A Roadmap to Special and Inclusive Education: National Education Policy 2020 Perspective

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Abstract:

Education is a crucial virtue, a social necessity, the foundation of a happy life, and a symbol of freedom. The leading of a satisfying lives is all made possible through education which helps us to understand the world, to be able to contribute to society, and fundamentally, is a process of gaining knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. However, the cherry on top will be when society begins to provide equal opportunities, through education, to each and every one.

With this concept of equality in education, the Indian government has adopted the third National Education policy, known as NEP 2020, which replaces the previous policy, which was implemented in 1986 and later updated in 1992. Many parts of the educational system are altered by this strategy, and the concepts of special education and inclusive education are treated extremely seriously. According to UNICEF "Inclusive education is that education system which includes all students, and welcomes and supports them to learn, whoever they are and whatever their abilities or requirements and special education. No-one should be excluded. Every child has a right to inclusive education, including children with disabilities".

Not just to children with disabilities and special needs who need to receive inclusive education, but it provides a knowledge to a wide range of people in accordance with their needs. A disability is any physical or mental condition that makes it challenging for the person with the condition to engage in certain activities or interact with others. Disabilities such as physical (Mobility impairments), sensory (Visual, Hearing), Intellectual and development (ASD, Down syndrome), psychiatric, Neurological (Parkinson's disease, ALS), communication (speech and language), learning (Dyslexia, ADHD) and many more and those who are affected by these defects are stigmatized in our culture. Our role, with the assistance of the government, is to make them feel equally valued. The media, such as television, books, magazines, the internet, film, and other forms of entertainment, has a significant impact on how people think now a days. Many art pieces are already present from which we are going to have a film literature review and a documentary review. A powerful line from one of the greatest works of art is "There are various diamonds that have been born in this world, who have changed the map of this whole world because they were able to see this world from a different angle".

This paper is an attempt to discuss inclusive education that emphasizes on special education under NEP 2020 and tries to examine how NEP 2020 addresses both inclusive and special pedagogies and if they coexist. This paper will also focus on how this policy impacts student's physical and mental capabilities at various level of learning by understanding psychological concepts and various theories that already exists. In conclusion, this paper will discuss the implementation of this policy, whether it is helpful or not, and offers some recommendations for how this policy could be better implemented into the current educational system for a successful outcome.

Keywords: *Inclusive, Special, Equitable, Education, Pedagogy, NEP2020, Psychological, Policy*

1. Introduction

Education is the cornerstone of youth development, offering pathways to brighter futures and fresh opportunities. While education policies have existed in the past, they often focused more on academic achievements rather than holistic development. Each child is born with unique qualities, yet specially-abled students have often been treated as a separate segment of society, their needs often overlooked. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) in India aims to foster inclusivity by integrating every student into the same classrooms from the elementary level. NEP 2020 seeks to provide equal educational opportunities for all students, regardless of their mental or physical development. This inclusivity is not only vital for economic growth but also for national integration, social justice, equality, scientific advancement, and cultural preservation in India. NEP 2020 helps identify students' capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses, enabling the government to cater to their specific needs. This can be described as 'Special Education (Kongkee D, 2021). If a physical faculty member is lost, an individual can still be of worth. Helen Keller believes that the most wretched person in society is one who has sight but not vision. A comprehensive understanding of humanistic principles is necessary to comprehend the skills of people with impairments (Kumar and Agarwal, 2016).

According to UNICEF, approximately 240 million specially-abled students globally strive for equal educational opportunities due to limited access to resources. This is where NEP 2020's goal of 'Special and Inclusive Education' comes into play. Special and Inclusive education plays a critical role in breaking down social stigmas and discrimination and fosters the values of sharing and caring among students during their formative years.

The National Educational Policy (NEP) of 2020 aims to tackle the growing inequality and inequity that plagues the country's education system. One of the key concerns is the high dropout rate among socio-economically disadvantaged groups and vulnerable minorities. The policy also acknowledges that there are barriers that result in inefficient resource allocation, such as small school campuses, which can lead to less participation by rural girls. (Kumar, 2021). Additionally, it recognizes that children living in geographically challenging areas often have unmet educational needs.

This article discusses recommendations for inclusive education and highlights the challenges that need to be addressed in the concept of Special and Inclusive Education under NEP 2020. It also examines their interrelation and explores the challenges and barriers faced by students with special needs in inclusive classrooms. Additionally, it offers suggestions for the smooth implementation of NEP 2020 for inclusive classrooms.

2. Special and Inclusive Education

The National Education Policy 2020 recognizes the importance of inclusivity in education. It aims to provide quality education to every child, regardless of their background, abilities, or disabilities. The policy emphasizes that no child should be deprived of education and acknowledges the need for tailored approaches to accommodate the diverse learning requirements of students (Panigrahi and Malik, 2020; Kumar, 2021).

NEP 2020 stresses the importance of Special and Inclusive Education to ensure that students with disabilities receive the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers (Imam & Andrews, 2022). These students face unique challenges due to physical or mental conditions that hinder their participation in basic educational activities. Disabilities can be physical, intellectual, or related to learning abilities such as language, mathematics, and motor skills (Archana, 2023).

It's imperative to understand that specially-abled students are an integral part of society and require personalized attention and specialized educational approaches to ensure their inclusion. Special and Inclusive Education should not be seen as separate entities but as simultaneous strategies. Many specially-abled students struggle in classrooms designed for non-disabled students, necessitating a more

inclusive approach with additional resources, specially trained teachers, audio-visual aids, and a curriculum tailored to their needs. (Mehraj Ud Din Bhat, 2017).

Students with disabilities often find learning challenging in an environment where their unique requirements are not adequately addressed. In India, significant research and policy initiatives have been undertaken to ensure that specially-abled children do not feel marginalized and experience a sense of belonging. Inclusive education allows children to learn from each other, fostering strong human relationships and contributing to overall dignity. Such inclusive education accomplishes the aim of universal education. Education achieves a higher prestige when inhibitions and barriers are lifted. It has been determined that including disabled children in the educational system is a challenging endeavour that demands extensive community engagement and support in addition to the provision of appropriate solutions to a wide range of special education needs in both formal and informal contexts. (Makwana, 2022)

3. Equitable and inclusive education with reference to NEP 2020

Individuals perceive Education differently, which is influenced by how education is tailored for both abled and specially-abled students. The early stages of a child's development, whether they have special needs or not, are deemed critical, as the human brain undergoes 85% of its development by early exposure (Antony, 2019). NEP 2020 has introduced structural changes in the education system, moving from the previous 10+2 system to the 5+3+3+4 model. This modification strongly emphasizes Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) starting at the age of 3 to promote a child's holistic development (Kumar, 2021).

The new structure divides education into four sections: the Foundation phase (5 years), the Preparatory phase (3 years), the Middle Phase (3 years), and the Secondary stage (4 years). Each stage is designed to cater to students' unique needs and developmental milestones. Cognitive development theory posits that learning progresses through distinct stages from birth through adolescence, and no learning phase should be overlooked (Cherry, 2022).

It's crucial to emphasize that inclusive education should provide a common educational journey for all students, irrespective of their special needs. Inclusion is based on the belief that students who work together in diverse groups can better comprehend information and solve problems, as learning is dependent on prior knowledge. This approach aligns with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016, promoting a system where students with and without disabilities learn together, with teaching and learning methods adapted to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

4. Challenges faced under inclusivity

According to the 2011 Census, India has a substantial population of specially-abled individuals, constituting 2.21% of the total population. Specially-abled children often encounter challenges such as communication barriers, adaptability, competition, making friends, demotivation, transportation, infrastructure, bullying, navigating social situations, emotional difficulties, hesitance to seek clarification, and more (Das and Bhatnagar, 2014). However, it's essential to recognize that non-disabled students may also face challenges when special-needs students require extra attention, potentially diverting resources and time from other students. Educators often lack proper training to address the diverse needs of their students. There are several prevailing problems that need to be solved to increase inclusivity even at the elementary level. This includes: Inadequate pre- service training and professional development, Lack of Assistive devices, Lack of Community Will and Participation (Mehraj Ud Din Bhat, 2017).

5. Literature and film review

In today's world, media plays a significant role in shaping perspectives and attitudes. Films, in particular, have the power to influence beliefs and practices more rapidly than other media. One such film, "Taare

Zameen Par," directed by Aamir Khan, tells the story of 8-year-old Ishaan Awasthi, who faces challenges in traditional and extracurricular learning. Attachment theory suggests that children who have emotionally or physically supportive figures in their lives are more likely to take risks and develop intellectually. Every child form attachment relationship with those who facilitate their learning. Mr. Nikumbh, an instructor at the Tulips School for young children with developmental disabilities, he changes the teacher before because the teacher has been gone to teach drawing to the whole New Zealand (Ardiyansyah et. al. 2020). This theory can help us better understand Ishaan's situation, as he receives support from a special educator and an art teacher, who not only assist him academically but also recognize his artistic talent. In a postmodern era where every child is expected to work hard to fit in, children like Ishaan study not to compete with others but to improve themselves and lead dignified lives. We can apply these aspects of attachment theory, a branch of psychoanalytical theories to better understand Ishaan Avasthi's situation, who is mocked at school and at home for not being able to study like other children. After separating from his mother, his primary caregiver, his anxiety increased due to a lack of emotional support. A special educator and art teacher understand this. According to theory, teachers can be thought of as caregivers and children as care seekers. He assisted him in understanding the letters and words by using visual and audio methods such as play cards, drawings, recording, and so on. This mentor not only assisted the child with his education but also recognized his artistic talent. In this postmodern era, where every child is expected to work hard in order to fit in, children like Ishaan study because they want to improve and become better people in life. "Every student can learn," says George Evans, "but not on the same day or in the same way." They are not competing with the rest of the world; they are simply living a good, educated, and dignified life.

6. Strategies and suggestions for nep 2020 easy implementations

To ensure the success of NEP 2020, it's crucial to implement it effectively. The integration of specially-abled students with regular students should begin at the initial stages of education, such as the Preparatory phase under NEP 2020. Given the preponderance of social justice and equity in the Indian Constitution, priority enrolment in primary and secondary education should be granted to India's 35 million physically challenged children. Children with disabilities make up less than 5% of students in schools. They are not included in the remaining nine tenths.

The development of the potential of this sizable percentage of challenged children is critically needed in light of the ongoing maltreatment they are experiencing. (Kumar and Kumar, 2007). This gradual approach helps students adapt to the idea of inclusive education and allows for personalized accommodations as their needs change. Therefore, simply creating and publishing a policy is insufficient. While documents serve as a starting point for addressing public needs, it's of the utmost importance to recognize flaws and loopholes in order to ensure the policy's goals are achieved and the competent authority cannot be exempted from compliance (Jain and Mishra, 2021). The government can introduce crowdfunding to help schools modify their infrastructure and provide innovative technologies and teaching aids suitable for all students (Das and Bhatnagar,2014; Archana,2023). In terms of their behaviours, beliefs, and knowledge, educators will be in different places. The consideration of differences must begin at the commencement of teacher education and professional development. Teachers should dispel the false belief that they lack the necessary qualifications to instruct students with disabilities or those with "additional needs." They possess many of the skills and knowledge needed to instruct all students and by acquiring new techniques and by self-assurance to use this knowledge to support students who are struggling academically (Florian, 2008). While educating in an inclusive classroom, educators have to recognize that the "differences between learners are a matter of degree and not a matter of category" (Florian, 2008). Co-teaching with Special Education teachers, the dynamics of teaching approaches and group work activity were quite grateful for Special Education's presence and support (Maarof and Jalaluddin, 2019). Classrooms should be designed following the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), incorporating a 'Complaint and Redress Mechanism' to address grievances from students with special needs and their parents. Interactive sessions can promote values of sharing, caring, unity, and respect (Hayes and Bulat, 2017).). Although, things would take time, but the teaching

methodologies need to be innovated, constant interaction with the especially abled peer can help improve the policy to great extents. India is making changes to its educational system. They converse with their peers who aren't impaired all the time. It has an impact on how they develop academically, physically, socially, and actively. School, resource teachers, and parents, provide assistance for the inclusion process. Another thing to contemplate is how the school sets itself apart as an efficient institution that attends to each student's unique demands (Kumar & Agarwal, 2016).
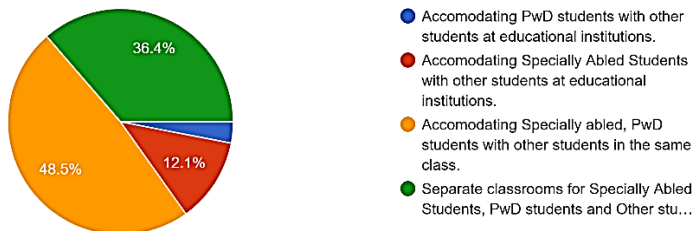
7. Survey Analysis

Surveys plays crucial role in understanding people's point of view about the topic of research. We conducted a survey through google form in an attempt to gather people's opinions about NEP-2020's Special and Inclusive Education. Responses were provided by both teachers and students. The responses are as follows:

Do you agree with government's decision to introduce special and inclusive education through NEP-2020?
33 responses

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

9.1%
15.2%
75.8%
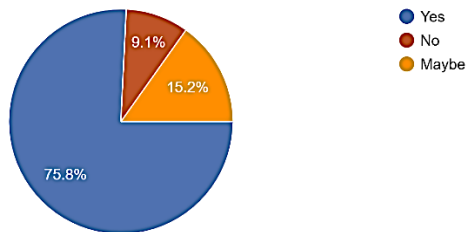
How well do you understand the concept of special and inclusive education?
33 responses

- Accomodating PwD students with other students at educational institutions.
- Accomodating Specially Abled Students with other students at educational institutions.
- Accomodating Specially abled, PwD students with other students in the same class.
- Separate classrooms for Specially Abled Students, PwD students and Other stu…

36.4%
48.5%
12.1%

Do you feel Specially Abled Students should be incorporated with normal students?
33 responses

- Strongly Agree
- Neutral
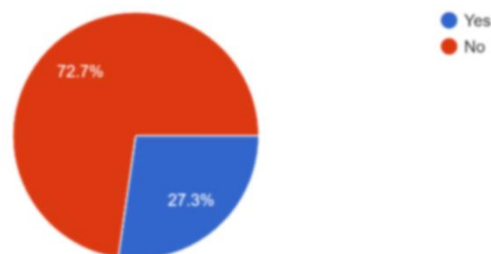- Strongly Disagree

45.5%
48.5%
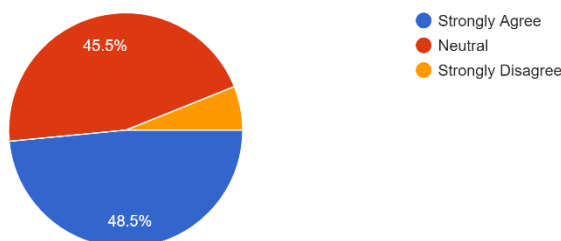
Do you feel teachers are trained enough to manage specially abled students and other students together in the same class.
33 responses
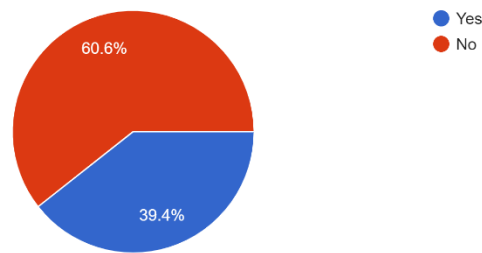
Do you think there are sufficient support and resources available for teachers to efficiently implement inclusive education?
33 responses

How comfortable would you be sharing you stationary requirements, lunch, playing, sharing your thoughts and experiences with a specially abled student?
33 responses

According to survey analysis done by us, many people are unaware of inclusive classrooms, often misunderstanding inclusion as merely including specially-abled students alongside regular students. While they may lack in-depth knowledge of inclusion, they still support the idea of including all children in a single classroom. Survey participants also identified several challenges in inclusive classrooms, including communication barriers, competition, the need for trained teaching staff, acceptance, navigating social situations, classroom size issues, emotional difficulties, infrastructure, hesitation to ask questions, and decreased self-confidence among students. Addressing these issues requires having well-qualified educators, raising awareness, modifying infrastructure, diversifying the curriculum, ensuring resource availability, and adopting innovative teaching methods.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, NEP 2020 is a commendable policy for enhancing India's education system. It emphasizes equitable and inclusive education, ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity to excel and lead life according to their aspirations. Teachers cannot implement the drastic changes to the educational system on their own that are necessary to allow inclusive education to take the place of special education.

Within the confines of national curricula, assessment systems, school structures, and their respective roles within them, educators are free to adopt diverse perspectives and possible solutions for students who face obstacles to learning. Future developments in inclusive education should therefore concentrate on practice that assist educators in understanding the inclusive structure as well as assistance in gaining the self-assurance to know what to do when their students face learning challenges. (Florian, 2008). Media, particularly films, plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions and advocating for the inclusion of specially-abled students. Inclusive and special education can coexist, and society's collective efforts, including students, teachers, parents, governmental and non-governmental agencies, and educational institutions, are essential to making this a reality.

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