

## TOPIC-NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020 IN REFERENCE TO INCLUSIVITY IN INDIAN CONTEXT

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### ABSTRACT

In the light of New Education Policy- NEP2020, India is heading towards another milestone of development. The present article is a descriptive analysis of the features of NEP2020 in reference to inclusivity for the diverse population of male, female, transgender and special individuals with varying language, culture, socio-economic status, and region. The article discusses the various kinds of barriers in the implementation of this policy along with the advantages and disadvantages.

**Keywords:** Inclusivity, Education, NEP2020, Disability

### Introduction

The new education policy (NEP) introduced in 2020 follows a policy first launched in the year 1968 and subsequently revised in the years 1986 and 1992. Changing conditions made it imperative that education too be redirected so as to help achieve the goals of economic and social development. With the passage of time voices have been raised in demand of equality for all. An equal society presupposes the acceptance of diversity in caste, class, gender, religion and ability. The NEP recognizes and attempts to address this call for inclusion through its various aspects. The NEP has an all-encompassing view covering both school level including special education to the special children with multiple disabilities, and higher education in the country.

In India, inclusion in education means providing equal opportunities to all to learn and develop skills to become a productive member of the society. This is possible only by provision of proper infrastructure in schools and colleges which will help in academic and co-curricular advancement of students and teachers with diversity. Most infrastructure-like buildings, libraries, playgrounds, and facilities such as books, laboratories and computers are not specific to everyone's needs. However, one essential aspect of access to education is the availability of maintained toilets in

schools and colleges are not available everywhere. Similarly, the availability of ramps, handrails signs, brail etc. in educational premises is essential for easing the trials of children with special needs.

Higher education in India includes undergraduate and post graduate levels for all the students of our country with diverse population. The distinctive nature of higher education in India is the preponderance of traditional streams as compared to STEM (science, technology, engineering and medicine) courses. Attempts are being made to change this situation to increase the employability of youth. This issue is raised in the new NEP2020 for preparing students to learn specific skills from school level only, which is a big advantage of this policy.

### Methodology

The article is based on secondary literature review and descriptive research. The gazette document of the new education Policy is a major foundation for the article. Apart from this, the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE) and All India Survey on higher education (AISHE) reports of various years, as well as periodic surveys on situation of education in the country have also been used. Various scholarly articles, news reports from magazines and newspapers have been referred too. The present article draws on these published sources to bring out the conditions prevailing in the country emphasizing the availability/non availability of services for all genders and persons with disability, that affect inclusion in society. As such, the main focus of the article is on factors affecting inclusion in terms of gender, social background, and disability.

### Findings and discussions

To understand inclusivity in education system in India according to New Education Policy 2020, it is necessary to understand NEP200 first. The main features of NEP2020 are given in figure 1.

Programme duration	Reforms in higher education	For Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universalization of early childhood education (ECCE)</li> <li>• 5+3+3+4 to replace 10+2 system</li> <li>• Teaching in mother tongue till class 5</li> <li>• vocational courses to start from class 6<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• UG Program- 3 to 4 years</li> <li>• PG Program- 1 to 2 years</li> <li>• Integrated Bachelor's &amp; master's degree-5 years</li> <li>• Special provision for special children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Mission on monitoring</li> <li>• Independent Board of Governors.</li> <li>• Common Norms for public &amp; private higher education institutions</li> <li>• No rigid separation between streams, students will have increased flexibility and choice of subjects having a multidisciplinary approach</li> <li>• Affiliation system to be phased out in 15 years</li> <li>• Review &amp; Analysis of knowledge for Holistic Development</li> <li>• PARAKH National assessment center for Performance Assessment, Review &amp; Analysis of knowledge for Holistic Development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandatory for every PhD student to do a module on teacher education</li> <li>• National professional Standards for teachers NPST by 2022</li> <li>• Minimum 50 hrs. of Inservice training per teacher/year</li> <li>• The minimum qualification degree for teaching will be 4 years integrated B. Ed degree by 2030.</li> <li>• Random sampling of students for continuous online feedback on self-disclosure</li> <li>• Engagement of social workers, alumni, retired teachers.</li> <li>• Strengthening the Central Advisory of Board of Education- CABE for developing &amp; evaluating, revising the vision of education on a continuous basis with collaboration of MHRD &amp; states</li> </ul>

Figure 1: Important features of NEP 2020

So, we find that the NEP 2020 reveals all the chances of inclusion of diverse students and teachers too to build up a new progressive education system in India.

### **NEP 2020 for the persons with disabilities**

When we talk about people with disabilities, NEP 2020 includes many future aspects. As described by our constitution, the fundamental rights are the right to equality, freedom, right against exploitation, right to freedom of religion, cultural and educational rights and right to constitutional remedies. These rights are for every citizen of the country including diverse populations with varying conditions and disabilities too. So, NEP2020 also implies principles for empowerment of persons with disabilities i.e. Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons, non-discrimination, full and effective participation and inclusion in society, respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity, equality of opportunity, equality between men and women, respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities & Accessibility for persons with disabilities. An accessible physical environment benefits everyone, not just persons with disabilities. NEP 2020 also includes standards of accessibility that should be as consistent as possible with international standards, such as those of the ISO, considering the local context. Regarding the built environment, ISO21542:2011, Building construction- accessibility and usability of the built environment, delineates a set of requirements and recommendations concerning construction, assembly, components and fittings. There is a provision of measures that should be undertaken to eliminate obstacles and barriers to indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, medical facilities, and workplaces. These would include not only buildings, but also footpaths, curb cuts, and obstacles that block the flow of pedestrian traffic.

Besides these, there are many barriers to implementation of professional learning programs in terms of Technological barriers like lack of access to library resources, limited resources of assistive devices, lack of uniform assessment schemes, lack of statistical report, lack of access to the internet, especially in the remote areas, lack of digital infrastructure and materials, as well as professional & personal barriers such as lack of ongoing professional learning opportunities, lack of resources (special education teachers, para professionals), Incoherent teacher training to adapt to new-age technologies, increased work load, non-availability of instructional materials, ethical concerns about the use of human participants, lack of familiarity with the research process. and even social barriers like lack of inclusion policies impacting teacher training, lack of collaboration, poor communication between stakeholders, large population and cultural myths.

### **Inclusion situation under level of school education in India**

An essential criterion of inclusivity is provision of proper infrastructure for different categories of students in schools. Since the students spend a major portion of their day in school premises, non-availability of adequate toilet facilities proves to be a major hinderance to education. This is true for boys and girls both and also for the children with special needs. According to data provided in

UDISE 2021-22 as shown in the table below, most schools in India have toilets for girls and boys though the number of functional toilets is much less than the number of toilets stated to be available. A bigger concern is the lower number of schools with CWSN toilet facilities. This shows that India still has a long way to go in providing services to its differently abled population. Only 10 lakh schools have ramps, and less than 7.5 lakh schools have ramps and handrails for wheelchair movement.

**Table 1: Number of schools with various inclusion parameters in India**

Parameter	No. of schools	Percentage
Total no. of schools (India)	1489115	
Girls' toilet	1439898	
Functional girls' toilet	1398305	
Boy' toilet	1404342	
Functional boys' toilet	1353081	
Ramp	1069795	
Ramp and handrails	740395	
Schools with CWSN toilet facilities	401487	

Source: UDISE+ 2021-22, Table 2, Page 28-29

When discussing the enrolment of students at various levels, it is being assumed that no child will willing forgo a chance for education. From table 2, it can be seen that more than 26 crore children are currently enrolled for school education in India. Out of this, around 12 crore students are in the primary level with another 6 crores studying in the upper primary level taking the total number of enrolled students at the elementary level to above 18 crore 86 lakh students. But this number begins to fall at the secondary and higher secondary levels, with less than 4 crore students in classes 9-10 and less than 3 crores at the plus-two level. This trend points towards reduced availability of opportunities for education as the level of schooling rises.

**Table 2: Enrolment of students at various levels of school education in India (in Lakhs)**

Total (Pre-Primary to 12)	Pre-primary	Primary (1 to 5)	Upper Primary (6-8)	Elementary (1-8)	Secondary (9-10)	Higher Secondary (11-12)
2652.35	94.95	1218.42	667.90	1886.32	385.28	285.79

Source: UDISE+2021-22, Table 5.1, Pg 73

Further, analysis of the data provided by UDISE+ 2021-22 survey shows that there is perceptible difference between the sexes regarding accessibility to education. The number of girl students is always less than the number of boys at all levels of education – elementary, secondary, or higher secondary (Table 3). As the level of education increases, there is lower participation of females

reducing their overall educational attainments in present and in future. This trend has been extensively observed even in the levels of higher education at the college and university levels.

**Table 3: Enrolment by gender and level of school education (in lakhs)**

Pre-Primary			Primary			Upper-Primary			Elementary			Secondary			Higher secondary		
Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
50.51	44.43	94.95	63.51	583.24	1218.42	345.11	322.78	667.91	980.29	906.03	1886.32	200.71	184.56	385.28	147.47	138.31	285.79

Source: UDISE+ 2021-22, Table 5.6, Pg 78-79 and authors' calculations

The new education policy has stressed that inclusion implies that all, including those with special needs, must be provided equal opportunities for education. Table 4 displays the number of CWSN at various levels of school education with gender-based diversification at each level being specified.

**Table 4: Enrolment of Children With Special Needs (CWSN) by gender and level of school education (in lakhs)**

Primary			Upper-Primary			Elementary			Secondary			Higher secondary		
Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
6.72	4.59	11.31	4.03	3.06	7.10	10.76	7.65	18.41	1.61	1.26	2.88	0.61	0.49	1.10

Source: UDISE+ 2021-11, Table 5.11, page 88-89 and authors' calculations.

The gross enrolment ratio (GER) is an important parameter to compare the enrolment at a specific level of education to the age-group which is most appropriate to that education level. The values shown in table 5 below represent enrolment at the elementary (consisting of primary and upper primary), secondary and higher secondary levels as a percentage of population of that age-group. It is relevant to point out that UDISE+2021-22 report holds that GER greater than 100% may be due to presence of over or under-age children in that level of education.

**Table: Gross enrolment ratio by gender and level of school education**

	Primary	Upper-Primary	Elementary	Secondary	Higher secondary
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	Bo ys	Girl s	Tot al	Bo ys	Girl s	Tot al	Bo ys	Girl s	Tot al	Bo ys	Gir ls	Tot al	Bo ys	Gir ls	Tot al
A ll	102 .1	104 .8	103 .4	94. 5	94. 9	94. 7	99. 3	101 .1	100 .1	79. 7	79. 4	79. 6	57. 0	58. 2	57. 6
S C	111 .5	114 .9	113 .1	103 .1	104 .5	103 .8	108 .4	111 .0	109 .7	84. 2	85. 6	84. 9	59. 5	63. 7	61. 5
S T	106 .3	106 .7	106 .5	98. 3	97. 6	98. 0	103 .4	103 .3	103 .4	77. 0	79. 2	78. 1	50. 5	53. 6	52. 0

Source: UDISE+ 2021-22, Table 6.1-6.3, pages 109-111 and authors' calculations

In this regard, the authors would like to point out that the gross enrolment ratio is close to and even above 100 at the elementary level (classes 1 to 8). However, this data may be more due to the lure of freebies such as midday meals, books and uniforms rather than an actual push towards education. At the secondary and higher secondary level, the GER has fallen reflecting the difficulty faced by most students in continuing the strenuous level of learning associated with classes 9 to 12.

### **Inclusion situation under level of higher education in India**

An access to higher education is broadly demanded on the ground of democracy and wider (equal) participation in public sphere of all. Since independence, India has made many strides with various strategies, primarily affirmative action, to make higher education accessible for socially and culturally marginalized groups, girls, SCs and STs.

According to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2020-21 report, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (henceforth GER) in higher education in India was 27.1 percent. The GER for male students was 29.3 percent, and for female students, it was 24.9 percent. The highest GER was recorded in Tamil Nadu (49.3 percent), and the lowest GER was recorded in Bihar (14.9 percent). The report also stated that out of the total enrolment in higher education, 51.6 percent of students were enrolled in undergraduate programs, 26.2 percent in postgraduate programs, and 22.2 percent in Ph.D. programs. Given these vast gap exist in GER, New education policy (2020) identify certain facets of exclusion, that are including “lack of knowledge of higher education opportunities, economic opportunity cost of pursuing higher education, financial constraints, admission processes, geographical and language barriers, poor employability potential of many higher education programmes, and lack of appropriate student support mechanisms”(p.41).

However, there are significant disparities in the enrolment of females in different levels and types of higher education institutions. Chanana(2000) analyses the disciplinary choice that are made by women in higher education in the socio-economic context. Thus, the enrolment of females in technical and professional courses is much lower than in arts and science courses. In addition, the enrolment of females is also lower in top-ranked institutions and institutions located in rural areas. Moreover, while the enrolment of females in higher education has increased, there is still a

gender gap in access to higher education, particularly in rural areas and among disadvantaged communities.

Besides, there are still socio-economic factors, e.g. Class (if a woman is coming from upper middle classes she would likely to attend the professional courses expanding on her own in order to become independent in later life) that determines the choices of courses. Indeed, the disciplinary choices are, to great extent, made by parent and seen by them education as opportunity for upwardly marriages proposal. Similarly, the enrolment of girls at higher level differ on the basis of caste and region.

Sahni & Shanker (2012) studies on girls' participation in higher education in state of Maharashtra. Although, the participation of girls in higher education have been expanded enormously over period of time yet the social and cultural contingency play crucial role in what courses do they access and where. For instance, a large number of girls education and its instructions are given in vernacular language that implicitly (or explicitly) affects their life chances to have jobs and so on. Similarly, their presence is largely concentrated in the social sciences and humanity as against of engineering and medicine. This highlights the need for targeted efforts to increase the enrolment and retention of female students, including measures such as providing financial assistance, creating safe and inclusive campus environments, and promoting gender-sensitive curricula and teaching methods.

NEP2020 also ensures conversion of public documents published as of a specified year and all current websites meeting the relevant International Organization. Public documents refer to all the documents issued by the national government including publications in laws, reports, regulations, forms, and informational brochures.

### **NEP and India's Finance Sector**

A country's economy is majorly dependent on business and management and is also benefited from the study of same as it doesn't affects only economic sectors, including banking, manufacturing, services, and technological advancement but non-economic sectors too. The brain of industry and building understanding that how to manage industry will involve both management and business. The Government is much aware about this and that's the reason our current NEP or current education policy is mainly focusing on involving practical aspects too in place of traditional method being followed for a long time where theoretical subjects are being into main focus, which also leaves the students with very few chances to learn and it everytime is becoming is a major barrier for them to be market or job ready. Also, as economy is not limited to the boundaries now a days, so, in order to cater to demands of the glocal labour market, NEP aims to promote the development of practical exposure, creative possibilities, and critical skills.

No one will disagree that there could be no better investment for the future of society than offering quality education & its services for the youth. Through NEP, Center & States are aiming to significantly increase investment in education by aiming to reach *6% of GDP from the current around 4% of GDP*. Government also aims to provide financial support for various components of education and will ensure that better & best service conditions are being provided in and by

schools to the teachers and students so that a well managed structure of teaching and learning is developed. The basic or adequate or secure infrastructural and non-infrastructural facilities, like computing, internet, libraries-offline & online, platforms for practical learning & exposure and sports and recreational facilities, is going to be the main focus of public & private educational organisations.

As the priority under NEP Policy is also to include the children of all genders and children with disabilities open handed, program has launched a "Gender Inclusion Fund" and "Special Education Zones" to develop our nation's capacity to make equitable quality education easily available and accessible for all the students. National Scholarship Mission by providing platform of National Scholarship Portal has opened a door where in partnership of government & private, lots of funds are generated and can be generated, i.e; 50% of its funds can be contributed from private including population of business or households or citizens on 100% tax-exempt basis, and whereas the government contributing 50% of the total amount.

Talking about private sector opportunities, as our modern education world has moved towards digital media, so, various schools or colleges and educational institutes require funds to get their digital infrastructure improved, and the various banks, non-banking financial institutions and other private finance institutes have taken birth to offer funds & financial loans to the required educational organisations. The companies which are offering financial services, now have the opportunity to work hand in hand with the National Scholarship Portal for building support to students to receive scholarships. In NEP 2020 as the focus is on vocational education also, hence it is going to arise the need of funds for these courses too. Students who are doing their normal school or college studies, who are not much financially sound and who are not able to complete their education by acquiring a traditional/market degree, can look after the courses which can make them ready to go in the market by learning required set of skills. It would require funds not by students only for their learning but by educational institutes also for equipment and supplies needed for education. In a country like ours where the range of demands are always high, the government and private partnership can play a major role in successful implementation of NEP.

### **Recommendations**

The professionals should handle education strategies from the entry to the rapport-building stage with the community. Proper participatory appraisal of needs, resources and cultural/contextual considerations are needed. Activities such as awareness generation, partnership, ownership in activities, and active participation are the utmost need to implement professional learning programs to support teachers to teach to students with diversity in an inclusive manner. Professional learning programs must be based on evidence-based practices and fulfill the school district's requirements. S moreover inclusion of third gender and also other members of the society in the school and colleges and also as teachers to build them as the productive member of the society.



## Conclusion

The NEP2020 is catalyst in many ways to Indian education system as it blossoms into world's largest workforce including the person with disabilities in the coming year. In order to fulfill this dream, we must overcome substantial execution challenges in a sustained manner NEP2020 policies recognize the lack of training to the teachers to address the learning needs of every student, how to keep a check on fake data and keep an eye on fraud activities too. The most important thing is that NEP2020 emphasizes that education must move towards less content and more towards learning about how to think critically, solve problems, be creative and multidisciplinary, innovate, adapt, and absorb new material in novel and challenging fields. In this regard India needs an estimated 7 million plus teachers to address the huge student population and the current pool of teachers also must be oriented towards the new-age teaching techniques with limited resources of assistive devices as India is having huge population and limited professional resources. Inclusion means change in attitude & acceptance level within us. That comes only after awareness and training. In spite of barriers, India is on right path. Many trend marks are setting up. We have also seen special individuals performing amazingly in service departments, sports etc which gives us HOPE that proper education to the diverse members of India, along with inclusivity and skill training, under the umbrella of NEP2020, will definitely going to give a boost to the development of our country.

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