

Indian Education Policies: Inclusive Education Perspectives and its Standpoints

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Abstract- The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), in the year 1997, included Inclusive Education under its arena, which directed the inclusion of disabled children. Special education developed in India in the 1880s, and special schools were usually organized for different classes of people with disabilities. The main disadvantage is that it fostered a segregated environment as there were generally no special schools in the immediate area. For these reasons, integrated education was born in 1986 according to the recommendation of the national education policy. In integrated education, the child is seen as a problem, not as a system. The National Policy on Education 1986 (NPE) focused on the fundamental issues of equality and emphasized the need to integrate children with disabilities into other groups. An action plan (POA, 1992) was prepared for the monitoring and implementation of NPE, which proposed a practical principle for children with special needs. The PWD Act of 1995 was an extensive breakthrough law passed in the field of education and economic rehabilitation of disabled people. This comprehensive law covered seven disabilities namely blindness, low vision, hearing impairment, physical disability, mental disability, cured leprosy and mental illness.

NCF-2005 is an excellent example of inclusive curriculum because it ensured that children from various socio-economic backgrounds, special those from weaker sections, with different physiological and mental characteristics can be included in the mainstream school. The National Education Policy, 2020 focused more on gender equality issues through transgender children and the gender inclusion fund. It gave more flexibility and recognition to schools and other educational institutions, and the standardization of Indian Sign Language (ISL), which are welcome measures to promote inclusion.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, National Curriculum Framework, Integrated Education, Inclusiveness, Special Education, Education policies.

Introduction

The global education development agenda reflected in the Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which the Government of India had adopted in the year 2015, reflected the global education development goal and aimed to "provide inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for everyone" by the year 2030. The Agenda for Sustainable Development's major objectives, including achieving this difficult goal, will require a complete overhaul of the educational system in order to foster and encourage learning. On a global scale, the landscape of knowledge is rapidly evolving.

As a basic human right to education, inclusion is actually put into practice and supports societal growth. Inclusive teaching technique acknowledges and utilizes the diversity of students. It ensures that all pupils have access to instructional knowledge equitably. Inclusion demands the deconstruction of discriminatory mechanisms that have resulted in resource deprivation and a lack of possibilities. In India, inclusive education is not a native concept. It was adopted from recognized intergovernmental organizations like UNESCO of World Bank. Children of all abilities have equal access to and meaningful participation in child care services when included. The Persons with Disabilities, Act of 1995 provided equal opportunities, protection of rights, and full participation to people with disabilities. The Integrated Education of Disabled Children Act, 1974 is a federal law that states that disabled children get an integrated education.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To have an insight on the inclusion of disabled children in various school education policies.
- ii. To study the recommendations of various committees, commissions and educational policies from inclusive viewpoint.
- iii. To study the measures recommended in school curriculum to accommodate disabled students in mainstream education.

Background of the Study

The National Education Policy (NEP), which was long-awaited and finally released this year after a torturous wait of more than three decades, has been one of the year's biggest highlights. It is difficult to create a national education policy for a nation with such diversity, especially given how quickly social and economic conditions can change. One issue among the numerous topics that have drawn public interest is the concept of equity and inclusion. Making education affordable and accessible to everyone, especially for kids from underprivileged environments, has been a central theme of all educational initiatives over the years. Each policy statement provides a distinct account of which types of learners in inclusive education need help and attention, even though the general premise is more or less the same. The reasons for making such decisions are not readily evident and require a deeper analysis that is outside the scope of this essay. Our focus will be on how various concepts and applications of inclusive education have traditionally found a home in NEPs. Understanding Inclusive Education in India, the idea of inclusive education is not a native one. The idea gained popularity in India after the 1990s after being appropriated from established international contexts (mostly through international intergovernmental institutions like UNESCO, World Bank, etc.). The initial underpinning of inclusive education was limited to 'special education' or inclusion of children with disability, which has seen some expansion in the past few years. Inclusive education is considered as taking "a holistic approach to school reform and so transforming the way the educational system confronts exclusion". The approach ensures the presence, engagement, and academic success of all students and their diversity in the least restrictive setting and is concerned with identifying and removing educational hurdles. LRE or Least Restrictive Environment was first addressed in the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), a law that governs special education in public schools and was passed in the USA in 2004. The classroom for general education isn't always used for LRE. That varies from student to student. The majority of students can learn in a general education classroom, while some may require a more intimate environment like a resource type classroom for certain of their services. A pupil shouldn't be excluded from the general education setting only because the general education curriculum needs to be changed.

Discussion

a. National Policy of Education (1986) :

To encourage education among Indians, the Government of India formulated the National Policy of Education (NPE). The strategy encompasses all levels of education up to and including colleges in both urban and rural areas of the country. The policy demanded that gaps be eliminated and that educational possibilities be equalized, particularly for Indian women, members of scheduled tribes, and members of scheduled castes. The National Policy of Education, 1986 (NPE, 1986) placed equality's core concerns in the front center. It emphasizes the significance of including children with disabilities in other organizations. The goal was to "integrate the physically and intellectually challenged with the general population as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth, and to enable them to confront life," as stated in the NPE, 1986. To "integrate the physically and mentally challenged with the general population as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth, and to enable them to confront life with courage and confidence," as stated in the NPE of 1986, was the goal.

The subsequent actions were designed to be taken in this regard.

- Where possible, children with mild disabilities and those with motor impairments would get an education similar to that of other students.
- For children with severe disabilities, special schools with hostels would be offered as close to district offices as possible.
- Sufficient plans would be established to provide impaired pupils with vocational training.
- Teacher training programmes will be refocused, especially for primary school teachers, to address the unique challenges faced by children with disabilities.

Every effort will be made to support voluntary activities for the education of children with disabilities.

b. Programme of Action (1992)

Plan of Action (1992) was created with the purpose of subsequent implementation and follow-up of the NCF. The POA proposed a practical approach for kids with special needs in light of the size of the effort involved in caring for and educating the estimated 15 million children with disabilities. The idea was that a disabled child who can attend a mainstream school should only attend a mainstream school and not a special school. Children who are first enrolled to special schools for instruction in co-curricular or extracurricular subjects should be moved to regular mainstream schools once they grasp the basic academic concepts, social skills, and daily life abilities. It placed a strong emphasis on developing and supporting adult education, education for people with disabilities, non-formal educational institutions, distance learning, rural universities, and early childhood care and education. The POA recommended requiring that the education of children with moderate disabilities, such as those affecting locomotion, be the same and inclusive as that of other children.

The goal should be to integrate those who are physically and mentally challenged into society as equal partners, to set them up for normal development, and to provide them the tools they need to meet challenges head-on.

The following actions were to be taken:

- As much as feasible, the district headquarters will offer special schools with hostels for the children who are severely disabled.
- Adequate plans will be established to provide disabled people with vocational training.
- Teacher education programmes will be revised to better address the unique challenges faced by children with disabilities.
- Every effort will be made to promote voluntary work towards the education of people with disabilities.

c. **Persons With Disabilities Act (1995)**

The Person with Disabilities (equal opportunity, protection of rights and full participation) Act, 1995 is the crucial act in the history of 'Special Education' in India. The PWD Act, 1995 was a comprehensive piece of ground-breaking legislation that provided for the economic rehabilitation of people with disabilities as well as their educational needs. It stipulates that up to the age of 18, children with disabilities will get free education in their maximum suitable setting. This comprehensive law addresses seven disabilities, including mental illness, leprosy remission, low vision, hearing loss, locomotor disability, and blindness. The Act's Chapter 5 (Section 26), which deals with education, states that the relevant government and the local authorities shall "strive to encourage" the integration of pupils with disabilities in the regular schools.

- Incentivize construction and establishment of special schools in both public and private sectors for those who require special education, with the goal of ensuring that all children with disabilities residing in the nation have access to such schools.
- Make an effort to provide vocational training facilities for the special schools for children with disabilities.
- Transportation services for pupils with disabilities or other monetary and financial incentives for parents or legal guardians to aid their disabled children attend school.
- The reduction or complete removal of physical obstacles from schools, colleges, and other institutions that provide training for careers in many fields.
- Providing books, uniforms, and other supplies to disabled kids who are enrolled in school.
- Scholarships awarded to students with disabilities.
- The establishment of a suitable forum for the resolution of parental complaints over the placement of their disabled children.
- Appropriate examination system alteration to exclude questions that are solely mathematical for the benefit of pupils who are blind or have low vision.
- Curriculum revision for the benefit of students with disabilities.
- Redesigning the curriculum to make it easier for students with hearing impairments to take just one language as part of their studies.

d. **National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005**

The NCERT shaped the National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education, in 1988 in the essence of National Policy of Education, 1986. National Curriculum Framework for school education was created by NCERT in 2000. The 2002–2003 academic year marked the start of the curriculum. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE), 2000 was reviewed by the NCERT in 2004 in light of the study "learning without load," 1993, at the request of the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The 35-member National Steering Committee was established with Prof. Yashpal, a former UGC chairman, as its chairman. The National Curriculum draught was created and distributed among the various divisions. Consultations were held in all parts of the country. Newspaper advertisements asking for the public's comments were published in both national and local publications, and many answers were received. In June 2005, a draught of the national curriculum was presented to the Central Advisory Board of Education for approval. A few members made changes recommendations. The draught and National Curriculum received some modifications before being submitted for CABE approval. The conversation took place on September 6th and 7th, 2005. On September 7, 2005, the CABE adopted the National Curriculum.

The NCF, 2005 proposes the following four principles of curriculum development-

- Linking classroom learning to real-world situations.
- Ensure that rote learning techniques are discouraged and abandoned.
- Modification of curriculum that ensures children's general growth as opposed to just serving as a repository for textbooks.
- Increasing the flexibility and integration of examinations with classroom activities.

The NCF 2005 is an excellent example of inclusive curriculum. NCF makes sure that youngsters from various social and economic origins and with a range of physical, psychological, and intellectual traits may study and succeed in

school. Apart from via policies and programs, the needs of impaired children must be addressed directly, starting in early childhood, through the design and choice of learning tasks and pedagogical techniques. The major highlights of the inclusive curriculum (NCF, 2005) are-

- All learners should have access to enabling opportunities through the curriculum.
- The teaching-learning process must accommodate the learners' various needs.
- Instructors must look at methods for assisting all students, including those with disabilities, in learning.
- Collaboration between instructors and even with other organizations could help achieve this goal.
- Teachers need to give each student individualized attention and be adaptable with activities and objectives.
- The curriculum advises that in order to enhance classroom activities, younger students and older students should be included in planning. This would enable a policy of no rejections, the education of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) in a setting most appropriate to their needs and flexibility in lesson plans to accommodate learners' focused needs.
- Schools need to improve their standing as institutions that help kids, especially those with disabilities, get ready for adulthood.
- Giving every child a multisensory learning experience, given that every child learns differently.
- The schools must maintain quality within the context of cultural and socioeconomic diversity.
- Multiple-choice learning opportunities must be offered to special needs children, like Sign language, Braille, etc. based on the child's needs.

Curriculum design should be reflected to the assurance of Universal Elementary Education (UEE) not only in representing cultural diversity but also by ensuring that children from different social and economical backgrounds with different physical, psychological and intellectual uniqueness are receiving equal educational opportunities.

e. **National Policy of Disabilities (2006)**

On February 10th, 2006, the National Policy for People with Disabilities was established. The Ministry of Social Empowerment has officially endorsed this policy. The policy seeks to fulfil the ideal of an inclusive society where everyone has room for herself and others. The policy serves as a reminder of the rights to equality and freedom for all individuals in all sectors of life. Additionally, it guarantees the idea that it cannot be violated under any circumstances. The National Policy of Disability, 2006 concedes that people with disabilities are contribute towards human capital for the nation and thus works to foster an environment which is suitable for them to equal opportunities, full participation in civic duties, and knowledge of their legal entitlements. The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities Act, 2006, serves many of the objectives of the concerned people. It has certain principles that deals with-

- Prevention of disabilities and rehabilitation measures for women with disabilities.
- Children with disabilities.
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), i.e., barrier free environment.
- Issue of disability certificate.
- Promotion of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
- Collection of data on disabled persons; analysis and research of the current situation.
- Social security.
- Cultural involvement of children with SEN, ie. Special Educational Needs.
- Amendments to the existing acts, dealing with the children with disabilities.

f. **National Education Policy, 2020**

With the present fast paced development and advancement, the Ministry of Human Resource Development presented the New Education Policy 2020 prospect, which was approved by the Union Cabinet of India on July 29, 2020, with the sole goal of creating citizens who are holistically productive, contributing to the construction of an impartial, inclusive society with improvement of Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 50% by 2035.

The education organization has undergone structural reform as a result of NEP 2020, which aspires to make India a worldwide knowledge giant while promoting equity and inclusion.

The NEP, 2020 provisions aimed at improving education for kids with disabilities are listed below:

- Teaching kids with specific problems is now a part of all teacher education programs.
- Special schools, neighborhood schools, and home-based education to be considered as possibilities for the education of children with disabilities, as a start towards resolving miscomprehensions over educational options that has come up during the Right to Education Act, 2009, the RTE Act's 2012 revision, and the RPwD Act, 2016.

- The RPwD Act of 2016 will review the instructions given in home education, if children choose to receive home education because of their impairment and physical hazards.
- To guarantee that there are sufficient resources, such as resource centres, educators, and schools nearby, available for students with impairments
- Schools situated within a radius of 5 k.m. to 10 k.m. will be amalgamated into one 'school complex' to ensure the necessary services for students with disabilities, including 'resource centres' as stated in the Integration and Inclusive Education concepts and educators because of the issue of the shortage of special educators.
- NEP, 2020 has developed various courses to teach children with disabilities with the on hand framework. According to the requirements of the pupils, the teachers will be free to select any number of teaching tools and strategies.
- For kids with learning difficulties, a national assessment centre- 'PARAKH' will be established. 'PARAKH' will ensure accessible evaluative procedures thus making education more inclusive.
- Teachers will be set to perceive and recognise disabilities, particularly explicit learning disabilities, because huge numbers of teachers are not trained enough to deliver their teaching to the children with disabilities properly.
- Combination between the NCTE (National Council for Teacher Education) and the RCI (Rehabilitation Council of India) has been made to link the gap that both teachers and special educators have identified to fulfill the lack of pedagogical and content knowledge.
- In line with NEP 2020, a flexible curriculum will be developed for meet up the 'disability' and inclusion of those learners in India's new national education strategy.
- NIOS (National Institute of Open Schooling) will provide wide provisions to teach 'Indian Sign Language' and necessary contents for Inclusive Education.
- According to NEP 2020 the 'Resource centres' and 'special educators' will work in co junction to address multiple disabilities of the learners.
- The NEP 2020 also includes to measure schools accessible infrastructure, least restrictive environment (LRE) and the use of 'Braille' and 'Indian Sign Language' in the classroom.
- NEP 2020 also suggests 'school complexes' which will be prepared with assets for the integration of 'disabled learners' with mainstream learners.

The NEP combines various schools of thought about the education of learners with impairments. This policy treats disability as a personal issue that needs to be resolved through 'rehabilitation' and 'mitigation' in turn to make it easier for learners with 'impairments' to 'integrate'. It supports the notion of developing the system of education that is intended for kids with and without 'disabilities' in one classroom, tackles 'barrier-free' access. This system suggests retrofitting answers to the "problem of disability," rather than a critical analysis of current norms. The policy further diminishes the concept of 'inclusive education', its constraints and how to propagate the inclusion.

Other Government policies & Initiatives:

One of the fundamental drives of the previous Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the 'Right of Children to free and compulsory Education Act', 2009 (RTE Act, 2009) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) programmes were comprehensive schooling for differently-abled learners. 'Samagra Shiksha' center around increasing instructive expectations for all students, incorporating Kids with unique necessities, beginning in the scholastic year 2018-19. Thus, this intervention is a crucial part of 'Samagra Shiksha'. The component supports a variety of student-focused initiatives, such as the identification and evaluation of CWSN, the provision of assistive aids, appliances, corrective surgeries, Braille books, talking books, and uniforms, therapeutic services, the development of teaching-learning material (TLM), assistive devices & equipment, environment building and orientation programmes to create a positive attitude and awareness about the nature and needs of CWSN. 'In-service' training of special educators and general teachers are very much essential. RTE Act, 2009 also highlights the special needs education policy within the 6 to 14 years age group learners. RMSA programme also properly address the needs of CWSN inside the school and additional financial support for learners at Secondary level.

Conclusion

Country like India still has a lack of well-recognized 'working definition' and shared understanding of 'Inclusive Education'. Reason behind this is to a lack of methodical attempt amongst government and other stakeholders in exploring the meanings, relevance and applications of Inclusive Education in India. This is also the reason why expressions of Inclusive Education are often placed under broader social concepts like inclusion, equity, access etc. Special Education is not a place. It is not a room at the end of the hallway, where students with disabilities are educated separately from their peers. It is a service or services provided in a variety of ways and settings, based on a

student's individual needs. Various components of the Individuals with Disabilities policies, the Special Education laws and provisions that enhance student with 'Individualized Education Programmes (IEPs) which are related to their non-disabled peers (in the General Education classroom) as much as it is appropriate, which is referred to as the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for those students.

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