



The Perception and Barriers of Inclusive Education for Differently Abled Children: An Analysis of Educational and Constitutional Rights in the Context of the New Education Policy 2020

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ABSTRACT

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a significant shift towards inclusivity with a focus on ensuring equal educational rights for all. This abstract delves into an assessment of the perceptions and barriers associated with inclusive education particularly concerning differently abled children. The research explores the diverse perceptions held by stakeholders, educators and parents to policymakers and the general public, regarding the inclusivity measures outlined in the NEP 2020. Positive perceptions are examined in the context of fostering diversity and equality. At the same time, challenges arise from existing misconceptions and a lack of awareness regarding the specific educational rights of differently abled children. This research assesses the integration of technology including assistive technologies and digital platforms in pursuing educational rights for differently abled children. The role of technology in overcoming traditional barriers and enhancing the learning experience is explored, offering recommendations for leveraging technological advancements in the service of inclusive education.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Inclusive education, differently abled, Educational, Constitutional rights

Introduction

The definition of inclusive education according to the National Education Policy 2020 is a system of education that aims to ensure equitable and quality learning opportunities for all learners including those with diverse needs and backgrounds. It emphasizes the importance of educating every child, irrespective of their socio-economic status, gender, disability and other factors within the same educational environment. It focuses on creating a learning environment where each student can learn and succeed based on their individual needs and abilities,

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promoting equal access to academic and infrastructural facilities for all learners. The policy envisions inclusive education as a transformative approach that fosters social justice, equality and holistic development through education.

Inclusive education is not just about physical integration but also about creating an environment where every student can learn and succeed based on their individual needs and abilities. The policy highlights the need to ensure that no child loses opportunities to learn and succeed due to their circumstances of birth or personal background. It acknowledges the challenges faced by marginalized groups such as the lack of special schools in rural areas and the significant number of drop out children due to various factors like gender, poverty, disability and caste. The NEP 2020 aims to transform the education system by fostering inclusivity and equity with a focus on empowering diverse groups. This includes women, differently-abled individuals, religious minorities, linguistic minorities and other marginalized communities. The policy envisions a comprehensive framework from elementary education to higher education, encompassing vocational training in both rural and urban settings. It sets ambitious goals to enhance the quality and accessibility of education, aiming to benefit all learners and promote lifelong learning opportunities by 2030.

Inclusive education under NEP 2020 also addresses the challenges and barriers that hinder the effective implementation of inclusive practices. These challenges include the need for adequate infrastructure, teacher training, curriculum development, assessment systems and stakeholder involvement. The policy recognizes the importance of conducting further research on areas like the challenges and barriers to inclusive education, stakeholders' attitudes, problems faced by educational institutions and the pros and cons of inclusive education within the NEP 2020 framework.

The objectives

1. To identify the barriers to implementing inclusive education and investigate the lack of infrastructure and resources in schools that hinder inclusive education.
2. To evaluate the scope to which the New Education Policy 2020 has been implemented concerning inclusive education for differently abled children.



3. To analyze the role of technology and digital platforms in facilitating inclusive education for differently abled children.
4. To assess the educational rights of differently abled children and examine the constitutional and legal provisions for the rights of differently abled children.

The Perceptions and Barriers to Implement Inclusive Education

The NEP 2020 ensures that all students including those with disabilities, different learning styles and diverse socio-economic backgrounds have equal access to educational opportunities. Implementing inclusive education requires a shift away from traditional teaching methods towards a more multidisciplinary approach which can face resistance from teachers, students and parents accustomed to conventional learning methods. Adequate investment is crucial for implementing inclusive education practices but limited resources pose a significant challenge in ensuring the necessary support and infrastructure for inclusive learning environments. There is a shortage of training programs and resources to support teachers in adopting the new methods of teaching and learning required for inclusive education practices. The current assessment system in schools often focuses on rote learning and may not adequately reflect the diverse abilities and needs of students, highlighting the need for a more student-centered assessment system as per the inclusive education approach. While the policy emphasizes the active involvement of students, teachers, parents and the community in the education process, there may be limited engagement and participation of these stakeholders in the actual implementation of inclusive education practices.

Teachers' requirement to be equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to address the diverse needs of students. This includes training in inclusive teaching methods, understanding different learning styles and managing diverse classrooms. Creating a physical and social environment that is inclusive and accessible for all students including those with disabilities. This may involve designing schools with ramps, elevators and other facilities that accommodate students with diverse needs. Involving parents, communities and other stakeholders in the education process to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment. 21st century has clearly shown that information technology provides unforeseen opportunities that enable



multifaceted growth and development. The policy aims to foster an inclusive and equitable educational environment that prepares students to face the challenges of the time. Identifying and appreciating the diverse cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds of students the policy may encourage the use of multiple languages in education to cater to the linguistic diversity of the population.

The research evaluates the adequacy of infrastructure and resources altered to the unique needs of differently abled children, addressing challenges related to physical accessibility and digital inclusion. The study delves into the attitudinal barriers persistent in society exploring the impact of these attitudes on the realization of educational rights for differently abled children. The term 'differently abled children' used to refer to children who have disabilities or impairments that may affect their daily functioning, learning abilities and participation in various activities like conditions affecting mobility such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, limb abnormalities Intellectual disability that impact cognitive functions and intellectual abilities such as down syndrome or intellectual developmental disorders, chronic health conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes or chronic respiratory conditions that may require ongoing medical management.

The NEP 2020 to Address the Needs of Differently Abled Children

The NEP 2020 emphasizes the need to sensitize teachers and parents to support each student's unique capabilities and to respect diversity in curriculum, pedagogy and policy. Furthermore, the policy aims to ensure full equity and inclusion in educational decisions to enable all students to thrive within the education system. The NEP 2020 has broadened the categories of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) to include various marginalized groups like migrant communities, transgender individuals and students from villages and aspirational districts. It highlights the importance of providing resources for the integration of children with disabilities, recruitment of special educators and establishing resource centers to support children with severe or multiple disabilities.

There might be gaps in adapting the curriculum and teaching strategies to cater effectively to the diverse learning needs of children with disabilities. The policy promotes flexible learning pathways and holistic development but more specific guidelines and support are needed to help



teachers adapt the curriculum and employ inclusive teaching practices. While the policy mentions resource allocation for children with disabilities there may be gaps in the actual implementation and availability of these resources. Adequate funding and resources are crucial for providing assistive technologies, specialized training for teachers and establishing support mechanisms for differently abled children.

The NEP 2020 highlights inclusive education, ensuring equal opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities. It accentuates the critical role of teacher training in effectively harnessing digital technology for educational purposes which is essential for supporting the unique needs of differently abled children. The policy aims to provide access to quality education for differently abled children by incorporating digital technology into their education ensuring that they have the necessary support and resources to thrive within the educational system. NEP 2020 emphasizes skill development, equipping differently abled children with 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and digital literacy enhancing their employability and preparing them for future challenges. It prioritizes creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment, fostering empathy and understanding among students, including those with disabilities, to ensure they have equal opportunities for holistic development. These strengths collectively highlight the NEP 2020's commitment to promoting inclusivity, leveraging technology, providing tailored support and fostering skill development to address the unique needs of differently abled children within the educational system.

A major concern of the policy is that it proposes ambitious changes without providing a clear roadmap for execution. This ambiguity can lead to confusion among educational institutions, teachers, and students, resulting in uneven implementation across the country. There is a need for more extensive awareness programs and sensitization efforts to ensure that teachers, parents and communities understand and support the unique needs of children with disabilities. The policy emphasizes inclusive education but without adequate infrastructure and accessibility measures the goal of inclusion may not be fully realized.

The Role of Technology to Facilitate Inclusive Education for Differently Abled Children



The integration of technology including assistive technologies and digital platforms plays a crucial role in facilitating inclusive education for differently abled children. Educators can overcome traditional pedagogical barriers and enhance the learning experience for students with diverse needs. Assistive technologies are specifically designed to support differently abled students in their learning process. These technologies can help students with visual impairments, learning disabilities, physical challenges and more.

- Screen readers and text-to-speech software for students with visual impairments
- Speech recognition software and word prediction tools for students with physical disabilities
- Graphic organizers and mind mapping software for students with learning disabilities
- By providing access to these assistive technologies, educators can create a more inclusive learning environment that caters to the unique needs of each student.

Digital platforms such as online learning management systems and virtual classrooms offer a range of features that can enhance inclusive education.

- Flexible learning pathways enabling students to learn at their own pace and revisit content as needed
- Personalized learning experiences, where content can be adapted to suit individual learning styles and preferences
- Collaborative learning opportunities, fostering social interaction and inclusion among students
- Accessibility features, such as closed captions, high-contrast modes, and screen reader compatibility
- By integrating digital platforms into the learning process, educators can create a more engaging and accessible learning environment for differently abled students.

Technology can help overcome traditional pedagogical barriers that often hinder the inclusion of differently abled students.



- Adaptive learning technologies can create individualized learning experiences, catering to the unique needs of each student
- Digital content can be easily modified and adapted to suit different learning styles and abilities
- Online learning platforms provide access to education for students who may face physical barriers in attending traditional classrooms
- By embracing technology, educators can create a more equitable and inclusive educational system where every child, regardless of their abilities, has the opportunity to thrive.

Challenges and Considerations

While technology offers immense potential for inclusive education there are also challenges and concerns

- Ensuring that all students have access to necessary devices and internet connectivity
- Providing adequate training and support for teachers to effectively integrate technology into their teaching practices
- Addressing privacy and data security concerns when using digital platforms and online resources
- Continuously evaluating and updating technologies to ensure they remain relevant and effective in meeting the evolving needs of differently abled students

The integration of technology including assistive technologies and digital platforms holds great promise for facilitating inclusive education for differently abled children. Educators can create a more accessible, engaging, and personalized learning environment that empowers students to reach their full potential. On the other hand, it is essential to approach technology integration with a holistic perspective, addressing challenges and ensuring that the needs of all students are met.



Digital Platforms Enhance the Learning Experience for Differently Abled Children

Digital platforms enable the creation of personalized learning experiences tailored to the unique needs and abilities of each child. Adaptive learning technologies can adjust content, pace, and difficulty level based on the student's progress and performance ensuring that every child receives the support they need to succeed. Online learning platforms facilitate collaborative learning among students, fostering social interaction and inclusion. Virtual classrooms and discussion forums allow differently abled children to engage with their peers, share ideas and learn from one another in a supportive environment. Many digital platforms incorporate accessibility features that cater to the diverse needs of differently abled children. These features may include closed captions, high contrast modes, screen reader compatibility and alternative text description for images ensuring that content is accessible to students with visual, auditory or physical impairments.

Digital platforms can integrate with assistive technologies such as screen readers, text to speech software and speech recognition tools. This integration allows differently abled children to access educational content and participate in learning activities using the assistive technologies they are most comfortable with. Online learning platforms offer flexible learning pathways enabling students to learn at their own pace and revisit content as needed. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for differently abled children, who may require more time or repetition to grasp certain concepts. Digital platforms can incorporate multimedia elements such as interactive simulations, educational games and engaging videos to make learning more enjoyable and motivating for differently abled children.

Provisions for Inclusive Education in NEP 2020

NEP 2020 aligns with the principles of inclusive education by promoting a common vision that covers all children and emphasizes the responsibility of the regular education system to educate every child to the maximum extent appropriate. The policy underscores the importance of collaboration among stakeholders, including learners, parents, teachers, administrators and policymakers, to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment for all children, including those with disabilities. The constitutional and legal provisions in India, along with the



inclusive education framework outlined in the New Education Policy 2020 aim to safeguard the educational rights of differently abled children, eliminate discrimination and promote equal access to quality education for all. By upholding these provisions and implementing inclusive education practices, India can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable educational system that caters to the diverse needs of all children.

Constitutional Provisions

- Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- Article 21 guarantees the right to life and personal liberty.
- Article 21A provides for free and compulsory education for all children aged 6 to 14 years.
- Article 24 prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 in hazardous occupations and processes.
- Article 39 involves the State to ensure that the health and strength of workers, men and women and the tender age of children are not abused.
- Article 45 mandates free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years.

Legal Provisions

- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, ensures that every child aged 6 to 14 has the right to free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school.
- The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 defines disability and provides for the rights, entitlements and safeguards for persons with disabilities.
- The Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) Act, 1992 regulates the training of rehabilitation professionals and sets standards for training courses.
- The National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999 provides for the constitution of a National Trust for the welfare of persons with disabilities.



Conclusion

The NEP 2020 encourages the creation of an inclusive and barrier free environment to ensure the active participation of differently abled children. The policy recognizes the need for special education for children with disabilities. It promotes a flexible curriculum and pedagogical approaches to accommodate the diverse learning styles and needs of children including those with disabilities. This flexibility is intended to make education more accessible and effective for all. The policy emphasizes the need for training teachers to handle diverse classrooms effectively. This includes training in strategies for teaching children with disabilities and fostering a sensitized and inclusive learning environment.

All citizens including the disabled have the right to education as enshrined in the Constitution of India. Article 29(2) prohibits discrimination based on religion, race, caste and language in accessing state run educational institutions or receiving state funded aid. Article 45 mandates free and compulsory education for all children, including those with disabilities, until the age of fourteen. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 plays a pivotal role in ensuring that children aged 6 to 14 receive free and compulsory education in neighborhood schools with specific provisions for students with disabilities to access necessary learning materials and support services. The NEP 2020 recommends a shift in the assessment and evaluation systems to focus on holistic development and understanding rather than rigid examinations. It's crucial to stay updated with any amendments related to the New Education Policy to understand how these principles are being implemented to support children with disabilities.

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