



Inclusive Education practices with special reference to National Education Policy 2020: A Reflection

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Abstract:

Every child is entitled to some right. Our constitution has guaranteed each citizen some rights. Along with other rights, educational rights are the most significant one. Education empowers people. As such right of education is a means of equalizing the status of people irrespective of gender and caste, creed, and minimizing the illiteracy as well. In spite of these opportunities provided by the constitution, disparity exists in education in terms of gender and other feasibility status of people to attend educational institutions like-ability/disability, locality etc. Inclusive education is an approach to overcome these disparities in the field of education. The NEP 2020 too incorporated inclusive approach in its policy and specially emphasized on this aspects. In this paper, an attempt has been made to highlight inclusive practices with special reference to national Education Policy 2020.

Key Words: *Inclusive education, Education for all, NEP 2020, SDGs*

Introduction:

Individual differences is a common phenomenon and it is persistent everywhere. No two child are alike, many of them deviate too much from the expected range of the normal or average possession of the one or other traits of their personality so much that their needs become special. Earlier these children were supposed to be in special school meant for catering their individual special needs. With the changes of time new approaches and new practices had been added to the different field of human activities including

education. Such a new approach that has been evolved in the field of Education is Inclusiveness. This is the most popular and pertinent concept of modern education. At present, every aspect of education has become inclusive.

The aim of education is to develop the “whole” of the children. As we are aware of that fact that there are different agencies of education. The most formal and crucial agency is the school. Thus schools can play a significant role in realizing the actual objectives of education by holding two ingredients-*Firstly- “Relationship with the students” and secondly, “holding the belief that every child has strength”*. Keeping this view, each school should welcome all students with their strength and weaknesses. In a school or classroom, the teacher finds diversity in respect to the cultural, social, economic as well as physical characteristics of the students. Teacher should try to build a unity with all these diversity in the classroom as well as in the school. We talk about equality in education. Recommendations of various national policies and commissions on education have been constantly putting emphasizes on achieving the goal of equality in education. But putting the students in different schools according to their abilities and disabilities doesn't imply meaning of achieving equality in education. Equality in education can only be achieved when all the students irrespective of all their characteristic, abilities are welcomed by one school and are given opportunities to learn together under one roof named –“Equality”.

No development can be considered complete, unless it is inclusive. Inclusiveness is equal to completely harmonious society reaching all the members of the human society. The term Inclusion implies to take in, to embrace. An inclusive society is one where everyone is valued, accepted, respected and given equal opportunities. Here, it is heartening to mention that, it is not only about accepting or rejecting, the term captures in one word, an all embracing societal ideology. Inclusion in the context of education stands for equality education, ensuring all children's needs are met in the classroom. Inclusion in education refers to the placement and education of children with diverse needs in regular classrooms with the children of the same age. In a simple word, it can be said that inclusive education is a new approach towards educating the children with disability and learning difficulties with that of normal ones within the same roof It rejects the use of special schools or classrooms to separate students with severe variations from the students without the same. Thus, we can hold the idea about inclusive education as a practice in education through which children experience quality as well as equality in education with peers. Now it has been observed that like other countries of the world, in India too, inclusive practice has gained much popularity and it has been a feature of quality education.

Inclusive practices and NEP 2020:

Our country India is such a country which has welcomed the inclusive approach in education much before. From the constitutional provisions and different welfare schemes it is clear that our education system is inclusive friendly. The government of India is committed to ensure the right of every child to basic education. Even the Constitution of India guarantees free and compulsory primary education up to an age. The country had witnessed different changes in terms of policies and undertaking. The Government of India has created numerous policies in regard to safeguard the rights of every child specially the deprived section. Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme of 1974 was such a revolutionary step that was implemented all over the country. The Kothari Commission (1966) too highlighted the importance of educating children with disabilities during the post-independence period. In 1980s the then ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India, realized the crucial need of an institution to monitor and regulate the HRD programmes in the field of disability rehabilitation. Till 1990s, a wave of changes touched the education system. The Policy on Education 1968, 1986 was adopted. The policies on Education 1986, the Programme Action 1992 are worth mentioning. According to reports, India's estimated 40 million children in the age group 4-16 years with physical and mental disabilities are being excluded from mainstream education. Then integration of such children with other children was highly realized.

As a result of which, the Government of India implemented the District Primary Education Project (DPEP) in 1994–95. In late 90s (i.e. in 1997) the philosophy of “inclusive education” is added in District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). This programme laid special emphasis on the integration of children with mild to moderate of the time in terms of funding with 40,000 million rupees disabilities, in line with world trends, and significantly it became one of the GOI's largest flagship programmes.

At the time, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched to achieve the goal of Universalization of Elementary Education in 2001. SSA is one such initiative which stressed on enrolment and retention of all children in 6-14 years of age and most importantly a zero rejection policy has been adopted under SSA, which was very much influential to ensures that every Child with Special Needs (CWSN), irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability is provided meaningful and quality education. Again, National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 has laid down a clear context of inclusive education. In 2005, the Ministry of Human Resource Development implemented a National Action Plan for the inclusion in education of children and youth with disabilities. Along with these, IEDSS in 2009-10 put emphasis on providing assistance for inclusive practices especially for the disabled children at 9th and 10th standards. This scheme then was subsumed under RMSA from 2013. RMSA emphasized to integrate these children into regular schools to help them socialize and build their confidence. IEDC was revised and named “Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary Stage”.

In the year, 2020, the Nation have witnessed a historic phenomenon in regard to Educational Development in terms of adoption of NEP. The National Education Policy 2020 is believed to be an epoch-making event after 34 years of other national policies on education. The purpose of NEP is a framework to guide the development of education in the country. A major development since the last Policy of 1986 and 1992 has been the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 which laid down legal underpinnings for achieving universal elementary education. The new education policy 2020 is proposed to provide to all students, irrespective of their place of residence, a quality education system, with particular focus on historically marginalized, disadvantaged, and underrepresented groups. Education is a great leveler and it is considered as the best tool for achieving economic and social mobility, inclusion, and equality. The aim of equity and inclusion is at the heart of new NEP2020. 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. With this end in view, the NEP 2020 has made a special provisions for Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SDGs) and their educational needs are highly placed. These SEDGs can be broadly categorized based on gender identities (particularly female and transgender individuals), socio-cultural identities (such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, and minorities), geographical identities (such as students from villages, small towns, and aspirational districts), disabilities (including learning disabilities), and socio-economic conditions (such as migrant communities, low income households, children in vulnerable situations, victims of or children of victims of trafficking, orphans including child beggars in urban areas, and the urban poor) including the women. NEP 2020 specially has made special provisions for inclusion of these SDGs in Education.

Concluding Remarks:

Thus, we can mark that NEP2020 is such a policy which can realize the yearlong goal of Education for all. It has incorporated all the measures through which the concept of inclusive practices can actually be implemented and realized, letting all children irrespective of their characteristics learn under one roof of equality and equity. The new trend of Atmanirbhar Bharat is leading India towards a new direction of self-sufficiency. The motto of Atmanirbhar Bharat can also incorporated in the educational area and it can only be achieved when all children/ individual are welcomed to learn and develop under one roof of equality and their special needs and characteristics are respected by others and they feel secured and self-reliant.

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