one that accommodates all students whatever their abilities or requirements, and at all levels – pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and life-long learning

"Inclusive Education refers to the educational practice base on the philosophical belief that all learners, those with disabilities and those without, have a right to be educated together in age-appropriate class groups, and that all will benefit from education in regular classrooms of community schools. Within these settings teachers, parents and others work collaboratively using appropriate and sufficient resources to interpret and enact the regular curriculum in a flexible manner in accordance with the individual abilities and needs of all learners."

Prof Gary Bunch Ontario.

According to **Stainback (1992)**, "Inclusion facilitates integration in school systems when general and special education personnel, as well as curriculum and instructional procedures, are combined to provide educational experiences to meet the needs of the students in an integrated setup."

According to **UNESCO (1994)**, "Inclusion is seen as diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation a process of addressing and responding to the in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education (Booth, 1996). It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children."

Therefore, based on the conversation above, we can say that Inclusive education is an approach that looks at how to change education institutions in order to adapt to the diversity of learners, not only a side issue on how some students can be integrated into the mainstream curriculum. It attempts to make diversity in the classroom feel natural and to help educators and students view it as an opportunity for growth and enrichment rather than as a hindrance.

4.Aim and objectives of inclusive education:

The aim is to reach out and register children with disabilities in mainstream schools, to offer them efficient academic help, and to arm them with the skills necessary to navigate the obstacles that arise in and around their communities.

4.1 Education for all: This means giving genuine learning opportunities to all students in the same classroom at the same school who were never given them. Every student's educational requirements are met in an inclusive school by having them supported by classmates and other members of the school community. In an inclusive environment as opposed to a segregated one, children with disabilities exhibit a high degree of social interaction with classmates who are not impaired. In inclusive environments, children with disabilities typically get a more rigorous educational program aimed at enhancing their academic performance and skill development. In the classroom, standard pupils benefit from enhanced teaching devices. The use of technology in the classroom will provide every kid with an equal opportunity to learn to the best of their abilities.

4.2 Protection of Right:
Safeguard the rights of individuals with disabilities to education by offering them this right. The Indian Constitution demands an inclusive society that includes individuals with disabilities and guarantees equality, freedom, justice, and dignity to every individual. The goals of inclusive education are to maintain human dignity, challenge common misconceptions, and acknowledge that nobody is perfection. The Integrated Education for Disabled Children scheme (IEDC) was introduced by the

Indian government in 1974. The Project Integrated Education (PIED) for disabled people was introduced in 1987. The goal of the District Primary Education Program (DPEP) is to "universalize elementary education." The integrated education for disabled children scheme (IEDC Scheme) aimed to prepare disabled children for normal growth and to face life with courage and confidence. It also provided educational opportunities for disabled children in regular schools, which would help them stay in the educational system. The disabled children were also to be integrated as equal partners with the general community at all levels.

4.3 Promotion of brotherhood:

Children come from all backgrounds, and even though they may not be same in terms of intelligence, physical ability, or even preferred methods of learning, they are all entitled to the same benefits. Youngsters are taught to value originality—both their own and that of others. Students' emotional intelligence rises when they develop tolerance, patience, and compassion for one another. They acquire the capacity to put up with both the good and bad in other people. Not only do kids who help their friends make lifelong friendships, but they also feel really good about themselves.

4.4 Identification of skills:

In inclusive education, skills include problem-solving and self-care abilities as well as adhering to rules and teacher directions. The social value of equality is promoted by inclusive education, which also fosters autonomous thought, positive competency, and increased self-esteem. The chance for the kids to grow and care for one another, acquiring the values and abilities necessary for communal living, enriches them all. Giving disabled students the chance to integrate into the school community and provide them with a realistic understanding of their own possibilities and limitations in a competitive and multiform society is another goal of inclusive education.

4.5 To get ready for upcoming difficulties:

Teachers need to be creative in their teaching if they want to captivate every student. Inclusive education reflects everyone's expectation that children will be included and respected for the rest of their lives. Every child can participate in their community, experience a sense of belonging, and gain more maturity readiness. Children have different motives for wanting to learn in a classroom with their classmates, based on the variety of skills they possess. Effective inclusion initiatives can help the youngster develop their skills and capabilities.

5. Key Features of NEP 2020 Promoting Inclusive Learning

This section provides an in-depth analysis of the key features of NEP 2020 that contribute to inclusive learning. The, emphasis on early childhood care, Curtailing Dropout Rates and Ensuring Universal Access to Education at All Levels, flexible curricular structure, Curriculum and Pedagogy in Schools, Special Education Zones (SEZs),and education, integration of vocational education, and the role of technology are explored. Real-world examples and success stories illustrate the transformative potential of these features in reshaping the learning experience for students across the country.

5.1 Early Childhood Care and Education:

The Foundation of Learning: Schools providing quality ECCE reap the greatest dividends for children who come from families that are economically disadvantaged. Inclusion and equal participation of children from these groups and for children with disabilities in ECCE and the schooling system is of highest priority. "The overarching goal will be to ensure universal access to high-quality ECCE across the country in a phased manner. Special attention and priority will be given to districts and locations that are particularly socio-economically disadvantaged. ECCE will also be introduced in Ashramshalas in tribal-concentrated areas and in all formats of alternative schooling in a phased manner."

5.2 Curtailing Dropout Rates and Ensuring Universal Access to Education at All Levels: "For providing equitable and quality education from the Foundational Stage through Grade 12 to all children up to the age of 18, suitable facilitating systems shall be put in place". To facilitate learning for all students, with special emphasis on SocioEconomically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), the scope of school education will be broadened to facilitate multiple pathways to learning involving both formal and nonformal education modes. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Programmes offered by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)5 and State Open Schools will be expanded and strengthened for meeting the learning needs of young people in India who are not able to attend a physical school".

5.3 **Curriculum and Pedagogy in Schools**: Learning should be Holistic, Integrated, Enjoyable, and Engaging. "All efforts will be made early on to ensure that any gaps that exist between the language spoken by the child and the medium of teaching are bridged. In cases where home language/mother tongue textbook material is not available, the language of transaction between teachers and students will still remain the home language/mother tongue wherever possible". Specific actions including the use of appropriate technology enabling children to work at their own pace, with flexible curricula to leverage each child's strengths would be initiated. Indian Sign Language (ISL) will be standardized across the country and National and State curriculum materials developed, for use by students with hearing impairment. Local sign languages will be respected and taught as well, where possible and relevant.

5.4 Special Education Zones (SEZs):

Certain geographical areas contain significantly larger proportions of SEDGs. Also, there are locations that have been identified as Aspirational Districts by the Government which require special interventions for promoting their educational development. The Policy recommends that regions of the country with large populations from educationally-disadvantaged SEDGs should be declared Special Education Zones (SEZs), where all the schemes and policies are implemented to the maximum through additional concerted efforts, in order to truly change their educational landscape. Providing quality education to girls is the best way to increase the education levels for SEDGs, the policy thus recommends that the policies and schemes designed to include students from SEDGs should be especially targeted

towards girls in these SEDGs to eliminate any remaining disparity in access to education (including vocational education) for children from any gender or other socio-economically disadvantaged group not just in the present but also in future generations.

6.Provisions:

6.1Concerted curricular and pedagogical initiatives, including the introduction of contemporary subjects such as Artificial Intelligence, Design Thinking, Holistic Health, Organic Living, Environmental Education, Global Citizenship Education (GCED), etc. at relevant stages will be undertaken to develop these various important skills in students at all levels**.**

6.2 Special Educators:

There is an urgent need for additional special educators for certain areas of school education. Some examples of such specialist requirements include subject teaching for children with disabilities/Divyang children at the Middle and Secondary school level, including teaching for specific learning disabilities. Such teachers would require not only subject-teaching knowledge and understanding of subject-related aims of education, but also the relevant skills for understanding of special requirements of children. Therefore, such areas could be developed as secondary specializations for subject teachers or generalist teachers, during or after pre-service teacher preparation. They will be offered as certificate courses, in the pre-service as well as in-service mode, either full time or as part-time/blended courses - again, necessarily, at multidisciplinary colleges or universities. Greater synergy will be enabled between the course curriculum of NCTE and RCI to ensure adequate availability of qualified special educators who can handle subject teaching as well.

6.3 Assessment and certification agencies:

Assessment and certification agencies (National Assessment Centre, PARAKH) will formulate guidelines and recommend appropriate tools for conducting assessment, from the foundational stage to higher education (including for entrance exams), in order to ensure equitable access and opportunities for all students with learning disabilities.

7.Implementation mechanism:

The NEP states that ECCE will be delivered through Anganwadi's, pre-schools, and grade 1 and 2 of primary schools. This necessitates the expansion and strengthening of early childhood education institutions, which involves:

● Strengthening Anganwadi:

Sensitisation of workers and teachers to diverse learning needs, disabilities, paying close attention to young children with regards to their learning progress. Easy to use tools in a number of different languages for the preliminary screening of children for further referral to assessment camps for disability certification. At this stage children should not be diagnosed and labelled, but only referred further after discussions with parents/guardians. Integration with school complexes/clusters. Provision of high-quality, accessible play and early learning materials that is suitably adapted/made accessible for the use of children with diverse needs.

● ECCE training of Anganwadi workers and teachers:

The planning and implementation of early childhood care and education curriculum will be carried out jointly by the Ministries of Education, Women and Child Development (WCD), Health and Family Welfare (HFW), Panchayati Raj, Social Justice & Empowerment (MSJE) and Tribal Affairs. Certificate and diploma programs in ECCE will be designed and run through offline as well as digital/distance mode as per convenience of participants. Those with qualifications of 10+2 and above shall be given a 6-month certificate programme in ECCE; and those with lower educational qualifications shall be given a one-year diploma programme covering early literacy, numeracy, and other relevant aspects from the perspective of inclusion of diverse learners. This training of Anganwadi workers/teachers will be mentored by the Cluster Resource Centres of the School Education Department which shall hold at least one monthly contact class for continuous assessment. In the longer term, State Governments shall prepare cadres of professionally qualified educators for early childhood care and education, through stage-specific professional training, mentoring mechanisms, and career mapping.

● Effective early intervention works towards making optimum use of every potential in the child to move on the path of holistic child development10 in all domains such as cognitive, language and communication, socialization, motor development and self-help skills development. Early childhood interventions in care, development and education also prevent problems occurring, or to tackle them head-on when they do, before secondary problems set in. It also helps to foster a whole set of personal strengths and skills that prepare a child for inclusive education.

● Pre-school inclusive education programme lays a firm foundation for preparatory and middle stages of school education. This needs active partnership with families, ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, NGOs support to schools.

● There are many ECCE holistic child development training programmes/refresher courses starting from screening to planning interventions for preparing children who are at risk, development delays, disabilities, chronic illness, epilepsy, premature birth etc. available in India which can be used by ECCE personnel, which would be available on DIKSHA/SWAYAM/NDEAR portals free of cost and these training courses are open for parents, teachers, Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers and community workers and others involved in early childhood care and education.

● State/district level studies (e.g. action research) related to education of young children at preparatory stage should be conducted, reported and disseminated for further improvement in quality of the pre-school education programme.

Ensuring accessibility infrastructure of schools as per the accessible code for educational institutions, with:

➢ separate toilets or boys and girls, built at a distance from each other and an adapted toilet for CwDs,
➢ toilets having constant running water and sanitation facilities;
➢ ramps and railings for children who may have difficulty in moving;
➢ tactile pathways and signage in approaching road, entrance, corridors, classrooms, labs, activity rooms, library, dining room etc.

- library, laboratory, activity rooms/spaces etc. equipped with good storage space and books, LTMs, equipment and other devices in accessible formats and ICT enabled library, smart classrooms and ample provisions for usage of assistive technology;
- resource room, separate room or rooms for vocational activities for optional/additional teaching if required;
- playground with adequate equipment for outdoor games and physical activities for all including CwDs;

8.The stakeholder role in an inclusive classroom:

Main stakeholder in the process of inclusive education are the policy makers, school authorities, teachers, teacher educators, parents, assistant teachers, health professional's counsellor and siblings etc.

8.1. Role of Parent-teacher interaction

Parents of students in different classrooms frequently express concern over the daily activities and behaviour of their children. Thus, the instructor needs to make the parents feel at comfortable. They accomplish this by responding to their worries and providing them with progress reports on their kids.
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8.2 Role of NGO as stakeholder:

To make the case for inclusive education, collaborating with non-governmental organizations is essential. Organizations from the civil society can have a significant impact on raising awareness of and funding for inclusive education. To go beyond the "special education paradigm" and actively promote their children's right to an education, families of disabled children require empowerment, support, and training. Achieving this objective and building a critical mass that raises awareness and promotes inclusiveness can be greatly aided by civil society organizations.

8.3 Role of the Teacher as stakeholder:

Teachers need to be aware that kids gain important skills from seeing their parents and teachers simultaneously. He should to be conscious of each child's unique demands. The activities and behaviours of teachers have a significant impact on the children. Students are continually observing the teacher's attire. How the teachers talk about the topics and how he may connect them to the kids in the community. The development of the body, morality, emotions, mind, and psychology is mostly affected, whether positively or negatively. From concrete to abstract, general to specific, simple to complicated, concrete to abstract, and theoretical to practical, the kids learn. Teachers have a vital role in inclusion as stakeholders. Precise student identification is one of the most crucial tasks an inclusion teacher performs in a diverse classroom. The social, emotional, behavioural, physical, and intellectual strengths of their exceptional kids are recognized by the teachers. To learn more about the students' needs, they speak with their parents or guardians. Based on this data, the teachers develop customized lesson plans and appropriate adjustments. For example, a student who is blind or visually handicapped would need larger print for course materials, or another student might need special seating because of their concentration during class. In a similar vein, teachers help students learn without feeling overburdened by offering different degrees of support in the classroom.

8.4 Role of Parents as stakeholders:

All aspects of learning require the involvement of the parents of exceptional children. The child's family is regarded as his primary source of education, and here is where his education begins. Parents are seen as the most significant stakeholders in inclusive settings. Parents have a key duty to see to it that their children finish school in keeping with their expectations. Every parent now has a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school. It is always the parents' responsibility to look after their children.

8.5 In order to provide special facilities, the following must be provided: transportation, escort and scribe allowances to children with special needs according to requirement, a stipend for all girls with special needs (from pre-primary to XII), assistive devices, aids and appliances, and ICT (Information and Communications Technology) resources like JAWS (Job Access with Speech). Additionally, providing children with special needs with the necessary teaching and learning resources, medical facilities, support for vocational training, guidance and counselling, and therapeutic services in accordance with their needs in coordination with line departments. Teachers in ordinary schools must also receive training and sensitivity training in order to educate and work with students who have special needs in the regular classroom.

In today's education system, inclusive education is a novel method, and curriculum developers, policy makers, and educationists all played significant roles. In order to improve the outcome, all parties involved must sincerely contemplate this. Children's development through high-caliber performance is stopped by mainstream education's flexibility and acceptance of the exceptional kid. In managing and administering any institution, administrators play a crucial role. One of their biggest challenges is ensuring that there are no disabilities present within the institution, as this would prevent specialized infrastructure and other facilities from being ready. If there is to be any admission in that, they have done very suddenly and quickly.

The solution to this problem has been proposed by NEP-2020, which mandates that all schools and colleges have inclusive campuses and special education facilities. The institution's independence will then be the sole thing guaranteed; failing that, the inspectional rating will drop. Even people are opposing calling attention to the situation and accepting its answers. The involvement of parents, educators, and other members of the school management committee and higher education committee is crucial in addressing such issues.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is an outstanding instance of revolutionary transformation in Indian education, especially in terms of its dedication to creating inclusive learning environments. This comprehensive program is a profound reworking of educational philosophy and represents more than just a historical change from its 1986 predecessor. NEP 2020's pillars of global readiness, inclusiveness, flexibility, and holistic development pave the way for a radical change in the way the country views education.

NEP 2020's inclusive learning framework emphasizes how important it is to build an educational ecosystem that values

diversity and meets each student's individual needs. The policy's emphasis on inclusivity aims to break down barriers and make education a means of achieving equality of opportunity and empowerment. The sections of NEP 2020, which tackle language diversity, socioeconomic inequities, and specialized support systems, demonstrate a real commitment to the goal of leaving no learner behind. It is clear as we work our way through NEP 2020's numerous dimensions that its influence goes beyond the classroom and influences societal structures, helping to shape the country's future. The policy acknowledges the critical role educators play in bringing the vision of an inclusive educational system to reality by emphasizing teacher preparation for inclusion. NEP 2020 must be carefully implemented and supported going forward in order to fully realize its transformative potential. Instead of being a static document, the policy is a dynamic blueprint that changes to meet the changing demands of the educational environment. This conclusion emphasizes how crucial it is for communities, parents, educators, and legislators to continue working together in order to maintain NEP 2020's long-term success. The policy can only genuinely transform India's educational landscape and create an inclusive, empowered, and progressive system of learning if there is a concerted effort and common commitment.

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[46] https://ciet.nic.in/tlclassroom.php?&ln=en

[47] https://diksha.gov.in/ncert/

[48] https://disabilityaffairs.gov.in/content/page/guidelines.php https://disabilityaffairs.gov.in/upload/uploadfiles/files/Guidelines-29_08_2018.pdf https://dsel.education.gov.in/sites/default/files/2021-06/CWSN_E-Content_guidelines.pdf https://dsel.education.gov.in/sites/default/files/guidelines/guidelines_sss.pdf https://epathshala.nic.in/

[49] https://ictcurriculum.gov.in/

[50] https://itpd.ncert.gov.in//

[51] https://ncert.nic.in/accessibility.php

[52] https://ncert.nic.in/degsn/NCERTBarkhaseries/Start.html https://ncert.nic.in/degsn/pdf/Book_enhancement_QE.pdf https://ncert.nic.in/degsn/pdf/FAQ-E.pdf

[53] https://ncert.nic.in/degsn/pdf/handbook_PAB.pdf https://ncert.nic.in/degsn/pdf/handbook_ups.pdf https://ncert.nic.in/degsn/pdf/IndexforInclusiveSchools.pdf https://ncert.nic.in/degsn/pdf/sms.pdf https://ncert.nic.in/degsn/pdf/Training_Module_for_Quality_Education.pdf https://ncert.nic.in/ict-initiatives.php

[54] https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/announcement/Inclusion_in_Eduction.pdf https://ncert.nic.in/pdf/Guidelines50HoursCpd.pdf

[55] https://ncert.nic.in/textbook.php

[56] http://mhrd.gov.in/inclusive_education http://mhrd.gov.in/rashtriya_madhyamik_shiksha_abhiyan

[57] http://minorityaffairs.gov.in

[58] http://nhfdc.nic.in/

[59] http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=150

[60] http;//education.gov.in

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