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Volume: 10, Issue 2, 2023 (April-June)

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW, EDUCATION,
SOCIAL AND SPORTS STUDIES
(IJLESS)**

A Peer Reviewed and Refereed Journal

[DOI: 10.33329/ijless.10.2](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijless.10.2)

<http://ijless.kypublications.com/>

ISSN: 2455-0418 (Print), 2394-9724 (online)

2023©KY PUBLICATIONS, INDIA

www.kypublications.com

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NEP-2020 IN THE CONTEXT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

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DOI: [10.33329/ijless.10.2.24](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijless.10.2.24)



ABSTRACT

The New Education Policy (NEP-2020) that is now referred to as National Education Policy. It has been approved on the 29th July 2020. National Education Policy 2020 has come almost 34 years after the National Policy on Education (NEP), 1986. The NEP, 2020 is very pragmatic in its approach as it specifically intended to focus on what education system should be, which area we need to focus upon and work on, what are our strong points and where are we lacking?

Overall, the policy represents a framework which is divided into majorly 4 main areas that is school education, higher education other key areas of focus and making it happen. Each area covers various subthemes on which future visions, issues or concerns and opportunities are given. Inclusive education is one of these areas, on which the policy makes recommendations in a very comprehensive manner. It not only refers to school education but also discusses inclusion in the context of higher education taking issues of access, equality, and social justice in diverse contexts that exist in India.

Keywords: Inclusion, social justice, contexts

Particularly in the context of school education, chapter 6 of the NEP 2020 is titled as Equitable and Inclusive Education Learning for All that majorly discusses the idea and relevance of inclusive education for developing an equitable society. The policy says that "Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. Inclusion and equitable education - which indeed an essential goal in its own right-is also critical to achieve an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation". As one can see that the policy reiterates that inclusion and equitable education is directly related to the growth of a nation. Thus, the policy strongly emphasises that for nation building it was essential to achieve the goal of hundred percent equitable and inclusive education. Besides constant efforts made by various Governments for bridging these gender and social category gaps, it focuses on idea of 'socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups' (SEDGs) and includes categories based on gender, geographical identities, disabilities, and socio-economic condition. The diverse contexts in Indian society is reflected in the terminology SEDGs itself as it covers people from backward castes, class, gender disability, and victims of child trafficking etc. Furthermore, this policy quotes the data of U-DISE 2016-17 about the issue of increasing dropout rates of children from scheduled caste and children with special needs (Divyang) at higher secondary level. Therefore, retention of SEDGs in school, bridging the gap of accessing resources, participation and improved learning outcomes are the major goals of this policy in

the area of inclusive and equitable education at school level. Moreover, it acknowledges the current disparities in our school education system, and it suggests interventions at various levels in school education itself to overcome these disparities. For example, it mentions the provision of providing the bicycles and organising cycles for children (mainly girl child) as access to school themselves as the first and important step towards “education for all” Policy also focuses on developing special mechanisms for providing equal opportunities to children with special needs so that no child should be left behind.

Improving Early Child Care Education

One of the most significant aspects of the policy is that when this policy talks about the inclusion of all, it recognises the importance of improving the present ECCE system, as this stage is the building block for the overall development of children in upcoming school years.

Identifying special education zones

In Indian context another important factor that influences children’s education is the effect of geographical conditions. It is evident that in hilly area accessibility to the public school is very difficult and this difficulty gets doubled for children with special needs The policy accepts this issue as one of the concerns and talks about the identification of aspirational districts, which require additional interventions for improving the educational situation in that district. Furthermore, it has expanded the idea of an ‘aspirational district’ and set a goal for identifying a “Special Education Zone” , where population of SEDGs is larger than other areas. In these zones special effort will be made to maximise the educational opportunities and to reduce the socio- economic gaps.

Gender inclusion fund

The policy states that women are about half of all SEDGs and they face double exclusion in the society. To overcome this challenge, this policy planned to constitute a “Gender Inclusion Fund” to provide better equitable opportunities to girl child as well as transgender students.

Flexible curriculum

RPWD Act 2016 are getting enclosed in National Curriculum Frame work suggested several quality measures in this policy like accessible textbooks, age and language appropriate materials, new forms of assessment, flexible curriculum etc.

Traditional or Alternative pedagogical schools

The policy also laid emphasis on alternative forms of schools, that they should sustain their traditional or alternative pedagogical styles. However, while sustaining their uniqueness they should make sure that all children are getting equal opportunity to read, listen, enjoy, and participate in all school activities The NEP,2020 encourages students to participate in nation and state level examinations and assessments conducted by NTA.

IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION:

The chapter 14 of the policy titled as Equity and Inclusion in higher Education, acknowledges the challenges faced by students at higher education level. As the challenges faced by students in higher education is in continuation of school education, therefore measures suggested in school education should be followed in higher education as well. The policy highlights that there are certain issues like lack of awareness about inclusion. Lack of knowledge of educational opportunities, costly education. Limited good universities, lack of student support system etc.

Gender Balance in Higher Education Institutions

The number of girl students taking admissions in higher education Institutions are relatively less than the boy students.NEP-2020 recommended to enhance the gender balance in admissions in Higher Educational Institutions.

Establishment of Higher Educational Institutions in Aspirational Districts

This policy stated that SDEGs (Socio- economically diverse group) persons with disabilities are more in aspirational districts It is difficult for them to travel and access different geographical locations.NEP-2020 recommended the establishment of higher education institution in special education zones containing larger number of SEDGs.

Teaching in Local/Bilingual Language

NEP-2020 suggested to develop and support high- quality higher education institutions that teach in local/ bilingually.

CONCLUSION

After examining the issues and concerns of people with disability, we are now in a position to say that the ideas of equality, rights non- discrimination, and freedom which were initially sought for them have in recent initiatives and provisions both at global and national levels are specifically recommending as well as propagating inclusion for them Also, it started with people with disability and their rights but inclusion as an ideology broaden to address the concerns of all people across the world who were marginalised and were disadvantaged due to some reason.

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