



A Study On The Awareness Level Of Special Educators Towards Implementing National Education Policy 2020

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Abstract –

Education is crucial for the development of children and for national growth. Quality education leads to success in the personal and professional lives of individuals, and also contributes to the country's economic growth. To achieve the educational goal, each nation must make its educational policy so that the country can achieve the milestone of the holistic development of the individual and the country's growth. National Educational Policy 2020 is the third educational policy of India, which emphasises quality, equality, and equitable and inclusive education for all diverse learners, including children with special needs. A special educator's role is crucial for implementing the education policy to provide effective education in the classroom. To provide effective education, teachers should be more aware of the implementation of the policy. The present study aimed to study the awareness level of the special educators towards implementing the National Educational Policy 2020, working in government and private school settings. A descriptive survey design was used as a method of the study. 78 special educators were selected from the population using a non-probability convenience sampling technique for the study. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire had five areas, which included implementation of inclusive education, curricular reforms, assessment strategies, early childhood care and education, and professional development of the special educators. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics with mean, standard deviation for minimum and maximum scores and quantified in percentage. Hence, the analysis demonstrated that the majority of the special educators were well aware of the implementation of the National Educational Policy 2020,

and in the area of multidisciplinary and competency-based assessment, a moderate level of awareness among special educators.

Keywords: Implementation of NEP 2020, Teacher Awareness, Educational Policy, Special Educator, School Education.

Introduction –

Education is a weapon for the development of all learners and the nation. An effective education system enhances the capability of the individual and also contributes to their financial growth, social equality, and inclusion. Education is not only about the academic aspects; it shapes the individual's life with dignity. All across the world, educational reforms have been implemented. Educational change across the world has highlighted the significance of equitable, quality, and inclusive education that ensures equal and equitable education and opportunities for all learners, irrespective of their abilities and disabilities and socio-economic background. Educational policies continuously address the issues and gaps and align the education system globally with national development goals. After more than three decades, the National Education Policy 2020 was introduced with a new aspect with the aim of bringing comprehensive reforms in the previous structure, which includes foundational, middle, secondary, and senior secondary stages (5+3+3+4). It also reforms in content, pedagogy, and governance of education. It emphasises multidisciplinary education, creativity, flexibility in learning, and skill development. Policy focuses on improving access, equity, and accountability in education at all levels. NEP 2020 strongly commits to inclusive and equitable education. This policy gives importance to every learner and their needs, abilities, and adopts inclusive practice and supports the full participation and success of all learners.

The policy mainly stresses to create barrier free learning environment inside and outside the classroom. Provide appropriate need-based high support services and promote the use of inclusive strategies for holistic development. These provisions are further supported by the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, which mandates equal opportunities, protection of rights, and full participation for children with disabilities. The new structure in the national education policy 2020 aligns with the holistic development in all developmental stages of the children, from the beginning with early identification and intervention with early childhood care and education to secondary education. Policy also highlights the importance of foundational literacy and numeracy skills as essential learning outcomes during the early foundational stage. In this technological era, policy emphasises digital literacy and its implementation. It advocates competency-based learning that focuses on authentic conceptual understanding rather than rote memorisation. For the conceptual leaning assessment practices are also expected to shift from summative assessment to continuous comprehensive evaluation, where the teacher assesses the children before, during, and after teaching. Its believe and promotes 360-degree development and evaluation. In the process of evaluation, not only will the teacher evaluate the children, but the peers and self-evaluation will be conducted for better learning, as well as a better understanding of self with evaluation skills. This will encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students. The central programme of

the policy is the preparation and professional development of the teachers. Teachers are considered the most powerful and crucial stakeholders in the education system, who can change the whole system and implement the policy properly. National Education Policy 2020 proposes a systematic reform in the structure, design of curriculum, evaluation pattern, and professional development of teachers. This policy focuses on inclusive and equitable education. The policy recognizes the need for trained special educators and resource support for effective implementation. (Ministry of Education 2020)

In-service training like – short term training programmes, workshops, and seminars, are very important for the upgradation of teachers' knowledge and to boost their proficiency for achieving the goal of the policy. Professional development of the teachers is a central component of NEP 2020. With the support of a proficient teacher, the policy can be implemented properly. They play a key role in translating policy objectives and achieving the goal in classroom practice. The policy emphasises continuous professional development, improving teaching practice and the education system, and greater autonomy for educators to adopt innovative teaching methods and techniques. This policy highlights the needs of well-professional teachers who can effectively address the needs of diverse learners with disabilities in the classroom and can provide an inclusive environment for them. In the context of disabilities, special educators' role is crucial; they are trained professionals who support diversity and children with disabilities and their needs by providing differentiated instruction, individualized educational planning with adaptation in curriculum, teaching methods, strategies, and techniques, while ensuring the appropriate adaptation and accommodation with modification in learning. For the development of the students in an inclusive classroom, a special educator collaborates with general education teachers, school administrators, and parents to create a supportive learning environment that enables students with disabilities to participate and learn meaningfully in the classroom without any fear or stress. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of implementing educational policies related to inclusive and barrier-free education are therefore essential for the effective implementation of policy initiatives in schools. However, the successful implementation of the National Educational Policy 2020 basically depends on the awareness level and understanding of the teachers on implementing the policy. Teachers are responsible for planning and executing these policies in the diverse classroom settings. If the teachers and special educators are not aware of or informed about the policy and its aims, objectives, goals, and strategies, it may lead to a gap between policy formulation and its practical implementation in the school, especially in the classroom. Awareness of policy enables educators to use appropriate strategies, methods, and techniques to cater to the needs of diverse learners and contribute to serving inclusive education and a supportive school environment for the holistic development of children. Ainscow (2005) concluded that successful implementation is largely dependent on teachers' awareness and attitude, and support from the institution. The study highlighted that policy reform alone cannot ensure inclusion unless teachers are adequately prepared.

National Education Policy provides a proper structure and framework for transforming the educational setting, but its success depends on the awareness of the teachers and how effectively it is

implemented at the ground level. Therefore, it is important to examine the awareness and understanding of working teachers of the major provisions of the National Education Policy 2020. For inclusive education, such awareness is especially important for special educators, as they play a crucial role in implementing inclusive educational practice and supporting diverse learners for their holistic development, especially in academic achievement. Several studies concluded that awareness of the policy of a teacher plays a crucial role in effective educational reforms. It helps them to adopt new teaching strategies, methods, and techniques in the classroom to create an inclusive environment for effective learning. Teachers who participate actively in professional development programs and contribute positively to school improvement initiatives. On the other hand, limited awareness of policy consequently reduces the effective implementation of the policy reform.

Considering the importance of special educators, the successful implementation requires adequate awareness of the Educational Policy 2020. Hence, it becomes necessary to examine their level of awareness on implementing the Educational Policy 2020. Understanding their level of awareness can help identify existing gaps in knowledge and highlight areas where further training or orientation may be required. Such insights can support policymakers, educational administrators, and teacher education institutions in designing effective professional development programs that strengthen the implementation of policy initiatives in schools. UNESCO (2020), in its worldwide education monitoring reports, noted that teacher readiness and policy awareness are essential elements for attaining equitable and inclusive education globally.

The present study aims to examine the awareness level of special educators regarding the implementation of NEP 2020 in school settings. The study focuses on key areas of the policy, including foundational understanding, pedagogical shift, curricular, assessment, and evaluation reforms, teacher awareness and professional development, inclusive education, and technology integration. By analysing the level of awareness among special educators, the study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how educational policies are perceived and implemented at the school level. The findings of the study may provide valuable insights for improving policy dissemination, strengthening teacher training programs, and promoting the effective implementation of NEP 2020 in inclusive educational environments.

Method –

The Researcher used a descriptive survey approach for the present study to know the awareness level of special educators implementing the National Education Policy 2020. A sample was chosen from the population of pre-school to senior secondary school teachers who are working in government, private and aided schools. The sample was stratified. The teacher was chosen using a stratified to ensure diversity in gender, teaching experience, type of school, and level of teaching. Data was collected from a researcher-constructed questionnaire by using a 3-point Likert scale. The tool was constructed under the supervision of experts, and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a value. The obtained value of $\alpha = 0.806$ indicates good internal consistency among the items, which is acceptable and excellent.

Before administering the questionnaire, permission was taken from school principals, and participants were assured of confidentiality. Descriptive statistics, mean, percentage, and standard deviation were used for evaluation.

Participants –

To study the Awareness Level of Special Educators towards implementing the National Education Policy, 78 special education teachers were conveniently selected using convenience sampling. Before selecting the participants, the researchers obtained permission from the principals of government, private, and aided schools in Khordha, Nayagarh, and Puri districts of Odisha.

Tool –

The present study aims to examine the awareness level of special educators towards implementing the National Education Policy for inclusion. Quantitative survey design using a Likert 3-point rating scale, a questionnaire developed by the researcher on five areas of implementation of the National Education Policy 2020, i. foundational understanding, ii. pedagogical shift and curricular iii. assessment and evaluation reforms iv. teacher awareness and professional development, v. inclusive education and technology integration. Data was collected from 78 special educators working in primary to senior secondary schools.

Data collection –

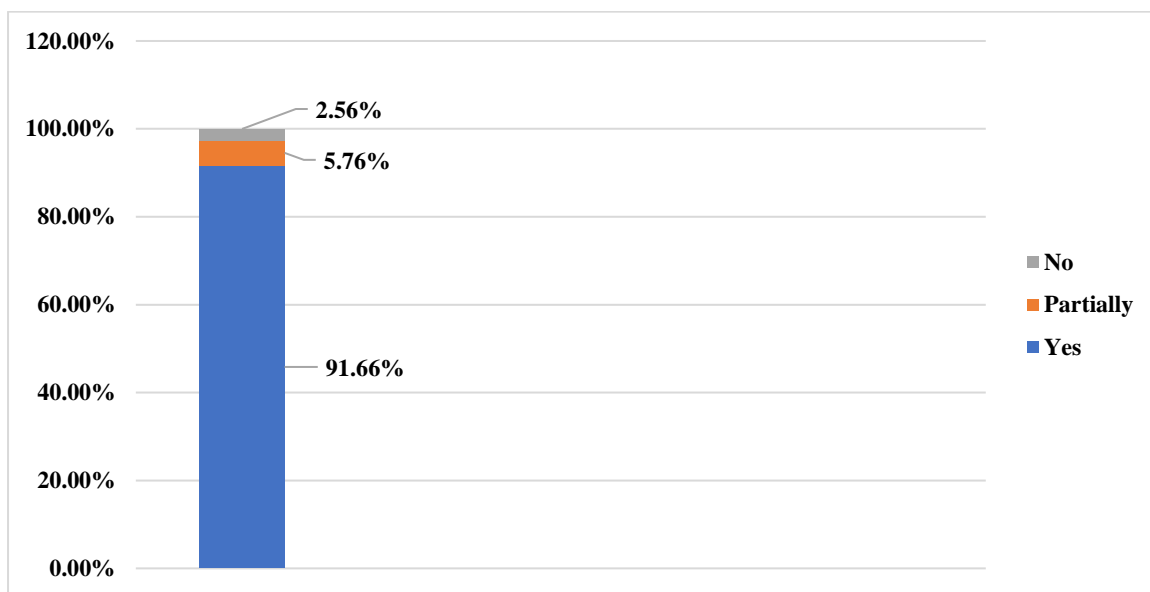
As a part of the data collection procedure, the first step carried out by the researchers was to contact the selected schools. A letter for permission was given to the respective school principals personally, and the schedule for data collection was finalised. Based on the schedule, the developed questionnaire was given to the teachers personally. All 78 questionnaires were collected and evaluated. Descriptive statistics and percentages were used for data analysis.

Validity and Reliability of the Tool - The tool was constructed under the supervision of experts, and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, with a value. The obtained value of $\alpha = 0.806$ indicates good internal consistency among the items, which is acceptable and excellent.

Result and Discussion –

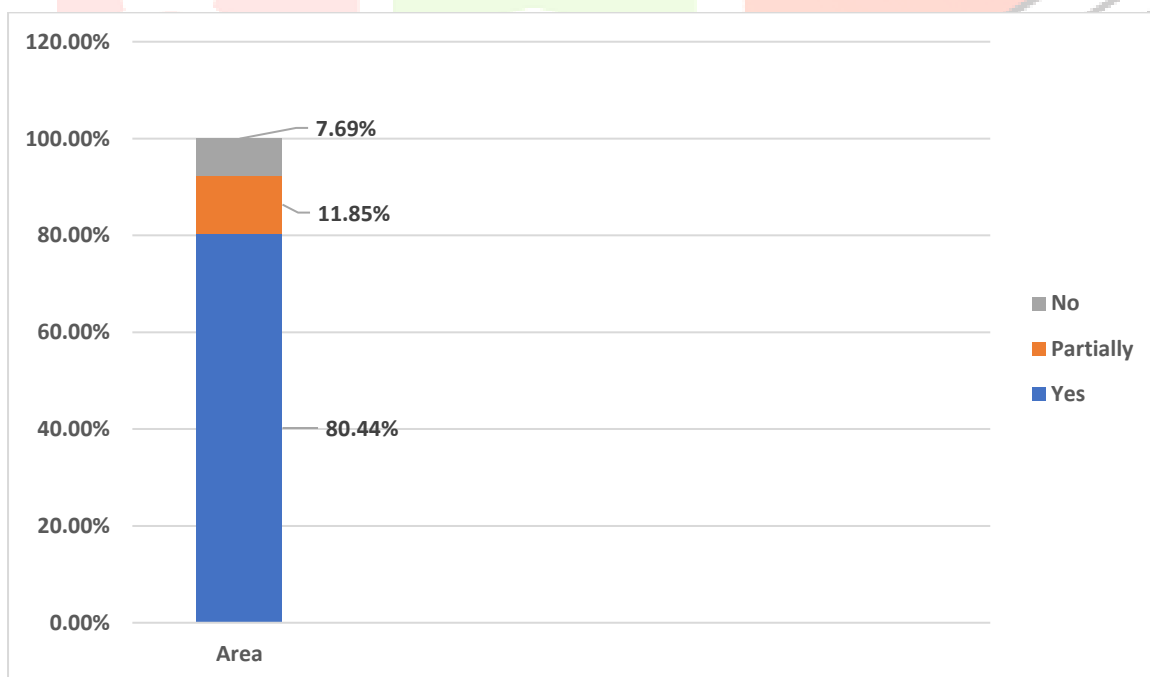
The analysis focused on five key areas of implementing National Education Policy 2020: i) Foundational understanding, ii) Pedagogical shift and curricular, iii) Assessment and evaluation reforms, iv) Teacher awareness on professional development, and v) Inclusive education and technology integration. Data are analysed in the bar diagram below, which shows the percentage level of implementation of the National Education Policy 2020 in the five areas.

Figure 1 Area- A) Foundational Understanding on Implementing NEP 2020



The data presented in Figure 1 revealed that 91.66 % of teachers are well aware of the foundational understanding of the implementation of NEP 2020, 5.76 % of teachers are partially aware, and 2.56 % teachers are not aware. It reveals that a foundation understanding of teachers is good, and they are well aware of the foundation of it

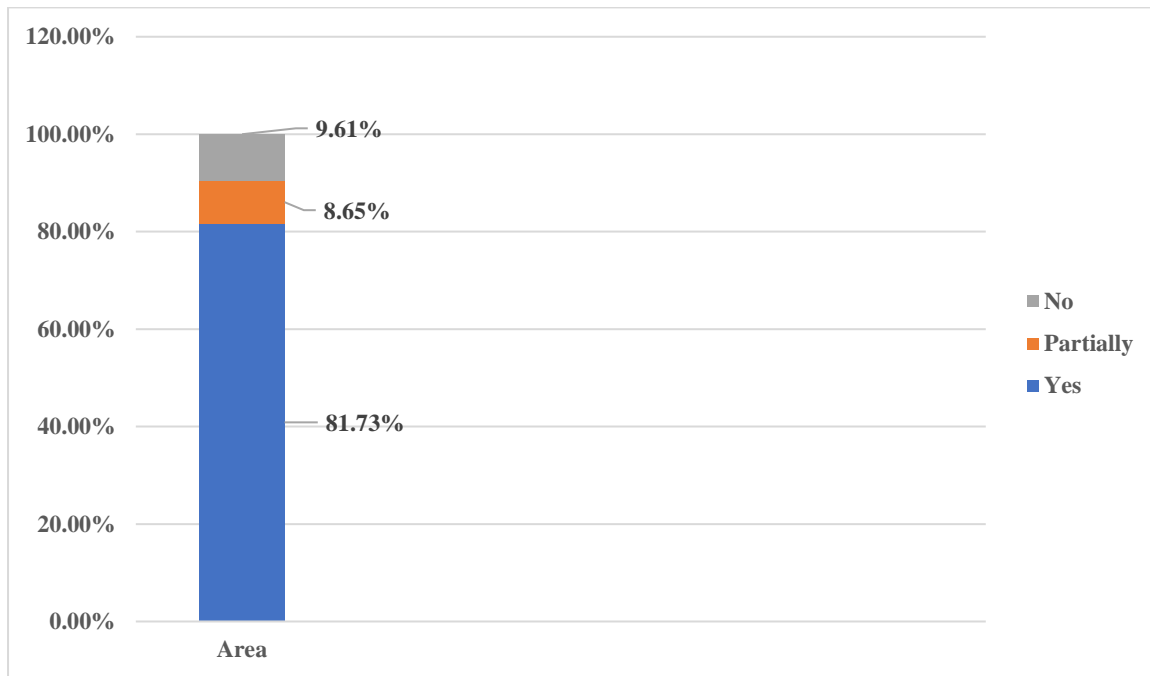
Figure 2 Area – B) Pedagogical Shift and Curricular



An analysis of the result in Figure 2, related to the pedagogical shift and curricular implementation in the figure, showed that the majority of teachers are aware of the implementation of pedagogical shifts and

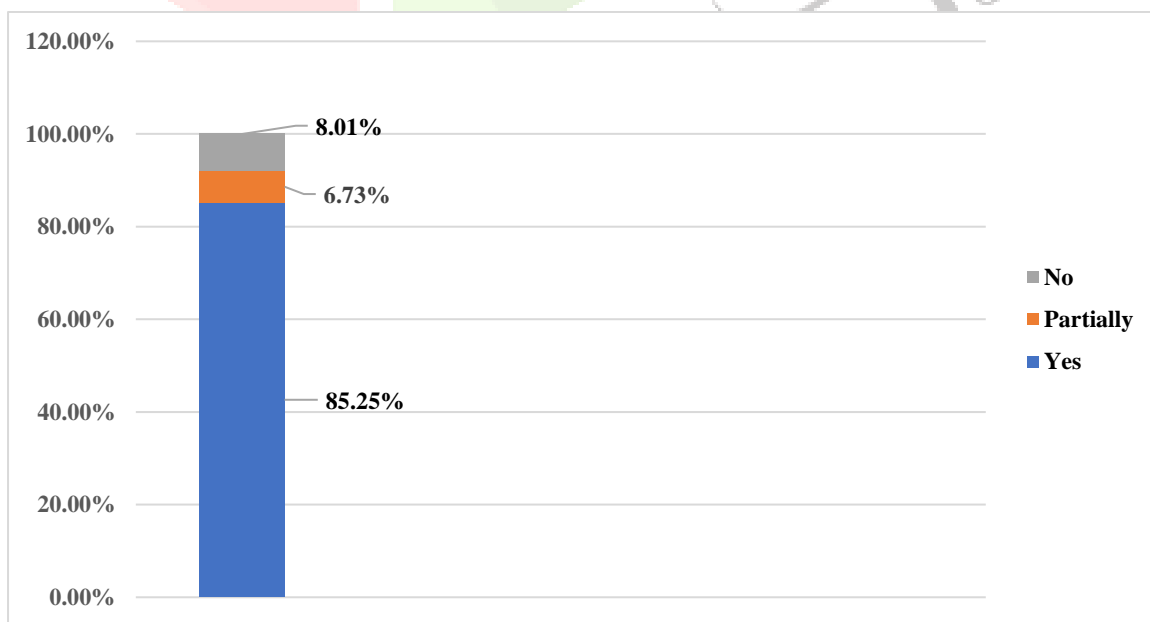
curricular. 80.44 % teacher were highly aware, 11.85% partially aware, and 7.69% were not aware of related pedagogical shifts.

Figure 3 Area- C) Assessment and Evaluation Reforms



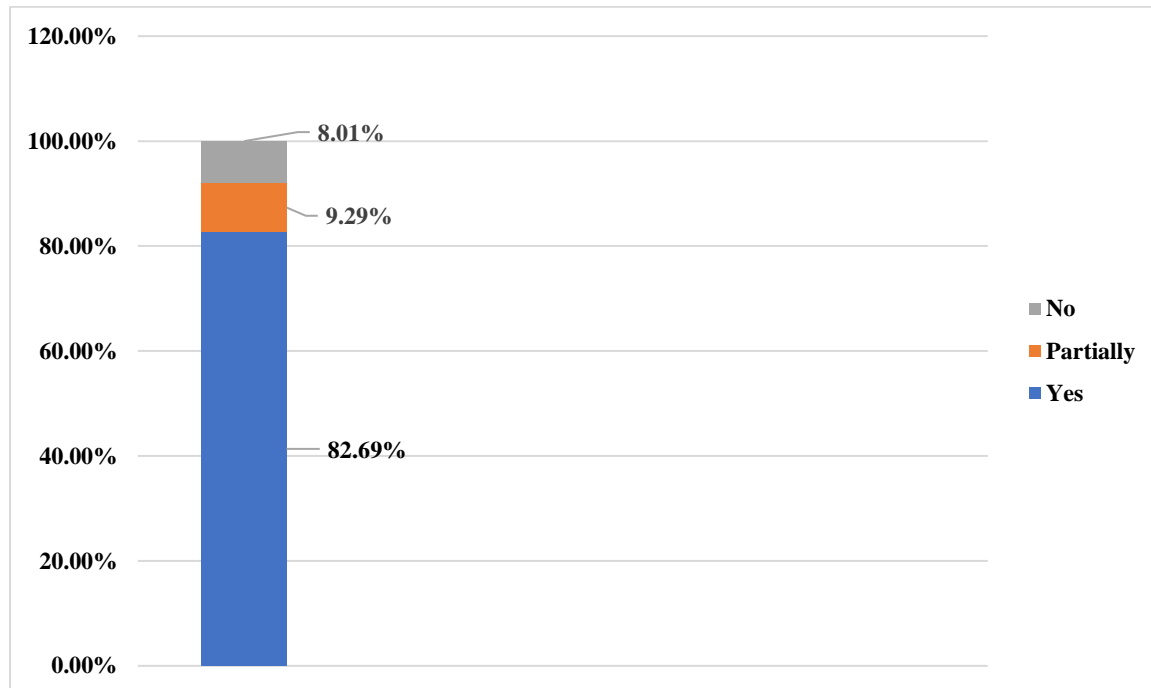
In Figure 3, the implementation of assessment and evaluation reforms as per the Education Policy 2020, 81.73 % teachers are aware and implement the evaluation reforms, 8.65% teachers are partially aware, and 9.61 % were not aware of this regard.

Figure 4 Area- D) Teacher Awareness on Professional Development



In Figure 4, it has been presented that 85.25 % teachers are aware of teachers' awareness on professional development. 85.25% of teachers are aware of the implementation of inclusive education, 6.73% are partially aware, and 8.01% were not aware.

Figure 5 Area- E) Inclusive Education and Technology Integration



The above Figure 5 shows that 82.69% teachers are aware of inclusive education and technology integration. 9.29% were partially aware, and 8.01% were not aware.

Discussion –

The overall result concludes that most teachers demonstrated a high level of awareness regarding implementing the National Education Policy 2020. Teachers were aware of most components of all studied areas of implementation of the National Education Policy, and they are working as per the recommendations given by the National Education Policy 2020. They are well aware of the new curriculum structure 5+3+3+4, curricular reforms, need-based assessment and evaluation, technology integration in the curriculum, and inclusion of diverse learners. A small group showed limited awareness, which indicates the need for further orientation and professional development training programmes for updating and upgrading their knowledge, which leads to the successful implementation of policy. Teachers' role in implementing policy is crucial, which further leads to a qualitative education for all diverse learners in the school, especially for children with special needs.

Educational Implications –

The majority of teachers are aware of and support the effectiveness of the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020 in the classrooms. The targeted trainings needed for special educators with limited awareness. Regular orientation, workshop, seminar should be conducted to updated the knowledge and

skills of the educators in the educational settings. Schools should follow the guidelines provided by the government on the policy and its implementation. The present study brought out the evidence that the educators are well aware of the implementation of the policy but few educators with the limited knowledge of the policy and are not aware of the implementation. Hence, all the efforts need to be made by the educational institution and government to promote the policy. The efforts should consider the all the stakeholder for the implementation and better learning of the children in divers' classroom for inclusive practice. Continuous professional development program should be a part of the educational setting for the educators in the schools. Policy awareness should be integrated into teacher training institutions as well as schools. It should be part of in-service teacher training programme for upgradation of their skills to implementation of policy.

Conclusion –

The study concludes that overall awareness of special educators was good on the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020. The research suggested that continuous evaluation of the implementation of the education policy by the researcher and government is essential for the development of the teacher's knowledge and implementation skills, as well as the academic perspectives of diverse learners. Awareness of policy and its implementation helps to create an effective learning environment, which supports achieving the academic goals too. Overall, the study concludes that the majority of teachers possess a good level of awareness of implementing NEP 2020.

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