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NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020 AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract: Education is a fundamental right, and along with education facilities, one must refrain from discrimination based on sex or gender. As a developing country our fundamental duty has to arrange education for all. We will fail as a developing country if education system is still not being accessible to each individual in every corner of the country. Inclusive education is no longer an advantage; it is the need of the present. For a developing country like India, education is the most priority aspect of growth. In this book chapter, the recommendations regarding inclusive education suggested by national education policy 2020 have been discussed. The National Education Policy 2020, which was sanctioned by the Union Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020. National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) replaces the previous National Policy on Education, 1986. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) give the recommendations for SCs, STs' students, for OBCs and minorities, regarding women education, for transgender students, for Children With Special Needs, for children with disabilities, for children with specific learning disabilities, regarding School centric education, regarding teacher education, regarding Single Window System, regarding curriculum in the field of School Education and in higher education. The policy aims to achieve India's education system by 2040.

Index Terms - National Education Policy 2020, Inclusive Education, Education for all, and Indian Education system

I. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education focuses not only on the inclusion or participation of children with special needs in the traditional education system, but also on creating an environment where all children from different social strata can participate without barriers. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016 stated that Inclusive Education is a “system of education wherein students with and without disabilities learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities.” Inclusive education aims to enable children with special needs to be self-

reliant for their future livelihood and it ensures the provision of conducive environment. Therefore, not only the human or social perspective should be changed, but overall cooperation and equitable environment should be created. So in our country, India various laws and regulations have been formulated and implemented for the education of children with special needs. By 2030, the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) aims to "provide inclusive and equitable quality education and encourage lifelong learning opportunities for everyone." The main goal of those aforesaid commissions and committees is to ensure the access of children with special needs into main stream of education. In this context the educational concept, the term, has been refined as follows; at first, it was considered as **Special Education**, after that it turned into **Integrated Education**, now it is stated as **Inclusive Education**.

Almost all the commissions and committees of independent India have recommended various provisions regarding the education of children with special needs. The name of the commissions and committees –

1. Indian Education Commission or Kothari Commission (1964-66)
2. National Policy on Education (1968)
3. National Policy on Education (1986)
4. Project Integrated Education for The Disabled (1987)
5. Revised National Policy on Education or Programme of Action or POA (1992)
6. Persons With Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation Act, 1995.
7. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan or SSA (2000)
8. The new article 21A (Right to Education) 86th amendment to the constitution of India in 2002.
9. National Policy for Persons with Disability (2006)
10. Right to Education Act (2009)

Similarly, National Education Policy 2020 has emphasized on Inclusive Education and suggested some important recommendations.

II. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN NEP 2020

At the starting of discussion about Inclusive Education, National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) has stated that "Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. Inclusive and equitable education – "while indeed an essential goal in its own right – is also critical to achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive and contribute to the nation."

As per education system should be such that "no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of circumstances of a birth or background." In this regard this education policy has suggested some important recommendations as per the level of education system.

- **Chapter 6** contains the recommendations regarding Inclusive Education at the level of school education. NEP 2020 named this chapter as "**Equitable and Inclusive Education: learning for all.**"
- **Chapter 14** contains the recommendations regarding inclusive education at the level of higher education. NEP 2020 named this chapter as "**Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education.**"

III. TARGET GROUPS AS PER NEP 2020

The target groups have been categorized as per NEP 2020 as follows;

- Based on gender identities - mainly female and transgender individuals.
- Based on Socio-cultural identities - Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Minorities and OBCs.
- Based on geographical identities - Village Students, Students from small towns, Students from Aspirational Districts.
- Based on Disabilities - Physical Disabilities, Mental Disabilities and Various Learning Disabilities.
- Based on Socio-Economic Conditions - Migrant Communities, Low-income households, Children in vulnerable situations, Children of victims of trafficking, Orphans, Child beggars in urban areas, Urban Pooors etc.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS (SEDGs)

NEP 2020 acknowledges that certain groups are grossly underrepresented in the existing education system. To specifically address their educational needs, the NEP created a new social group called SEDG, combining gender identity, socio-cultural identity, geographic identity, disability and socio-economic status. The policy bases much of its intent on building inclusion around these groups. As mentioned earlier, these groups have high dropout rates due to various factors ranging from lack of (geographical) accessibility to tribal communities, education systems for socio-cultural identity categorization to historical exclusion of communities.

Recognizing their special needs, NEP 2020 recommends a series of policies and plans such as targeted scholarships, conditional cash transfers to encourage parents to send their children to school, providing of bicycles for transportation that have worked in the past to increase enrollment, to make more Representation.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL EDUCATION

The NEP 2020 confirms all the recommendations made by the RPwD Act 2016 regarding school education. The policy has given top priority to enable regular schooling process for children with disabilities from primary level to higher education. Children with moderate to severe disabilities will have the option of regular or special schooling (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.10).

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCS, STS' STUDENTS

- Children from tribal communities, historically or geographically Scheduled Tribes, face certain barriers and difficulties; need to be provided with various programmatic interventions on a more ongoing basis for their upliftment. Even by developing some special measures to provide those children, so that they can have access to this intervention and ensure it for them. Then they can't get a chance to think that education is irrelevant to their life.
- All possible efforts will be provided to those children, belonging to Scheduled Castes, so that the access, participation and learning outcomes of them will be continued without any barrier, as a major goal. Because lack of access to quality schools, poverty, social mores and language have had a harmful effect on rates of enrollment and retention.”

- Special hostels will be provided in certain areas to increase the participation of SC, ST children in school education.
- To increase their participation, bridge courses will be arranged in school education.
- Financial assistance will be provided in the form of scholarships as well as fee waivers to meritorious and talented students, mainly at the secondary education level. Also, such financial assistance will be provided for their proper enrollment in higher education.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OBCS AND MINORITIES

- As a major target, other backward class (OBC) children who are socially and educationally backward should be given special and prominent attention to increase their access, participation, learning outcomes in school education.
- This principle recognizes the importance of several programmatic interventions currently in place and also the provision of these interventions in schools and higher education for the educational development of minority groups or communities, mainly those who are educationally under represented.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING WOMEN EDUCATION

According to the National Education Policy 2020 recommendations have been suggested for women education. These are as follows;

- Bicycles will be given to girls to increase their participation in school education, so that they can easily go to school. Then the parents will send their girl child to school without any financial burden.
- For equitable and quality education, the Government of India will create a fund called "Gender-Inclusion Fund" and this fund will be available to each state. But during implementation, the priorities will be determined by the central government such as; For Sanitization, Toilet, Conditional Fund Transfer, Bicycle etc. With this implementation of the "Gender-Inclusion Fund", all states will strive to encourage all girl children to access school education.
- Quality education will be provided to girls not only for the present generation but also to raise the level of education of future generations.
- For their advancement in education, policies and plans will be designed in the best way as they can access quality education without any hindrance.
- To increase the participation of socio-economically disadvantaged girls in quality schooling up to class 12, Kasturba Gandhi Girls' School needs to be strengthened.
- Standard and free boarding facilities will be provided as per standards of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya for the safety of girls. Such boarding must be built as close as possible to the location of the school.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (CWSN)

For children with special needs or Divyang, this policy has been recognized to provide them with access to quality education according to their diverse needs as well as providing opportunities for important proactive processes to improve their education. That will be it the same is provided as other children.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRANSGENDER STUDENTS

- It will be the same in terms of objectives to be implemented by the states for these students
- In a nutshell, this policy related to “Gender-Inclusion Fund” aims to reduce as well as eliminate any form of gender disparity mainly in the context of access to education, be it for or against female students or Transgender students.
- Just like female students, transgender students will be provided with "gender-inclusion funds" so that they can easily access quality education.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

- This policy emphasized the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016 and reiterated that children with and without disabilities will continue their education together.
- For their education, the most appropriate and appropriate teaching-learning strategies will be adopted to meet their diverse learning needs.
- Ensuring the inclusion of such children in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and schooling system will be given top priority.
- Ensure full participation of children with disabilities in the regular school education system from primary level to higher education.
- RPWD (2016) Act to ensure barrier-free access for all children with disabilities.
- Updated and appropriate technology-based tools and other devices must be developed to ensure full participation in the classroom. Also teaching learning materials will be developed adequately and language appropriate, i.e., “textbooks in accessible formats such as large print and braille”, so that they can easily enter the classroom and easily engage with their teachers and peers.
- Special educators with cross-disability training will be recruited to provide barrier-free education.
- In the context of teaching Indian Sign Language and other basic subjects using Indian Sign Language, the high quality module will be developed by the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS).
- Special attention should be paid to the safety and security of the children.
- Provision of regular and special schools will be affirmatively provided to those children with benchmark disabilities as per their choice.
- Home based education will be provided to children who are unable to go to school.
- Such home based education must be considered at par with the general education system.
- Guidelines and standards related to RPWD Act 2016 as required will be recorded by audit.

XII. RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SCHOOL CENTRIC EDUCATION

This policy recommended that as per the nature and features of such type of schools, education will be provided-

- For quality teaching, teachers' competence needs to be developed through adaptation and pedagogical practices.
- Libraries need to be strengthened and appropriate quality reading material ie: books, journals need to be made more available
- Necessary teaching-learning materials should be made more readily available.
- Also, laboratories in such schools need to be strengthened and updated.

- The policy recommends that such schools be encouraged to preserve their traditions and educational techniques.
- Also, to enhance the education of such school children, the National Curriculum Framework for Secondary Education (NCFSE), subjects and learning areas will be integrated, so that children can easily access higher education.
- Financial assistance will be provided as per the need of such schools to introduce language, science, social science, mathematics and other relevant disciplines.
- Students of such schools must be encouraged to appear for state or other board examinations conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA), so that they can easily enroll themselves in higher education.

XIII. RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING CURRICULUM

- While developing National Curriculum Framework (NCF) consultation program with expert organizations like National Institute of DEPwD (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities), must be organized which will be confirmed by NCERT.
- More knowledge of different cultures, religions, languages, gender identities etc" must be included in the school curriculum to develop respect for diversity.
- Any kind of bias should be removed from the school curriculum.
- More relevant materials will be included that are more useful to all communities.
- With the help of well-trained teachers, social workers and counselors, students will be sensitized to the new school culture and an inclusive school curriculum will be developed.
- This curriculum will include humanistic values such as; "Respect for all persons, compassion, tolerance, human rights, gender equality, non-violence, global citizenship, inclusion and equality."

XIV. RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING TEACHER EDUCATION

- Teacher education programs will develop teaching strategies for these groups for teachers to ensure the improvement of those groups.
- Also, the teacher education program will have gender and underserved group sensitization programs.
- Teacher education programs should include awareness programs about children with specific disabilities as well as specific learning disabilities.

XV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CHILDREN WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES

- To ensure access and opportunities for such children, some equitable guidelines and associated tools will be developed to conduct such assessments by some assessment and certification agencies like the newly proposed National Assessment Center, PARAKH etc.
- Such assessment and certification systems will evolve from primary level to higher education.
- Also, such assessments will be developed for entrance examinations at any level of education.
- Most classrooms typically have many children with specific learning disabilities. Continuous support should be provided for them right from the beginning of their education, so that they can easily enter school education, have better and barrier-free opportunities for their educational progress.
- Here, the role of teachers will be to help identify those with such learning disabilities as early as possible. Also, teachers must play a role in planning how to mitigate their various learning disabilities.

XVI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

According to this principle, provision of quality educational opportunities to students should be given top priority, enrollment in higher education, individual development as well as community development at large should be ensured. Hence, the policy emphasizes equitable access to quality higher education for all students with a special focus on SEDGs. For achieving the purpose and overcoming the barriers, this policy recommended some additional actions which will be taken by all the Governments as well as Higher Education Institutions. These are as follows;

- Further financial assistance, various scholarships will be provided to students of public or private higher education institutions, mainly SEDGs.
- To facilitate access to higher education opportunities and scholarships, the government will conduct some outreach programs for SEDGs.
- According to the needs of the current education system, the government will develop technological tools for maximum participation and better learning outcomes.
- The government will arrange or create appropriate financial funding, government funding for the education of SEDGs.
- To ensure a higher Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER), the government will set necessary and clear targets for SEDG.
- The government will regulate the admission process in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by ensuring gender balance.
- Government will ensure access to higher education by establishing more high quality HEIs for SEDGs as needed, mainly in aspirational districts and special education zones.

Some steps must be taken by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

- HEIs will conduct bridge courses for educationally disadvantaged students for their academic improvement.
- For such students who need socio-emotional and academic support, HEIs will provide suitable counseling programs and mentoring programs for them, so that they can easily continue their education.
- Discrimination of any kind will be strictly prohibited in HEIs and there will be strict anti-harassment rules for appropriate education systems.
- HEIs will increase the employability of higher education programs.
- HEIs will develop and include more degree courses along with previous courses that will be taught in Indian languages or bilingually.
- HEIs will develop its infrastructure and facilities in such a way that it becomes accessible to students, such as those who use wheel chairs and which becomes friendly to children with other disabilities.
- HEIs will also conduct some outreach programs similar to the government regarding higher education opportunities and scholarships for students.
- HEIs will provide inclusive admission procedures
- HEIs will make the curriculum more inclusive.

- HEIs will reduce the cost of various fees, so that students have the opportunity to pursue higher education without any financial burden.
- HEIs will provide more financial aid and more scholarships for socio-economically disadvantaged students.

XVII. IMPLEMENTATION

The policy not only lays down some recommendations but also emphasizes its implementation coherently and systematically. During implementation, various organizations at both central and state levels will take the lead, such as; MHRD, CABE, NCERT, SCERT, NTA, State Governments, State Education Departments, Ministry of Education, Boards, HEIs, Regulatory Bodies of Schools, Higher Education Regulatory Bodies, etc.

- Satisfactory implementation of these policies will require human resources, infrastructural resources, and financial resources from both central and state levels in time.
- It also requires "careful analysis and review" to assess the results of the implementation of these policies.
- For better implementation of these policies, some Implementation Committees will be formed with experts on the aforesaid subjects in consultation with the relevant Ministries at both the Central and State levels.
- Each recommendation made should be implemented through several steps.
- Urgent action should be taken according to the priority of recommendations.
- Proper and careful planning should be done for the effective implementation of these policies.
- The Center and the States should jointly monitor and implement these policies cooperatively.

XVIII. CONCLUSION

“All of us do not have equal talent. But, all of us have an equal opportunity to develop our talents”. (Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam) Only the placement of disabled children will not help. If we want to grow as a nation, it is our moral responsibility to make education accessible to every child regardless of disability. India, being a country of diversity, always sees these variations as an opportunity, so now is the time to change the mindset of people and see every disability as a special ability. That is to focus on what these children can do well rather than focusing on what they cannot do. From segregation to inclusion, the inclusive education system in India overcomes several hurdles. Viewing disability as a special ability requires a change in mindset. Finally, the Government of India came up with a policy that contains minute details. The New Education Policy 2020 will prove to be a catalyst for inclusive education if implemented with proper planning. This will change the paradigm of inclusive education. All the aspects discussed above will lead to effective and quality education for children with disabilities. This will help bridge the gap between expectations and the reality of inclusive education.

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