



Transforming Education in India: NEP 2020 and Inclusiveness

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Abstract

The present study examines the impact of the National Education Policy (2020) in creating an inclusive society in India by transforming the education system with its vision, goals, recommendations, and intervention schemes. To conclude, the researchers used qualitative and descriptive approaches, focusing on document analysis. Several research questions were formulated, and research objectives were framed accordingly. The objectives were analysed, and conceptual descriptions were provided accordingly. It has been revealed that we can expect to experience a transformed education system in India that is flexible, inclusive, and skill-based shortly. The study identified that the components of an inclusive society in India include systematic social categorization, social, educational, and economic status of underrepresented groups, social disparity, geographical location, socio-economic gaps among different socio-religious groups, socio-economic disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), the female population, disabled or differently -able children and adults and an inclusive school environment. It also finds that social stratification, cultural diversity, external attributions, hierarchical structures, and the marginalization of social groups, including those defined by caste, gender, and disability, are key sources of exclusion. The intervention programs initiated in line with the vision of NEP 2020 represent a positive approach by policymakers. However, they still need to be adequately implemented due to insufficient funds and specific policy implementation issues. Hence, future research on this issue should focus on stakeholder awareness and implementation challenges to find solutions.

Key Words: Inclusive Society, India, Intervention Schemes, NEP(2020), Transformative Education System.

Introduction

Human rights, liberalization, internationalism, humanism, social equity, and equality have become imperative in today's fast-changing world. Inclusion is a philosophy of life acknowledged as an essential element of human development globally. It focuses on holistic development for all and strives for everyone's involvement and participation in society. It also emphasizes mutual respect and dignity and creates the best learning environment for all children. Broader aspects of education and development have been

prioritized in the paradigm of inclusiveness. Considering international perspectives, India has enthusiastically been promoting inclusive schools as a prerequisite for an inclusive society and national development. The National Education Policy 2020, unveiled in July of that year by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, significantly focused on inclusiveness, equity, and equality in its 6th and 14th chapters, respectively (MHRD, 2020). The policy's holistic approach and framework align with the goals of sustainable development and education for all on a global scale. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India stresses making education accessible and fair for everyone, no matter their background or abilities (Kumarasamy & Saikumari, 2020). It highlights the need for better infrastructure, updated curriculums, and materials promoting respect, empathy, and tolerance, especially for children with special needs and groups that have been left out before (Rasool & Rasool, 2024). It also values Gender inclusivity, reduces gender stereotypes, and tries to bring about equality by continuously modifying curricula and transparent academic practices. By involving policymakers, educators, parents, and the community, NEP 2020 aims to establish an inclusive education paradigm that supports social equality and fairness, ensuring everyone has access to quality education (Parihar, 2024). This effort contributes to building a more inclusive society in India (Upadhyay, 2024). This article triggered an analysis of different aspects of the National Education Policy 2020, focusing on evaluating the elements and factors related to inclusiveness, equity, and equality from the Indian perspective.

Literature Review

The related research literature reveals that NEP 2020 emphasizes vocational and job-centric skills, addresses gender disparity, follows sustainable development Goal-4, integrates ICT in Education and promotes a holistic, multidisciplinary, and inclusive education system in India to foster an inclusive society. According to Patil (2024), "The National Education Policy (2020) emphasis on vocational training, experiential learning, and competency-based education effectively enhances graduate employability". Chowdhry (2021) admitted that NEP-2020 addressed the issues of including gender categories, catering to the needs of minority communities and young children with special needs with appropriate appreciation. Seethalakshmi and Shyamala (2022) opined that occupational skill development, research work, art and languages, ICT in education, and internationalization of learning had been given supreme importance in NEP-2020. Bakshi et al. (2022) noted that NEP-2020 has accelerated access, equity, and inclusion. Sengupta (2022) mentioned that the NEP is comprehensive and respects the United Nations' Vision 2030 and Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive education for all. Dhavaleshwar (2022) acclaimed that NEP-2020 is a total structure for both lower and upper primary education through higher-level education and occupational coaching in both villages and cities of India, and it provides a comprehensive framework. By 2030, the initiative seeks to transform India's education system fully. Reforms in higher education are being implemented following the National

Educational Strategy 2020, which emphasizes the need for holistic, multidisciplinary, and futuristic education as part of the national educational policy. Its primary focus is on sparking high-quality research and identifying the opportunities and requirements for equitable use of technology to expand educational opportunities. Kumar and Singh (2020) explored the fact that disability hinders a learner's preschool and elementary education enrolment. Kumar (2022) concluded that NEP-2020 has many intensive voices to enhance the desirable quality of school and college education. It is research-focused and will be able to attain the national objectives of quality education for learners in the country.

Research Questions

1. What are the important components of an inclusive society in India?
2. What are the key sources of exclusion?
3. How can inclusiveness be promoted in India?
4. What are the visions and recommendations of NEP 2020 for creating an inclusive, equitable, and equal society in India?
5. How are the goals and recommendations of NEP 2020 important for creating an inclusive education system and society in India?
6. Are the schemes and programs effectively creating an inclusive and equitable society and providing equal educational opportunities in India?
7. What prospective research initiatives can be undertaken to create an inclusive and equitable society in India?
8. Will the vision of NEP 2020 transform India's education system into an inclusive one?

Objectives

By the above research questions, the following research objectives have been framed:

1. To identify the components of an inclusive society in the Indian context based on research findings.
2. To analyze the National Education Policy 2020 recommendations and goals for creating an inclusive and equitable society in India.
3. The programs and schemes emphasized by NEP 2020 will be evaluated using research findings and databases.
4. To propose prospective research initiatives to foster an inclusive and equitable society and education system in India.

5. To examine how NEP 2020 is transforming the education system in India into an inclusive one.

Analysis of objectives

The research objectives outlined above have been analyzed below:

Analysis of Objective -1(To identify the components of an inclusive society in the Indian context based on research findings.)

Objective 1 was framed to address research questions 1, 2, and 3. Through this objective, the researchers aimed to identify the components of an inclusive society in India and the barriers to inclusivity or the reasons behind exclusion. This objective was also formulated to explore how a society can be inclusive and holistic. Several research findings were analyzed to address these questions.

Analysis of Objective -2 (To analyze the recommendations and goals of the National Education Policy 2020 for creating an inclusive and equitable society in India.)

Objective 2 was formulated to analyze how NEP 2020 plays an important role in creating an inclusive and equitable society in India through its vision, goals, and recommendations. This objective addresses research questions 4 and 5. Through objective two, the researchers aimed to explore the goals and recommendations of NEP 2020 concerning creating an inclusive and equitable society and an inclusive education system. It is also tailored to analyze the impact of the goals and recommendations presented in the NEP 2020. The NEP 2020 policy document has been explored, and the researchers' insights have been expressed to fulfill the requirements of objective two and the relevant research questions.

Analysis of Objective -3 (To evaluate the programs and schemes emphasized by NEP 2020 using research findings and databases.)

Objective 3 addresses research question 6. Through research findings and relevant data, the researchers examined existing Programmes and schemes launched by the recommendations of NEP 2020 to promote inclusive and holistic education in India, aiming to create an inclusive and equitable society.

Analysis of Objective -4 (To propose prospective research initiatives to foster an inclusive and equitable society and education system in India.)

This objective was formulated to suggest future research areas through which NEP 2020 can be implemented, especially in creating an inclusive and equitable society and school system in India. It addresses research question 7.

Analysis of Objective -5 (To examine how NEP 2020 is transforming the education system in India into an inclusive one.)

This objective addresses research question 8. It aims to answer how NEP 2020 successfully transforms India's education system towards a more inclusive and supportive model. The researchers studied several related research papers and policies to conclude this objective.

Methods

The study is descriptive. A key qualitative approach, document analysis, has been employed. The study primarily uses the official document of National Education Policy 2020. Other secondary data sources, such as esteemed journal articles, magazines, policy papers, research reports, and related publications, have been studied to analyze how the National Education Policy 2020 effectively transforms Indian society towards an inclusive, equitable, and equal society. A thematic analysis has been conducted to examine the recommendations of the National Education Policy, with special reference to creating an inclusive and equitable society and an inclusive education system in India. Research questions have been formulated in a way that allows them to be answered through previous research work or documents. To address these research questions, five research objectives have been framed, and the paper has been organized into several subheadings accordingly.

Components of Inclusive Society in India

Social classification in India is extreme, and significant differences exist in social and economic status among socio-religious groups. Addressing exceptional children or Children With Special Needs (CWSN) and differently-abled children is an important part of the inclusive approach in India from a global perspective. Stressing Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) and addressing the issues related to social disparities within different socio-economic categories are equally important. Another aspect of Inclusiveness in India is geographic location. Supporting people living in adverse geographic conditions is important to reduce regional disparities and ensure equality and equity. In Indian society, inclusiveness faces challenges due to social stratification, cultural diversity, and systemic hierarchies, creating gaps among socio-economic groups. Key sources of exclusion—such as social stratification, cultural diversity, external attributions, and hierarchical structures—play significant roles in marginalizing various groups, including those defined by caste, gender, and disability (Oommen, 2023).

India's female population is part of the Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), and it is equally necessary to make provisions for female inclusion in society. The allocation of sufficient funds becomes compulsory for the successful implementation of inclusive policies. It is crucial to support children in their education at an early age and give priority to it alongside the existing schooling system. Proper attention must be given to the RPWD Act, 2016 to secure its integration into the educational system and enhance inclusiveness in broader aspects. To address inclusiveness in India, weight should be given to improving school resources, raising awareness, and incorporating knowledge about disabilities into teacher education programs. Ensuring fair access to technology, providing

culturally responsive content, and offering personalized instruction are crucial for creating an inclusive educational environment (Parashar,2023). These measures collectively contribute to a more holistic and practical approach towards fostering inclusiveness in the educational setting. The advancement of Indian states regarding inclusive philosophy is assessed using the Inclusive Development Index (IDI), which reveals significant disparities in development across states (Aggarwal, 2021). Higher inclusiveness is correlated with better economic and social performance(Aggarwal,2021). In India, inclusiveness is demonstrated through efforts to reduce poverty, ensure health services and enlightenment, and foster the availability of basic amenities, all aimed at achieving equitable economic and social development for every segment of society (Meena,2022). The importance of inclusive development for sustainable growth is emphasized, with a call for policy interventions in states lagging (Aggarwal,2021). In India, inclusiveness addresses various social, economic, and geographical dimensions beyond mere economic disparity, striving for growth that benefits every segment of society (Hirashima et al.,2011). Continuous monitoring and evaluation of inclusiveness are recommended to guide policy decisions and promote balanced development across the country (Aggarwal,2021).

Recommendations and Goals for Inclusiveness and Equity in NEP 2020

Let's point out a few recommendations and goals for inclusiveness and equity in NEP-2020:

1. NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of intervention Programmes, especially addressing issues faced by scheduled castes, tribal communities, minority groups, and children with special needs. It aims to create positive attitudes to meet their unique needs within the educational setting.
2. The policy stresses that SEDGs can be categorized holistically based on gender, socio-cultural factors, geographical location, different abilities, and socio-economic components.
3. Bridging the gaps in availability, affordability, attainment, and learning consequences, especially for Scheduled Caste and Other Backward Classes children, will be one of the primary goals.
4. Unique mechanisms must be created for tribal children to ensure they benefit from the intervention programs designed for them.
5. Intervention programs will be important in promoting the education of all minority children.
6. Emphasis will be given to creating enabling mechanisms for providing quality education for CWSNs or Divyang.
7. Strategies are to be formulated to reduce social gaps in education.

8. Successful intervention policies for education are to be strengthened.
9. Research on SEDGs will be extended.
10. The Government of India will establish a 'Gender Inclusion Fund' to offer fair, just, equal, and quality education for all females and third-gender students.
11. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas will be increased, and these schools' infrastructure will be modernized.
12. Priority should be given to ensuring enrolment and equal engagement of disabled learners in ECCSs and school education.
13. NCERT will consult with expert bodies like DEPwD to prepare the National Curriculum Framework and ensure it meets the needs of differently-abled children.
14. A new school culture will be created where all the stakeholders in education, including teachers, students, parents, and administrators will be sensitized to equity, respect, dignity, and privacy for all individuals.

The encouraging recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 for developing an inclusive education structure are laden with prospective challenges. This might be a good initiative targeting low SES groups, namely SC-ST-CWSN. Still, it largely hinges on targeted implementation with adequate funding and a real-time downward feedback loop for course correction to succeed. It is said that Special Education Zones and Gender Funds will be set up to show the willingness to establish cross-cutting social category bridges of exclusion, indicating a commitment towards ending inequalities. How they are executed on the ground and monitored for success needs institutional machinery with adequate authority & mandate. In addition, it will be helpful to engage in free-board insinuations at all levels and advocate for equitable assessment processes, but add a peer to travel along with each of those ambulant homes.

Evaluation of Programmes and Schemes emphasized in NEP 2020

Programs and schemes emphasized in NEP-2020, with special reference to inclusiveness and equity, are analyzed here.

Samagra Shiksha focuses on gender-fair and inclusive classroom practices from Pre-primary to Higher Secondary stages. The scheme will be implemented for 5 years (2021-22 to 2025-26). This is integrated With KGBVs vocation education. The scheme is essential in expanding schooling facilities for an inclusive, equitable Indian society (It seems only an updated version of Sarva Shiksha Avijaan-2001). Samagra Shiksha is an integral initiative for the Education of children up to eighteen years extending support through clusters, composite school grant etc. from pre-school to senior secondary levels which includes various sub-components including, among others, RMSA and SSA supporting

universalization of Secondary Education throughout the country. Despite goals, implementation is mired in challenges (Reja, 2022). RMSA has struggled with issues such as delays in funding, insufficient teacher training, and inadequate health services, which negatively impact the teaching and learning environment. Although SSA has improved access to essential resources like mid-day meals and educational materials, socio-economic barriers still prevent many children, especially those from marginalized communities, from attending school (Mahiwal & Kumar, 2017). Therefore, while Samagra Shiksha provides a solid framework, its success depends on addressing systemic issues and offering targeted support to disadvantaged populations.

SARTHAQ was designed and formulated by the school's Education and Literacy Department on 26 April 2021. It stands for Students' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement through Quality Education. It is meant to ensure uniformity in the school education system across India. The SARTHAQ implementation plan has allotted 297 tasks to be completed by 2025. Where according to Part 1, every chapter explains specific areas like Early Childhood Care and Education (26 tasks), Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (33 tasks), dropping off children from class III onward (23 tasks), and so on (Kaur, 2021). This arrangement has been made by keeping the Indian context in mind, where this responsibility relies on both states and UTs with timely review and monitoring by the Centre and States. The said plan has emerged following the direction given by NEP 2020. The final plan was formulated after much brainstorming with the states, UTs, and other stakeholders (Kaur, 2021), who gave their feedback and comments. One such task is connected with the Anganwadi Centre. However, no date is available due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which will be communicated later on by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

NIPUN BHARAT: It was launched under Samagra Shiksha in July 2021 to ensure that all children in India acquire Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) by the end of the third standard. Basic literacy and numerical ability aim to help the children to be self-reliant, active in reading and writing and navigate from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn' and from 'learning to write' to writing for scholastic success and also self-expression (personal enjoyment) (Chaudhary et al., 2024). This scheme is intended to be implemented in all government-aided and Private institutions. Although the scheme is another avatar of the Total Literacy Campaign, it has some new dimensions. The scheme is similar to the Total Literacy Campaign but has a few new dimensions. The NIPUN Bharat Mission, launched in 2021, is crucial for addressing foundational literacy and numeracy challenges in India's education system, aiming to ensure that all children attain these skills by the end of the third standard by 2026-27 (Ankita, 2024). The mission responds to significant learning gaps identified in national surveys, making it essential for the success of broader educational reforms under the NEP 2020 (Ankita, 2024).

VIDYA PRAVESH is a school preparation program focusing specifically on grade 01 students based on 3 months play-oriented curriculum developed by NCERT in alignment

with the recommendations of NEP (National Education Policy) 2020. The adoption and execution of this program are mandatory for all states and Union Territories to ensure that grade 01 learners are well prepared to get facilities from high-quality education opportunities. The key goal of this initiative is to facilitate the provision of childhood education. Vidya Pravesh emphasizes promoting inclusivity by supporting children with needs and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds, including individuals who use sign language. Promoting education in a child's language and creating a relaxed atmosphere for learning purposes, the initiative seeks to enhance academic achievements early and reduce the chances of students leaving school prematurely (Ranjan, 2024).

Proposed Research Areas for Building an Inclusive Society in India

The following research areas can be considered as per the vision of the education policy:

1. Schemes and incentive activities and their effectiveness,
2. Views and attitudes of students, teachers, guardians, headmaster/headmistress, principal's, and dean's, and
3. Policy implementation issues and remedies.

It is important to find related research questions and hypotheses regarding national education policy and to conduct research so that new ideas and dialogues are fostered. Scholars, especially research scholars, need to be proactive in this matter. Continuous research and discussion on the policy (2020) obstacles and probable solutions should be the intent of current research.

NEP 2020 and the Transformation of the Education System in India

The National Education Policy (2020) has transformed the teacher education program, making it more holistic, flexible, and inclusive (Tomar, 2024). As per the recommended structure of NEP (2020), a three-year compulsory and free preschool education is to be implemented. This can establish an inclusive education system from the very beginning of the education process in India. In this regard, the introduction of VIDYA PRAVESH is highly relevant. On the other hand, the Samagra Shiksha program is eliminating gender and social gaps by focusing on reducing social discrimination in education. A multidisciplinary approach under NEP 2020 will help transform the education system into a more flexible and holistic educational environment in India. There are programs and schemes for skill development for teachers and students per the vision and recommendations of NEP 2020. Vocational courses are being encouraged under this policy.

Moreover, the policy emphasizes technology integration and adaptation. So, we expect to experience a transformed education system in India that is flexible, inclusive, and skill-based shortly. NEP 2020 emerges as a transformative force, poised to reshape India's

educational landscape by creating an inclusive environment where every learner can thrive (Aleem & Tomar, 2024).

Research Outcomes

The following research outcomes have been communicated here based on the analysis of the research questions and objectives organized under several subheadings using related research documents, including the government of India's policy documents, especially NEP-2020.

1. Systematic social categorization, social, educational, and economic status of underrepresented groups, social disparity, geographical location, socio-economic gaps among different socio-religious groups, socio-economic disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), the female population, disabled or differently -able children and adults and an inclusive school environment are the components of an inclusive society in India.
2. The current study finds that social stratification, cultural diversity, external attributions, hierarchical structures, and marginalization of various social groups, including those defined by caste, gender, and disability, are the key sources of exclusion.
3. To promote inclusiveness in India, it is crucial to allocate sufficient funds, monitor policies effectively, uplift the social and economic conditions of the SEDGs, develop inclusive school infrastructure, and revamp teacher education programs with a special focus on knowledge and attitudes towards disability.
4. NEP 2020 stressed several visions and goals, such as holistic categorization of SEDGs; intervention Programmes for SCs, STs, Minorities, and Children with disabilities; bridging gaps in availability, affordability, and attainment of learning outcomes; formulating strategies to reduce social gaps in education; focusing research on disadvantaged groups; establishing a gender inclusion fund, and creating a positive school culture, etc.
5. The goals and recommendations of NEP- 2020 are important for reducing social and economic gaps and ensuring access, enrolment, retention, and achievement of quality education. However, they are subject to proper allocation of funds, stakeholders' awareness level, and regular policy examination and monitoring. However, these goals and recommendations create an inclusive philosophy and Outlook among people.
6. The intervention programs initiated after the visions of NEP 2020 are a positive approach by policymakers but have yet to be adequately implemented due to a lack of funds and specific policy implementation issues. While VIDYA PRAVESH

is significantly important for reducing dropout rates and fostering inclusivity, NIPUN BHARAT is akin to the old Total Literacy Campaign. However, the SAMAGRA SHIKSHA program has significantly reduced gender gaps in education and fostered inclusivity. SARTHAK strives for quality education for all students, but we must wait until 2025 to see its results.

7. Future research on this issue should focus on stakeholder awareness and implementation hindrances to find solutions.
8. NEP 2020 provides the intentions and directions to transform the Indian education system into a multidisciplinary, skills- and job-oriented framework, incorporating digital elements to address issues of inclusive education and the social system shortly. It creates a new horizon in preschool education but is subject to proper policy implementation.

Conclusion

India, a country with many ethnic groups and cultures, has an entirely mixed population; therefore, the differences come together in the same place. As the global paradigm is leaning more towards togetherness than division, India is ready to meet the new challenges successfully. NEP 2020 enactments are broad enough, and related programs are clear signs that the nation is consistent with a world and global view. Furthermore, not only are its objectives and plans praiseworthy, but also how hard and fast the path to successful implementation is due to the challenges triggered by resource limitations. Solving this issue requires a friendly social environment to encourage cooperation and shared responsibility. The validity and application of government policies, when in harmony with the principle of inclusiveness, are the very means through which the groundwork for the policy is successfully laid. The first and foremost requirement to develop and implement excellent plans is conducting ground-breaking studies of the problem, concentrating on the necessary issues and their solutions, and integrating alternative concepts for the diverse and ever-changing educational grounds.

Furthermore, it is essential to raise awareness and knowledge of all stakeholders about the complexities of new education policies. This goes beyond policymakers to include educators, students, parents, and the broader community. Transparent communication channels, workshops, and awareness campaigns can bridge the gap, ensuring a collective understanding and commitment to the transformative objectives laid out in the policy. In an era defined by technological advancements, the mindset of the teaching community holds significant sway over the success of educational reforms. The outlook on educational skills among teachers is an asset, and the most important need is to navigate landscapes in education development. Continuous expertise development programs that cover digital tools and promote rational technical thinking in the educational community are essential for the stable success of NEP-2020. Since India is on a difficult path to inclusive education,

it is not only a national desire but also a contribution to the global discourse of justice in education. Multipartite tasks highlight the need for a holistic and joint approach, where the parties interested in each level actively contribute to the general vision of the inclusive, fair, and technologically authorized education system. An inclusive education system will lead to an inclusive society in India, which is the driving force of NEP 2020, aiming for an equitable and holistic social environment free from disparity and discrimination, especially caste- and social stratification-based disparities exacerbated by economic conditions.

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