

Education for all According To NEP 2020: A Transformative Approach to Inclusive Learning in India

**Harneet Kaur, Research Scholar,
School of Education, RIMT University, Punjab**
harneetkr888@gmail.com

Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a significant shift in India's educational landscape, aiming to make education more holistic, inclusive, equitable, and accessible. This paper explores how NEP 2020 promotes the principle of "Education for All," especially focusing on marginalized and underrepresented groups. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 explicitly addresses the educational needs of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), which include individuals based on caste, gender, and disability. It aims to create a more inclusive and equitable education system by focusing on these groups and their specific challenges. It analyses key initiatives, structural reforms, and implementation strategies aimed at achieving universal access to quality education from early childhood to higher education.

Keywords: *National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Education for All, inclusive education*

Introduction

India's education system has long struggled with inequality in access, quality, and outcomes. The NEP 2020, announced after a gap of 34 years, is a bold response to these challenges. One of its core goals is to realize "Education for All", ensuring that every child, regardless of background, receives a quality education. This policy framework acknowledges the importance of recognizing and fostering the unique capabilities of each student, promoting respect for diversity and ensuring full inclusion within the education system. Education Policy lays particular emphasis on the development of the creative potential of each individual. It is based on the principle that education must develop not only cognitive capacities - both the 'foundational capacities' of literacy and numeracy and 'higher-order' cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking and problem-solving – but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions.

Former ISRO chairperson Dr. K. Kasturirangan said, that the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 underwent an extensive consultation process involving the stakeholders from the grassroots level onwards and their feedback was incorporated in the final document.

Aakash Chaudhry Director, and CEO said, “A case in point is the inclusion of arts, humanities, sports, physical education and vocational training in school education. The Policy is also futuristic - it is promising online content in English, Hindi, and regional languages.”

Sharad Mehra, said, “The NEP is a transformative step in the right direction on a number of fronts. The concept of the centre and states collaborating to increase the public investment in the education sector to reach 6% of GDP is a welcome move.”

Vision of the Policy

The vision of the policy is not only to cultivate the knowledge, skills but also to inculcate the basic human values which will make the learners feel proud for not only being an Indian .They will realize their inner potentiality, human spirit, innate and acquired intellect, the process of converting their thought into action and attitude that supports the basic human rights, ensurance of the sustainable development, maintenance of quality in lifestyle and approach with responsibility for enhancement of global well-being that molds them be a true citizen.

Need of Equitable and inclusive education

NEP 2020 aims to ensure that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of the circumstances of birth or background. Special emphasis will be given on Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups(SEDGs) which include: 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).

<https://www.eoibucharest.gov.in/docs/1596447766SalientFeatures.pdf>

Here's how NEP 2020 addresses these aspects:

Caste:

NEP 2020 recognizes the historical disadvantages faced by Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) and aims to bridge the gap in educational opportunities for these groups.

Gender:

The policy emphasizes the need for gender equity in education, particularly for female and transgender individuals, who may face unique challenges.

Disability:

NEP 2020 promotes inclusive education for students with disabilities, including those with physical, mental, and learning disabilities, ensuring they have access to quality education.

SEDGs:

SEDGs stand for Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups. These are groups of individuals who face significant challenges in accessing quality education, healthcare, and other essential resources due to a combination of social and economic factors. The policy categorizes these groups based on gender identities, socio-cultural identities (SC, ST, OBCs, minorities), geographical identities (students from rural areas, aspirational districts), and socio-economic conditions (migrant communities, low income households, etc.).

Concept of "Education for All" in NEP 2020

The idea of "Education for All" aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 and reflects India's commitment to inclusive and equitable education. NEP 2020 embeds this in multiple ways:

- Universal Access and Retention: By 2030, NEP aims for 100% Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in preschool to secondary education.
- Focus on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE): Foundational literacy and numeracy for all children by Grade 3.

- **Bridging Gender and Social Gaps:** Targeted support for disadvantaged groups (SC/ST/OBC, minorities, girls, transgender, and children with disabilities).

Objectives of the study

1. To study the reforms for promoting education for students related to SC and ST category.
2. To study the strategies for promoting education for students of various genders.
3. To study the initiatives for promoting education for disable children.

Methodology

The methodology of this paper is descriptive and secondary data has been used.

1. Reforms for promoting education for promoting education for SC/ST students

To promote education for SC/ST students, the government has implemented various reforms including reservations in educational institutions, scholarships, free education, and hostel facilities. These measures aim to address historical disadvantages and ensure equal access to quality education for these communities.

- **Samagra Shiksha:**

This revamped scheme, aligned with NEP 2020, aims to ensure quality education for all children, including those from SC/ST communities, with a focus on inclusive and equitable learning environments.

- **Equitable and Inclusive Education:**

NEP 2020 emphasizes creating an inclusive educational system that addresses the diverse needs of all learners, including those from SC/ST communities, by providing support for infrastructure development, foundational literacy and numeracy, gender and equity, and quality and innovation.

- **Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC Students:**

This centrally sponsored scheme provides financial assistance to SC students pursuing post-matriculation education, covering tuition, maintenance, and other related expenses.

● **National Fellowship for Higher Education of ST Students:**

This fellowship program supports ST students pursuing M.Phil. and Ph.D. programs, reducing their financial burden.

● **SHRESHTA (Scheme for Residential Education for Students in High Schools in Targeted Areas):**

This scheme aims to provide quality education to meritorious SC students in private residential schools.

● **ULLAS - Nav Bharat Saksharta Karyakram:**

This program focuses on adult education and aims to make all citizens, including those from SC/ST communities, literate and integrate them into society.

● **Incentive Schemes:**

Various other incentive schemes, such as pre-matric scholarships for minority students and fellowships for minority students pursuing higher education, indirectly benefit SC/ST students as well.

- The government has implemented reservation policies in educational institutions, both at the central and state levels, to ensure representation of SC/ST students in higher education.
- Includes SC/ST, PVTGs, DNTs, NTs, and SNTs
- Strengthening Eklavya Model Residential Schools for Tribals
- A total no of 1,09,618 students in EMRS. 55,621 are boys, 53,994 students are girls, and 3 transgender students
- Improvement of traditional and Neighborhood Skills. Includes: Blacksmiths, Goldsmiths, Leather Workers, Weavers, Culinary Experts etc.

2. Strategies for Promoting Education for Students of Various Genders

The objectives of NEP for equitable and quality education for girl children are being met through specific provisions under Samagra Shiksha 2.0 by allocating dedicated resources for SocioEconomically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs).

- Under Samagra Shiksha, various interventions have been targeted for providing quality education to girls, which include opening of schools in the neighbourhood to make access easier for girls, free uniform and text-books to girls up to class VIII.
- Additional teachers and residential quarters for teachers in remote/hilly areas, appointment of additional teachers including women teachers, stipend to CWSN girls from class I to class XII, separate toilets for girls, teachers' sensitization programmes to promote girls participation, gender-sensitive teaching-learning materials including text books etc.
- In addition, to reduce gender gaps at all levels of school education, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs), which are residential schools from class VI to XII for girls belonging to disadvantaged groups such as SC, ST, OBC, Minority and Below Poverty Line (BPL), are sanctioned in Educationally Backward Blocks.
- With a view to improve female enrolment in the Undergraduate Programmes in Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and National Institutes of Technology (NITs), supernumerary seats were created which increased the female enrolment from less than 10% to more than 20%.
- University Grants Commission (UGC) is implementing the scheme of “Development of Women’s Studies in Indian Universities and Colleges”. This scheme provides funds for setting up Women Studies Centers (WSCs) in universities and colleges, focusing on teaching, research, curriculum development, training and outreach activities. The objectives of the scheme are to provide financial support in advancing Women’s Studies through teaching, research and practical work.
- IIT-Madras has undertaken “Vidya Shakti” scheme which aims at enhancing conceptual and foundational learning skills of children from rural areas to enhance enrolment (including women) in STEM branches in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs).
- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) offers fellowships to promote research in basic and applied sciences among women through programs under Women in

Science and Engineering- Knowledge Involvement & Research Advancement through Nurturing (WISE-KIRAN) and Science and Engineering Research Board- Promoting Opportunities for Women in Exploratory Research (SERB-POWER) Fellowship scheme to identify and reward outstanding women researchers and innovators working in various Science & Technology program in Indian academic institutions and R&D laboratories.

- The Department of Biotechnology runs a special program ‘The Biotechnology Career Advancement and Re-orientation Programme (BioCARE)’ with a vision to promote and support women in science.
- Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL), Ministry of Education has developed Guidelines on School Safety and Security of children studying in Government, Government-aided and Private Schools. These safety guidelines envisage constitution of anti-bullying committees, parent teacher associations, school management committees, safety walk and complaint boxes etc., as preventive measures for ensuring safety and security of children in schools. Further, these guidelines have provisions to conduct awareness and sensitization program on various provisions including POCSO Act for girls in schools, preparation and dissemination of e-modules on sexual abuse and violence, parenting, nutrition, safety of girl child, etc., and integration of prevention of violence against young children in routine health delivery.

NEP 2020 has provision of Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF)

| Sr. No. | Particulars | Amount In Lakhs (2021-22) |
|---------|---|------------------------------|
| 1 | Provision of free text-books up to Class VIII to all children. | 286055.88 |
| 2 | Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas | 244186.46 |
| 3 | Uniforms to all girls, SC, ST children and Below Poverty Line (BPL) children up to class VIII | 491952.50 |
| 4 | Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Awasiya Vidyalayas and Hostels | 36025.27 |
| 5 | Rani Laxmi Bai Atmaraksha Prashikshan (Self defense training to Girls) | 11657.76 |

| | | |
|---|---|----------|
| 6 | Incinerator & Sanitary Pad Vending Machines | 5606.07 |
| 7 | Stipend for Children with Special Needs Girls | 12257.66 |

Inclusion of LGBTQ communities

NEP 2020 for the first time mentioned “Education for Transgender”

- Transgender Persons Rights Act (2020) proposed by National Council for Transgender Persons.
- 25 percent reservation in educational institutions for Transgender Children
- In 2019-20, a total of 61214 transgender children are enrolled in schools • 5813 in Class X and 4798 transgender children in Class XII are enrolled • 25 transgender students cleared 10th and 12th CBSE board examinations in 2020
- Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020 for accommodation and schooling of transgender
- Kinnar Vidyalaya (2021) was established in Mumbai, by Shri Mahashakti Charitable Trust U
- Three transgender teachers were recruited at Karnataka state-run schools for the first time in the country (2022).
- Implementation of NISHTHA (National Initiative for School Heads’ and Teachers’ Holistic Advancement)
- Teachers are trained for Gender Dimensions in Teaching and Learning Processes

3. Initiatives for Promoting Education for Disable Children

- Guidelines for development of e-content for Divyang students for School and Teacher Education have been published.
- Content for visually impaired children has been published and specific Textbooks have also been uploaded on DIKSHA - Barkha series.
- DAISY Audio Books for visually impaired have been developed and made available on DIKSHA.

- Talking books (in Daisy format) for learners with Visual Impairment: 13 subjects at secondary level and 23 subjects at senior secondary level covered. 1936 audio books are recorded and uploaded on DIKSHA.
- Indian Sign language Dictionary has been developed including 10,000 dictionary words on DIKSHA in text, audio and video format.
- ISL videos available on Swayam Prabha have been uploaded on DIKSHA platform also and telecast regularly on PM eVIDYA & DTH TV channels. Live sessions of ‘Teaching Learning Interventions for Inclusive Classrooms - Ask the Expert’ have been transmitted live on PM eVidya.
- Under Samagra Shiksha assistance for Student oriented component, separate stipend for girls, identification camps at blocks for CWSN, resource centres at block level and deployment and training of special educators is provided.
- Content on DIKSHA in 33 Indian languages, including Indian Sign Language has been made available.
- To convert textbooks and educational material into India Sign Language, MoU has been signed between India Sign Language Research & Training Centre (ISLRTC) and NCERT.
- NIOS has introduced ISL as a language subject at the Secondary Level.
- General and Specific Provisions for each of the 21 disabilities notified by CBSE and NIOS for Board Examinations.
- Core committee has been formed for preparing guidelines & standards for Home Based Education.
- Draft guidelines on Gifted Children are under finalisation after consultations with PSA, UGC, AICTE, and Jnana Probodhini in Pune.
- The department has launched an initiative called ‘Manodarpan’ for mental health and wellbeing of students. It aimed to provide emotional support and needful counseling to the students under distress due to the unprecedented times they were facing. Issuance of advisory guidelines from time to time, creation of web page and national tollfree numbers, interactive online chat options and, national-level database and directory of counselors are part of this initiative.

Recommendations

- Invest in teacher training and infrastructure in underserved regions
- Expand internet and electricity access for digital learning
- Strengthen public-private partnerships for inclusive outreach

Conclusion

NEP 2020 holds great promise for achieving "Education for All" by reimagining India's educational framework. Its success lies in sustained political will, adequate funding, community participation, and timely implementation. With inclusive and equitable approaches, NEP 2020 can become a milestone in building an educated and empowered India.

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