

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: VISION FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract

Teachers truly shape the future of our children - and, therefore, the future of our nation. The quality of teacher education, recruitment, deployment, service conditions, and empowerment of teachers is not where it should be, and consequently the quality and motivation of teachers does not reach the desired standards. The motivation and empowerment of teachers is required to ensure the best possible future for our children and our nation. To achieve the goal of universalisation of Education in India, there is an urgent need for additional special educators for certain areas of school education. Over the years, the Government of India came with various policies on education inclusive education such as the RPwD Act 2016. All the policies emphasized the right of the child from diverse backgrounds and abilities to access formal education but still, the disparities continued. After 34 years, finally we have our long waited National Education Policy. This paper is an attempt to discuss the new provisional changes for Inclusive Education in NEP 2020.

KEYWORDS: NEP 2020, Inclusive Education, RPwD Act 2016,

Introduction

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. After Independence Indian Education System goes through various changes, in order to make it accessible to the masses. Numerous commissions, policies and various reservations worked out pretty well for the paradigm shift from focusing solely on the 3R to providing quality education to the masses. Education is a fundamental right of every Indian citizen. All children in the age group of 6-14 years irrespective of any diversity are ensuring to access free and compulsory education by the RTE act 2009. In the current situation, education is not a distant dream for the disadvantaged groups. But is it same for children with special needs?

The definition of inclusive education is given by UNESCO's Section for Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 2000) as, "Inclusive education is concerned with removing all barriers to learning, and with the participation of all learners vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation. It is a strategic approach designed to facilitate learning success for all children. It addresses the common goals of decreasing and overcoming all exclusion from the human right to education, at least at the elementary level, and enhancing access, participation and learning success in quality basic education for all."

Inclusive Education refers to an educational practice, wherein child with disabilities will be fully included in the mainstream classroom with same age peers in the local school. This also emphasized that the child with

disability must be exposed to all the curricular and co-curricular activities in order to ensure his full participation in the educational process.

In the year 2015, India adopted the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. The goal 4 of SDG mentioned to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030 (NEP,2020).

INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO

In the International scenario, the emphasis on education as a right of every individual started 60 years ago with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and World Declaration for

Education for All in 1990. Various International Conventions pronounced the need equality of opportunity such as Convention against Discrimination in 1960, Convention on Rights of Child in 1989 which was the first treaty that was developed for the child rights and the United Nations Convention on Rights of Person with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2006. Two very important International Framework for awareness of Inclusive education are Salamanca Framework (1994) and Biwako Millennium Framework of Action (2002) (Schuelka, Johnstone 2012).

AN OVERVIEW OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA

1. The first school for the deaf was set up in the Bombay in 1883 and first school for the blind at Amritsar in 1887. In 1947, the number of schools for blind increased to 32, for the deaf 30 and for the mentally retarded 03.
2. In India, the Kothari Education commission (1964-

- 66) emphasis on the need for development of an effective education programme for the people with disability, to ensure the equalization of educational opportunities.
3. NPE 1968 pronounced "Educational facilities for the physically and mentally handicapped children should be expanded, and attempts should be made to develop integrated programmes enabling the handicapped children to study in mainstream schools" (NPE, 1968).
4. A programme for Integrated Education was included in the Planning Commission of India in the year 1971.
5. In December 1974 a scheme named Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC), was launched by Government of India in order to put the idea of integration into action. The vision of this scheme was to promote integration of the children who have mild or moderate disabilities in the regular schools.
6. In the year 1976 education was added in the concurrent list by the 42nd amendment.
7. Article 45 was introduced. Article 45 ensures the free and compulsory education for all children from age 6 to 14 years.
8. The second education policy of India was adopted in the year 1986. NPE 1986 by emphasizing on Inclusive Education states that "the children with mild disabilities should be permitted to education in the regular school while the children with moderate to severe disabilities should continue to get education in the special school" (NPE, 1986).
9. In the year 1987, the Mental Health Act came into action which revoked the Indian Lunacy Act of 1912 intending to consolidate the law for mentally ill persons.
10. In the same year, the Project Integrated Education for the Disabled (PIED) to encourage the school in the neighborhood to enroll the children with disabilities. This was a joint venture of Education Ministry with NCERT and UNICEF.
11. However, the Programme of Action in the year 1992, stated that "the children disabilities who can be integrated in the regular school must get education there and the children who are facing problem in integrating in the regular school must send to the special. After learning skills, they can further have shifted to the regular school" (POA, 1992).
12. Rehabilitation Council of India Act (RCI) also came in September 1992. This act was enforced for regulating the training of rehabilitation professionals and the maintenance of a Central Rehabilitation Register.
13. After RCI act the Persons with Disabilities Act came in 1995, which ensure the full participation and equality of the people with disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region.
14. With the joint effort of Government of India and the world bank in 1997, the District Primary Education Program was launched. DPEP states that "any difference that a child exhibited in learning was to be attributed not a problem with child, but of school system." This was the first time when the emphasis was on the school preparedness (DPEP, 1997).
15. In the year 1999, National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act came. To provide financial support to the people with mentioned four disabilities, various scheme such as "Reach and Relief Scheme" and "Samarth Scheme" was introduced (National Trust Act, 1999).
16. For the Universalization of Elementary Education, Government of India launched Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2001. Though SSA was not an intervention specific to disability but the emphasis was Education for All.
17. In the year 2009, Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary Stage (IEDSS) came. This was a reformed of IEDC for secondary stage education.
18. In the same year Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) was introduced by the Government of India, for the Universalization of Secondary Education.
19. 2009 was a major year in education for India. The Right to Education act was passed in the same year and enforced from 1st April 2010. RTE 2009 under the article 21 A, makes the education a fundamental right of every children in India.
20. The Rights of Person with Disability Act 2016, replaced the PwD Act of 1995. This act was in line with the UNCRPD. It includes 21 conditions as disable. The central and state government will be established advisory board on disability.
21. In the year 2018, the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan was launched by the MHRD. It is an integrated scheme for school education, which merged three scheme SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan), RMSA (Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan) and TE (Teacher Education).
22. At Present there are 410 special education Institutions in India and 08 Special Education Institutions are situated in Haryana.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN NEP 2020

Based on the recommendation given by the Kasturirangan Committee (2019), the National Education Policy has been brought out after 34 years. This is a very comprehensive policy covering all the level of education. The policy spread into four parts. Equitable and inclusive education is cover under school education (NEP, 2020).

NEP 2020 is in line with the RPwD act 2016. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016 defines inclusive education as 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 “(RPwD Act, 2016). The RPwD act also affirmed the provision of free education for the child with disability upto the age of 18 years in an adequate condition (Banga, 2015). The RPwD act also increased the 3% reservation to 5% for the people with benchmark disabilities in all government institution for higher education. Any person with at least 40% of the listed 21 disabilities in the RPwD act is known as the person with benchmark disability. The act also emphasized on the barrier free access as a non-discrimination measure (Narayan, John 2017).

a) Schooling

NEP 2020 affirms all the recommendation given by RPwD Act 2016, regarding school education. The policy has given highest priority to enabling regular schooling process from foundational stage to the higher education, for the children with disability. Children with moderate to severe disabilities will have the option of regular or special schooling (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.10).

b) School Complex

School complex will be provided with a resource centre inside the complex itself and other resources. School also must ensure the recruitment of special educators with cross-disability training. The school will be supported to provide individualized accommodations and support mechanism in order to fulfill the need of the child with disabilities and to ensure barrier free access (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.11).

c) Curriculum, Supportive Devices and Assistive Devices

NCERT will work with expert bodies like DEPwD to make national curriculum framework (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.10). NIOS is responsible for developing high-quality modules to teach Indian Sign Language and

through this to teach other basic subjects. The curriculum will be flexible according to child strength, which will allow the children to work on their own pace. To integrate and engage the child in the classroom activities, appropriate technology- based tools and other assistive devices, as well as teaching-learning materials which are adequate and language-appropriate such as large print textbooks and Braille will be made available in school (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.11).

d) Teacher

NEP 2020 talks about reform of teacher education programmes. Sensitization, early intervention, support and special pedagogy to teach children with disability, to be an integral part of teacher education programmes (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.14)

e) Assessment

National Assessment Centre, PARAKH, will formulate the guidelines and recommend tools for the assessment of the child with disability. This will be for all the exams including the entrance test from the foundational stage to higher education (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.13).

f) Home Schooling

The home-schooling option will be available like before for children with severe and profound disabilities. The resource centers and special educators will provide support for home- schooling. For home-schooling all the guidelines and standards will be developed as recommended in the RPwD Act 2016. The orientation of the parents will be done though the technology-based solution for enabling the parents to meet the diverse educational need of their child (NEP 2020, Part-I, Section 6.12).

DISCUSSION

The New Education Policy is a comprehensive plan. It includes all those aspects that will lead to full inclusion of the children with disability in the education system. The following five aspects are an attempt to give a structure to all the points included in NEP 2020.



Figure: 1

Positive Attitude

Attitude is one of the most significant barriers to inclusion. Teacher as a pillar of the education system can bring a positive attitude among students towards inclusive education. This requires the teachers not only to be sensitized towards inclusion but also well trained for the inclusion. NEP 2020 talks about the reforms in teacher education program to inculcate the values and skills required for inclusive education.

School Preparedness

Inclusive education can only be successful if the school is well prepared to cater the need of the children with disability. NEP 2020 gives priority to the school preparedness. Resource centre in every school complex and recruitment of the special educators and the individualized support programs are the aspects of school readiness towards inclusion.

Resources & Support

Assistive, supportive device and other resources according to the individual needs must be available in the school. When it comes to supporting NEP 2020 has a very detailed plan. The resource centre supports not only the school but also the home-schooling parents. The school and the parents must be provided support by the state for quality education. Orientation programs for the parents providing home-schooling are also a part of NEP 2020.

Individualized Program

No two children are alike similarly no two disabled children are alike. So, for every disabled child with different disabilities have diverse needs. No one size fits all is the key to success here when it comes to design educational program for these children. NEP 2020 has the provision of the school to provide individualized programs for these children.

Flexible Curriculum

These children have very distinct need and ability than their peers and that is why we can't make them learn whatever their peers are learning. And that is why a flexible curriculum and a flexible assessment mechanism is very much essential for the betterment of these children. NEP 2020 not only talk about the flexible curriculum but also talk about PARAKH for easy assessment. NEP 2020 also mentioned, for the development of national curriculum framework NCERT will work along with PEDwD.

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 placement of the child with disability will not help. If we want to grow as a country, it's our moral duty to make education accessible to every child regardless of their disability. India as a country of diversity, always see these diversities as an opportunity similarly now it's time that the mindset of people to change and see every disability as a special ability. That is to focus on what these children can do better rather than merely focusing on things that they cannot do. From segregation to inclusion, the inclusive education system in India goes through several hurdles. To look at the disability as a special ability, it's required a change in the mindset. Finally, the government of India came up with such a policy which includes the minute details. The New Education Policy 2020 if implement with proper planning, will be proved as a catalyst for inclusive education. This will bring the paradigm shift in inclusive education. All the aspects discussed above altogether will give rise to effective and quality education for children with disability. This will help in bridging the gap between the expectation and the reality of inclusive education.

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