



Cultivating Potential: The National Education Policy 2020's Requirement for Equity and Inclusive Education

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Abstract

According to India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, equity and inclusion are essential to achieving social justice and high-quality education. NEP 2020 aims to address issues among various learner groups, acknowledging education as a potent tool for national development. With special reference to higher education and Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities, women, people with disabilities, and students from marginalized geographic areas, this paper explores the importance of equity and inclusive education under NEP 2020.

In order to examine structural obstacles to inclusive education and assess the tactics suggested by NEP 2020, the study uses a documentary analytic technique, consulting official policy papers, government publications, scholarly literature, and educational research databases. Community involvement, gender equality programs, inclusive pedagogical reforms in early childhood education, integration of skill-based and vocational courses, multilingual education, flexible curricular structures, and structural reforms in higher education, such as multiple entry and exit options and a stronger focus on research, are some of the key policy interventions examined.

In order to ensure that no student is left behind, the paper concludes that although NEP 2020 offers a comprehensive and revolutionary vision for inclusive and equitable education, its successful implementation necessitates ongoing financial investment, institutional commitment, and cooperative engagement among legislators, educational institutions, and communities.

Keywords: Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs); Higher Education Reform; Gender Equality; Educational Access and Justice; Equity in Education; Inclusive Education; National Education Policy 2020

Introduction

Nelson Mandela's renowned quote, "It is not necessary to destroy any country with long-range missiles or atom bombs," is displayed at the entrance of the University of South Africa. It merely advocates reducing educational standards and permitting students to cheat on tests.

The following instances illustrate the significance of education.

- These physicians are responsible for their patients' deaths.
- The building collapsed due to the actions of the aforementioned engineer
- The actions of these economists and accountants result in financial loss.
- When engineers and physicians handle it, humanity is doomed.



- Justice is lost when these judges decide cases.

The dissolution of the country and the deficiencies in education are related. When diversity, equality, and inclusion are firmly ingrained in the educational system, more people will have access to school, more people will join the workforce, and all students will have the opportunity to pursue lifelong learning. "The single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality in education," according to the 2020 National Education Policy (NEP). This has an effect on the growth of inclusive communities and society as a whole. The facilities, resources, and educational obstacles that impact children with special needs (CWSN) must be addressed in order to implement this policy.

Rationale of the Study

The rationale for incorporating fairness into new educational policy stems from the understanding that education is a fundamental human right and a means of fostering both social and personal development. Gaps in educational options and access have been increasingly apparent in recent years. The following significant aspects affect how equality is included in educational policies:

- **Justice and an Equitable Society**

Educational equality aligns with social justice and fairness ideals. It seeks to correct historical and institutional inequalities that have led to differences in educational opportunities for different groups based on socioeconomic class, gender, aptitude, and other factors. By addressing these disparities, educational policies aim to create a fair and just system that benefits all.

- **Acknowledging Individuals' Complete Potential**

Education equity recognizes that every individual has unique abilities, potential, and talents. Regardless of a student's background, educational policies aim to maximize their potential by providing equal learning and development opportunities. This approach is both morally right and promotes the more general goal of creating a skilled workforce.

- **Preparing for a Diverse Future**

Inclusion and equality in education express the notion that education should prepare students to thrive in a diverse society. Globalization and technological advancements necessitate a workforce with a diverse variety of perspectives, skills, and cultural competencies. The goal of making equality in education a top priority is to provide students with the skills necessary to navigate an increasingly interconnected world.

- **Development of the Economy and Society**

It is recognized that greater economic and social inequality is influenced by variations in educational attainment. By addressing these disparities, educational policy becomes a tactical instrument for promoting social cohesiveness and economic growth. Higher educated people are more likely to actively engage in civic life and contribute positively.

Meeting the Needs of Every Learner:

Every learner is unique, with unique learning styles, abilities, and challenges. Meeting the



needs of every student is a top priority in inclusive education policies, which acknowledge this variety. Instead of being one-size-fits-all, this approach ensures that training is tailored to each student's specific requirements, including those who have significant learning issues or impairments.

Global pledges and sustainable growth

Many countries align their educational initiatives with global commitments like the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Ensuring that everyone has access to inclusive, high-quality education is the focus of Goal 4. Countries recognize that achieving these global goals requires a commitment to justice within their own educational systems.

The underlying rationale for incorporating equality into new educational policy is the idea that education is a powerful tool for positive social change. By removing inequalities and promoting inclusivity, these policies aim to unleash the full potential of every student and build a more equitable, prosperous, and peaceful society.

Objectives of the study

- -To study the topics of inclusion and equity in higher education
- -To study NEP 2020's strategies for an inclusive, equitable, high-quality education for all Inclusion and equity
- Incorporating Community Involvement
- Inclusion and Gender Equality
- Incorporating a New Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care
- Incorporating Skill Courses
- Inclusion of Graduation Research and M.Phil's Exclusion
- To evaluate the actions done to solve the issue

Methodology of the study

A documentary analysis was carried out. Journals and educational websites, including Education Week, Inside Higher Ed, and The Chronicle of Higher Education, regularly study official government papers, reports, and documents related to education policy. JSTOR, ProQuest, and Google Scholar were used to find scholarly resources; publications from education-focused research centers and think tanks, like Pew Research Center, were examined in order to create indices of equity and inclusive education that are used to create new standards for education policy. The results of these indicators are considered while making choices and suggestions.

Analysis and Interpretation of data

1. To research topics related to inclusion and equity in higher education

Due to the Indian education system and subsequent government measures, gender and socioeconomic inequities have steadily decreased at all educational levels. However, there are still significant gaps, particularly for the Socio-economically Disadvantaged Group (SEDGs), which includes groups like low-income households, migrant communities, children in vulnerable situations, victims of human trafficking or their children, orphans, urban beggars, and the urban poor. Gender identities (particularly those of women and transgender



individuals), sociocultural identities (like scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, OBC, and minorities), geographic identities (like students from small towns, villages, and aspirational districts), disabilities (like learning disabilities), and other characteristics can all be used to classify these groups. A brief synopsis of the SEDG pertaining to sociocultural identities is given in the following subsections:

These groups can also be classified based on their gender identities (particularly women and transgender individuals), socio-cultural identities (SC, ST, OBC, minorities), geographic identities (students from small towns, villages, and aspirational districts), disabilities (like learning disabilities), and other characteristics.

Scheduled Caste

Many variables, such as poverty and cultural norms and customs, have a detrimental effect on the enrollment and retention rates of the scheduled castes. Inadequate access to a good education and language. Gaps in the educational attainment, participation, and access of children from Scheduled castes would be one of the main goals. OBC, who usually fall behind in both the social and academic domains, should also receive special care.

Tribal Community

Due to historical and geographic considerations, children from scheduled tribes and indigenous people encounter a variety of issues. Tribal youngsters may perceive schooling as intellectually and culturally foreign and as having little bearing on their daily lives. Even though there will be a lot of challenging work done now and in the future to improve the lives of children from tribal communities, special strategies are required to guarantee that the children of these communities benefit from these interventions.

Minorities

Minorities are underrepresented in secondary and post-secondary education. This policy acknowledges the significance of the program that supports minority children's continued education, particularly those who are disproportionately underrepresented among students.

2.To Analyze the different approaches of NEP 2020 towards an inclusive and equitable quality education for all

The new NEP 2020 is now based on the goals of equity and inclusion. To provide a wide range of educational possibilities, inclusion in higher education or the classroom necessitates redesigning the entire system, including curriculum, pedagogy, and leisure activities, among other things. The strategy's goal is to prevent the segregation and isolation of people with disabilities, members of racial and ethnic minorities, and those who would not be able to attend school because of language challenges. We utilize language to make sense of the world, and it is through language that authority, legitimacy, and power are built and maintained. The goal of NEP 2020 is to attain universal competence in many languages throughout various educational levels.

Incorporating Community Involvement

Through community involvement and a deliberate understanding of the roles and duties, efforts have been made to lower the percentage of students who are excluded because of their language



handicap. Students will be inspired to discover more about India's rich cultural heritage, knowledge system, and human values. They will also get greater knowledge on human rights, gender equality, equity, and inclusivity, which all encourage appreciation for diversity. NEP 2020's primary goal has been to promote human creativity, which is essential for the 21st-century educational system and the first to treat all religions equally.

Gender Inclusion and Equality

By addressing disparity, vulnerability, and inequality in learning outcomes as well as all forms of exclusion and marginalization in educational access, participation, retention, and completion, NEP 2020 seeks to achieve equity and inclusion in and through education. Gender equality and inclusion are essential for accomplishing these goals and ensuring that no one is left behind. Accessibility, equity, and quality are given increasing attention in education. Significant advancements in female participation up to the secondary level have been observed in recent years. Other advancements may be caused by government initiatives like "Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana," "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao," and several more.

Nonetheless, there are fewer girls than boys enrolled in upper secondary. In order to ensure that no one is left behind based on gender, NEP 2020 aims to achieve equity and inclusion in and through education by addressing the disparities, vulnerabilities, and inequalities in learning outcomes as well as all forms of exclusion and marginalization in educational access, participation, retention, and completion. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in female participation up to the secondary level. The majority of NEP 2020 present activities are dedicated to increasing.

Incorporating the New Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care

In order to integrate young students between the ages of three and five into formal school, the educational system has been separated. Furthermore, this educational stage will be incorporated into the school curriculum in compliance with international standards, something that was not done before. By addressing disparity, vulnerability, and inequality in learning outcomes as well as all kinds of exclusion and marginalization in education access, participation, retention, and completion, NEP seeks to achieve equity and inclusion in and through education. To achieve these goals and ensure that no one is left behind, gender equality and inclusion are essential. Accessibility, equity, and quality need to be given more attention in education. Recent years have seen notable advancements in female participation up to the secondary level. Government incentives and policies may be the cause of this advancement. In order to compete with industrialized nations, the early education system will benefit by employing the mother tongue as the primary language of teaching.

Incorporating Skill Courses

Another goal has been to teach students life skills so they can sustain themselves after school. Providing current academics, career programs, and extracurricular activities will encourage students to return to their schools. "Bal Bhawans" will be built as a unique daytime boarding school with the intention of providing students with a customized support system based on their needs and encouraging play, career exploration, and creative endeavors.

Inclusion of Graduation Research and Exclusion of M.Phil

The addition of a four-year undergraduate curriculum will help students who had anomalies in



their education and were unable to complete. There are several places of entry and departure. Students are granted a one-year sabbatical. Students may decide to stop their graduation process and save their credits in an academic bank for later use. Depending on how many graduating years a student passes, post-graduation lasts either one or two years. NEP2020 also includes research production and capability across disciplines. The world's best research has been carried out at multidisciplinary institutions to date. Only exceptional multidisciplinary research across the domains might meet the concerns of society. Because anybody who is at least eighteen years old and literate is eligible to vote, Article 32 of the Constitution guarantees the right to an education.

2. To evaluate the actions performed while completing the mission
 - Provide the necessary government funding to enable SEDGs education.
 - Clearly state objectives for raising the Gross Enrollment Ratio in support of the SDGs. By constructing more first-rate HEIs in Special Education Zones with aspirational districts and a greater number of SEDG, increasing the proportion of female HEI admissions increases access. Establish and sustain a first-rate HEI that provides training in both native and multilingual languages.
 - Increase governmental and private financing and scholarships for the SEDG in HEI Plan outreach programs that highlight SEDG prizes and prospects for higher education. Develop and manage technology tools to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.
 - Reduce the opportunity costs and out-of-pocket costs associated with going to college. Increase the quantity of financial help and scholarships offered to students from low-income families. Educate individuals about the choices for higher education and scholarships.
 - Make sure the admissions procedure is more welcoming. Provide a more inclusive curriculum. Enhance the employability of programs in higher education. Expand the number of multilingual degree programs offered in India.
 - Ensure that all buildings and facilities are wheelchair and disability accessible. Give students from less fortunate educational backgrounds access to bridging courses
 - Through suitable counseling and mentoring programs, offer academic, socioemotional, and mentoring assistance to all such kids.
 - Ensure that gender identity problems are included in all HEI programs, including curriculum, and that students, instructors, and counselors are informed about them. Respect all anti-discrimination and anti-harassment laws.
 - Create thorough action plans, such as the one mentioned above, to boost SEDG involvement and include them in the institution's growth strategy.

Conclusion of the study

In conclusion, implementing new educational policies aimed at fostering inclusion and equity is one of the most crucial steps towards creating a more just and equitable educational system. These policies not only recognize the range of requirements that children have, but they also aim to eliminate the institutional barriers that prevent learners from having equal chances. These policies, which place a strong emphasis on inclusion, can reduce educational disparities and give students from all backgrounds, skill levels, and socioeconomic backgrounds access to high-quality education. Additionally, by promoting equity, these policies address historical and



structural injustices for certain oppressed groups and foster an environment that supports all students' success.

The effectiveness of these policies will depend on how eager communities, lawmakers, and educational institutions are to embrace and successfully implement them. Schools must foster a culture of knowledge, tolerance, and appreciation for diversity in order to create an environment where students feel valued and supported. We will need to constantly evaluate and adjust these policies as we go in order to address new problems as they emerge and sustain their long-term benefits. Pursuing diversity and inclusion in education is ultimately a strategic investment that is also ethically necessary.

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