

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND INTEGRATION INTO NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the importance of inclusive education and how it should be implemented in the present education with reference to NEP 2020. NEP 2020 lays emphasis upon inculcating Inclusive Educational structure and Inclusive Educational Culture in our today's school education system, through infrastructural culture in our school education system, through infrastructural support and by making corresponding materials on human values such as respect for all people, empathy, tolerance, human rights, gender equality, non-violence, global citizenship, inclusion, equality and equity. Thus, the policy aims at promoting inclusion, bringing out equity and developing respect for diversity through developing understanding about various cultures, religions, languages, gender identities, demographic differences, etc. Among children, teachers and other school functionaries. The paper focuses on:

1. Recognizing, identifying and fostering the unique capabilities of each student
2. Respect for diversity and respect for the local context
3. Full equity and inclusion in the education system of India
4. Highlights the important functions of inclusive education in the context of Manipur

Here lies the significance of the present paper. The paper relies on the literature of NEP 2020 as it resource and will draw out the need and impact of inclusive education towards the growth and development of the existing society.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Inclusive Education, Specially Able children, Special Education Zones, Integrated Education

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of education, the concept of inclusivity has gained paramount importance, reflecting a paradigm shift towards fostering diversity and ensuring equitable opportunities for all learners. The article, authored by an exceptionally educated and experienced research scholars with a major in education and political science respectively, aims to delve into the intricate interplay between inclusive education and National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020. Inclusive education is not merely a pedagogical approach; it is a philosophy that advocates for the integration of all students, irrespective of their abilities, disabilities, or socio-economic backgrounds, into mainstream educational settings. The ultimate goal is to create an environment where every learner feels valued, respected and empowered to reach their full potential. Drawing on extensive academic knowledge and practical experience, this article will explore the foundational principles of inclusive education and its implications for the education landscape. Inclusion is a basic human right and not an privilege. "Inclusion is a sense of belonging, feeling respected, valued for who you are, feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best work" (Miller and Katz). National Policy of Education 1968 is the first educational policy of Indian Constitution. Its one objective was to provide for the first time free educational facilities to differently/disabled students/physically or mentally handicapped students in regular classes. So, Integrated Programmes for handicapped children to learn in regular classes are developed. Whereby the teachers are

also provided training with desired skills to teach them. For the proper and effective implementation of this policy in this regards, in 1974 the programme of Integrated Education for Disabled Child is set up such that this type of children may learn in the regular school.

In an Inclusive Education:

- A) all types of students like students with congenital disease, children with cerebral palsy, children with low IQ levels, multiple disabilities, autism, etc are not to be segregated but to be brought in the same classroom to learn together along with other children.
- B) Teachers are encouraged to collaborate with each other to support all types of student in the classroom
- C) Focusing on the abilities and strength of the students rather than their inabilities and weakness
- D) Providing regular training to the teachers to develop their skills in coping with the inclusive classroom
- E) Individual learning styles is to be encouraged
- F) Equitable and equal opportunities and facilities to be provided to attain the needs of all individual student
- G) Valuing of alternative interest, thoughts and perspectives among the students to taught
- H) Celebration of diversity and individuality
- I) Nurture of shared interest, beliefs, respect and empathy among learners

This type of education also includes integrated education, special education, mainstreaming

Integrated Education is where persons with disabilities irrespective of their age, gender, sex, caste, creed, race, status, and those learners identified with special educational needs are being placed in the same classroom with regular students with regular educational settings accompanied with some adaptations and resources.

Special Education is a practical way of educating students in an exclusive set up such that the teaching-learning process addresses the student's differences and needs through individualized teaching. This process includes, systematically monitored and individually planned arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment and materials, collaborative teaching method, participation of parents for the children's progress and accessible settings.

Mainstreaming is the placing of students with Special Education Services in a regular classroom during periods based on their skills where flexibility of the classroom setup is required.

It is of utmost importance that inclusive school must adopt changes in its overall structure in such a way that it becomes a part of the School's Culture. This flexibility and changes are at various levels viz. Classroom management, curriculum-based, infrastructural, sports and cultural events, community-level programmes, assessment, teaching methods, etc.

According to Rights of Person with Disabilities Act (RPWD) 2016, inclusive education is a "system of education wherein students with and without disabilities learn together and the system of teaching and learning needs of different types of students with disabilities". Barrier free access to education for all children with disabilities are to be enabled as per the RPWD Act. The Global Education Development agenda which is mirrored in the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), adopted by India in 2015, seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016 defines Inclusive Education as a 'system of education wherein students with and without disabilities learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities'.

Under Rights of Person with Disabilities Act (RPWD) 2016, children with benchmark disabilities will have the chance to opt for regular or special schooling. This policy also reaffirms in bridging the social category gaps in access, participation and learning outcomes in school education. The policy also aims at inclusion of the Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDG) children in the learning institutions to attain equitable and inclusive education (Learning for all), i.e.

1. Gender Identities- male, female and transgender

2. Sociocultural Identities- ST, SC, OBC, EWS & minorities
3. Disabilities- learning disabilities
4. Socioeconomic Conditions- low income households, victims of war, victims of natural calamities, victims of trafficking, migrants, urban poor, orphans, children with vulnerability, etc
5. Geographical Identities- villages, small towns and aspirational districts

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Manipur through household Survey Identified Children with Special Need and endeavors to provide Education to all children from the age of 6-14 years of age, under Inclusive Education. More than 5000 children from different parts of Manipur have been identified under Children with Special Needs and Inclusive Education Education and are currently enrolled in various Government Schools. The differently able children come with different cases of ailment like eye, bones, clefts, etc. The main aim of Inclusive Education is to raise the enrollment rate of these children in the mainstream schools by providing medical intervention for a better society and a better generation. The objective, SSA/RMSA and Education department deploy Special Teachers. The Special Teachers through camp and household survey identify the Children with special needs. They collaborate with other Teachers and look after the Children with Special Needs. So far during this drive children have been given medical intervention in collaboration with Shija Hospital and Research Institute. Most people in Manipur remain unaware of the facilities given to Children With Special Needs by SSA, IED, Manipur. Here, household survey conducted by special teachers plays an important role for the effective functioning of this type of education.

National Education Policy 2020: A transformative vision.

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a comprehensive framework that aims to transform the Indian education system into a more holistic and flexible one. It has a transformative vision that addresses several key areas of concern and strives to provide a quality education for all. One of the key focuses of the NEP 2020 is on early childhood education and care, with an emphasis on a multidisciplinary and flexible approach to education. The policy also encourages students to choose subjects according to their interest and aptitudes, and offers flexibility in terms of multiple entry and exit points in education. This will allow students to explore different fields and pursue a well-rounded education. In addition, the NEP 2020 also gives importance to the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity among students. It proposes a shift from rote learning, which will empower students to think critically and apply their knowledge in real-life situations. Furthermore, the NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of technology in education and aims to integrate it effectively in teaching and learning processes. The policy emphasizes the use of digital tools and platforms to enhance teaching and learning experiences, and to make education more accessible and inclusive. Overall, the NEP 2020 has a transformative vision that seeks to revolutionize the Indian Education system. It aims to bridge the gaps in quality, access and equity in education, and create a learning environment that fosters creativity, critical thinking and holistic development of students. The National Education Policy 2020 stands as a landmark document not only in the Indian educational context but also as a guiding principle for Manipur Education System. Departing from traditional approaches, the NEP 2020 envisions a holistic and flexible education system, promoting critical thinking, creativity, and a multidisciplinary approach. Armed with a PhD in education, we dissect the key provisions of the NEP 2020 and shed light on its ambitious goals, specifically examining how Manipur can align itself with this transformative vision.

Intersecting Realities: Inclusive Education within NEP 2020 in Manipur:

This article's core lies in understanding how the principles of inclusive education align with and complement the objectives outlined in the National Education Policy 2020 for Manipur. We scrutinize the NEP 2020's provisions related to curriculum flexibility, teacher training, and the integration of technology in education. The evaluation focuses on how these aspects contribute to fostering inclusivity within the educational spaces of Manipur. Inclusive Education refers to the practice of providing equal educational opportunities to all students, regardless of their backgrounds, abilities or disabilities. In Manipur, inclusive education has been gaining momentum over the years, aiming to ensure that no child is left behind in their educational journey. One of the key aspects of inclusive education in Manipur is the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, which aims to provide free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 6 and 14 years. This act emphasizes the importance of inclusive education and

prohibits discrimination against children children with disabilities. The government of Manipur has taken several initiatives to promote inclusive education. Special schools have been established to cater to the needs of children with disabilities. These schools provide individualized learning opportunities, specialized teaching methodologies, and rehabilitation programs to children with various disabilities. This includes ramps, elevators and accessible washrooms for students with physical disabilities, as well as sensory rooms and learning materials for students with sensory impairments. To ensure the effective implementation of inclusive education, teacher training programs have been organized to equip educators with the skills and knowledge required to cater to the diverse needs of students. These training programs focus on creating inclusive classrooms, employing inclusive teaching strategies, and utilizing assistive technologies to support students with disabilities. Furthermore, awareness campaigns and workshops have been conducted to sensitize parents, communities and stakeholders about the importance of inclusive education and the rights of children with disabilities. These initiatives aim to break the stigma and misconceptions surrounding disabilities, fostering an inclusive society that accepts and supports children with diverse abilities. Inclusive education in Manipur is gradually transforming the educational landscape by providing equal opportunities for all children. It strives to create an inclusive environment that enables children with disabilities to learn alongside their peers, fostering empathy, understanding, and social inclusion. With continued efforts and support, inclusive education in Manipur can contribute to the overall development and well-being of all children in the state.

Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing Inclusive Education in Manipur:

An erudite exploration of inclusive education in Manipur wouldn't be complete without acknowledging the unique challenges and opportunities that lie on the path of implementation. From infrastructural constraints to attitudinal barriers, we navigated through the complexities and propose strategic solutions tailored to the specific context of Manipur. There are several challenges in implementing inclusive education in Manipur. Firstly, there is a lack of understanding and awareness about inclusive education among teachers, parents and even policymakers. Many people still hold traditional beliefs and attitudes towards disability, leading to stigmatization and exclusion of children with disabilities. Secondly, the lack of resources and infrastructure is a major challenge. There is a shortage of trained teachers and special teachers and special educators who can cater to the needs of diverse learners. Schools also lack facilities such as ramps, accessible toilets and teaching aids that can support inclusive education practices. Furthermore, the language barrier is another issue. Manipuri is the primary language used in schools, while most inclusive education materials and resources are in English. This makes it difficult for children with disabilities who may have communication difficulties or learning disabilities to access the curriculum. Additionally, there is a lack of collaboration and coordination between different stakeholders involved in inclusive education. Policymakers, schools, parents and disability organizations need to work together to create a supportive and inclusive environment for children with disabilities. However, there is often a lack of communication and coordination among these stakeholders, hindering the implementation of inclusive education. Finally, the overall socio-economic conditions in Manipur also pose challenges to inclusive education. Poverty, limited access to healthcare and rehabilitation services and the prevalence of armed conflicts make it harder for children with disabilities to receive proper support and inclusion in the education system. Overall, addressing these challenges requires a multi-dimensional approach, including raising awareness and providing training, improving infrastructure and resources, addressing language barriers, promoting collaboration and coordination, and addressing socio-economic issues.

Best Practices and Case Studies in Manipur:

To provide a practical dimension to the theoretical discourse, the article showcases best practices and successful case studies from around the world, emphasizing instances where inclusive education has seamlessly integrated into national education policies. Drawing on a wealth of knowledge, the authors highlighted instances where inclusive education in Manipur has not only benefited students with diverse needs but has also enriched the overall learning experience for all. Government of Manipur has established special education and resource centers in various districts of Manipur. These centers provide support services, including assistive technology, specialized training for teachers and counselling services for students with disabilities. In addition, the government has introduced inclusive education policy in the state

curriculum. This policy promotes inclusive practices in regular schools by providing guidelines on curriculum adaptation, teaching strategies and assessment methods. It also encourages collaboration between regular and special educators to ensure that every student receives appropriate support and is integrated into mainstream classrooms. Several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and parent associations are actively working towards promoting inclusive education in Manipur. These organizations provide advocacy, awareness campaigns, training programs to sensitize teachers, parents and the community about the rights of children with disabilities. Despite these efforts, there are still challenges to achieving full inclusion in education in Manipur. Limited resources, lack of awareness and social stigma are some of the barriers that need to be addressed. However, with the government's commitment and collective efforts of various stakeholders, and the implications of NEP 2020, inclusive education in Manipur is gradually gaining momentum.

A few case studies related to in Manipur are:

- 1) The first case study focuses on Manipur government's efforts to ensure inclusive education for children with disabilities. It documents the implementation of the Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary stage (IEDSS) scheme in the state. The case study analyses the challenges faced by the government, the strategies employed to address these challenges and the impact of the scheme on students with disabilities in Manipur
- 2) Another case study examines the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in promoting inclusive education in Manipur. It highlights the initiatives taken by NGOs to provide educational opportunities to marginalized and disadvantaged groups, such as children from economically backward communities and those belonging to ethnic minorities. The case study explores the impact of these interventions on educational outcomes of these groups and the lessons learned for future inclusive education efforts.
- 3) A third case study focuses on the efforts of a specific school or educational institution in Manipur to promote inclusive education. It examines the institutions inclusive curriculum, teaching methodologies and support services provided to students with disabilities. This case study also investigates the perceptions and experiences of students, teachers and parents regarding inclusive education at the institution and the outcomes achieved in terms of academic performance, social integration and emotional well-being of students with disabilities attending the school. These case studies provide valuable insights into the challenges, best practices and outcomes of inclusive education initiatives in Manipur. They could serve as useful references for researcher, policymakers and practitioners interested in implementing similar initiatives in other regions.

Recommendations of NEP 2020 for Inclusive Education:

1. Enabling mechanisms for providing children with CWSN (Children with Special Needs) or Div-yang, the same opportunities of obtaining equal, equitable and quality education as other children.
2. Declaration of SEZ (Special Education Zones) in regions of India which constitutes the large population of educationally disadvantaged group like SEDG to spread and increase high-quality educational opportunities in the remote and suburb places in India.
3. Establishing more Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Kendriya Vidyalayas in India where free boarding facilities are provided for easy access to the schools
4. Government of India (GOI) to constitute a "Gender Inclusion Fund" so as to strengthen the country's capability in providing equality and equitable education to all boys, girls and transgenders. Similarly, 'Inclusion Fund' schemes to be developed to address analogous access issues for other SEDGs.
5. To expand and strengthened Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas to heightened the participation in quality schools (upto Grade 12) of girls from SEDGs
6. NIOS to develop high quality modules for teaching Indian Sign Language such as to be able to teach basic subjects using this sign language
7. Under holistic or 360 degree assessment, a new National Assessment Centre, Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development (PARAKH) to formulate the guidelines and recommend appropriate tools for conducting equitable system of assessment
8. Proper handling and effective usage of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to be encouraged among the special need students to learn at their own pace

9. For children with severe or multiple disabilities, schools and school complexes are to be provided with resource centers. This will enable the integration of children with special needs in conjunction with special educators with cross-disability training and thereby supports the rehabilitation and educational needs. This resource centers will also assists the parents/guardians in achieving high-quality home schooling and skill development for such students as per the need. It will also provide language appropriate Teaching-Learning Material (TLM) like textbooks in large print, Braille, Sign language, assistive devices and technology based tools, etc.

10. Home-based education will continue to be a choice available for children with profound disabilities who are unable to go to schools and they are to be treated equal to any other child in the general system of education.

11. To preserve the traditions and alternative pedagogical styles, alternative forms of schools are to be encouraged

12. At the Secondary Stage, bridge courses, financial assistance through fee waivers and scholarships will be offered to talented and meritorious students from all SEDG

13. As an integral part of all teacher education programme, awareness and knowledge enhancement programme to be conducted on how to teach children with specific disabilities including learning disabilities. Accompanied by gender sensitization and sensitization towards all underrepresented groups in order to reverse their under-representation

14. Research activities to be conducted to ascertain which measures are particularly effective for certain SEDG.

15. To eliminate any disparity in access to education, including vocational education for children from any gender or other socioeconomically disadvantaged groups.

16. Under the aegis of the Ministry of Defence, State Governments may encourage opening NCC wings in their secondary and higher secondary schools, including those located in tribal dominated areas. This in turn enabling the natural talent and unique potential of students, helping them in building a successful career in the defence forces irrespective of their potentials and differences.

17. A new school culture to be brought in by teachers, trained social workers and counselors as well as through corresponding changes in bringing an inclusive school curriculum

18. Human values or Value Education such as tolerance, human rights, gender equality, non-violence, respect for all persons, empathy, global citizenship, inclusion and equity

19. Inclusion of diversified form of curriculum which includes detailed knowledge of various cultures, religions, languages, gender identities, different abilities, etc. to sensitize and develop respect for diversity. Filtration of biases and stereotypical materials from the school curriculum is encouraged simultaneously supporting more context relevant and relatable to all communities and student diversities.

20. Encourage students to appear board exam

21. Strengthen libraries and laboratories

22. Building capacity of teachers

23. Support for Gifted or Special Talent Students: encouraging them to pursue realm beyond the general school curriculum; project based clubs to be encouraged and supported at all levels in school; Olympiads and other competitions in various subjects to be conducted across the country; efforts for interventions in rural areas and regional languages; extensive use of technology to encourage talented and gifted children; NCERT and NCTE to develop guidelines for the education of gifted children and B.Ed programme to allow specialization in education of gifted children.

Steps to be taken by the Indian Government for inclusive education in Higher Educational Institutions (HEI)

1. To earmark appropriate Governmental funds for the inclusive education of SEDG

2. Setting achievable clear targets for higher Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for SEDG

3. Enhance gender equality and equity in admission to HEI

4. Enhance access and participation by establishing more high-quality HEI Special Education Zones containing larger numbers of SEDG

5. Establishment and encouragement to high-quality HEI and developing more degree courses that teaches in local/Modern Indian languages or bilingually

6. Provide easy access and usage of technology tools for better participation and learning outcomes of all students
7. Ensure proper building and infrastructural facilities including wheelchair-accessibility, adapted transport, barrier free, inclusive classes and disabled-friendly environment
8. Provide bridge courses for students that comes from disadvantaged educational backgrounds
9. Provide training and awareness programme to the faculty members, counselors, stakeholders and students to ensure sensitization on gender-identity issue and its inclusion in all aspects of the HEI, including curricula
10. Enforce all non-discrimination and anti-harassment rules stringently

Role of teachers in the proper functioning of Inclusive Education

1. To develop positive attitude in the teaching-learning process
2. Proper identification of children with special needs inside the classroom
3. Provide equal opportunity and access to all students in every activity
4. Teachers need to coordinate and collaborate among themselves and with the stakeholders
5. Teachers are to exercise suitable adaptations in the curriculum framing and practice
6. Preparation of effective teaching methods and teaching aids
7. Practical adaptations in the assessment and evaluation process

Challenges in a real Inclusive Classroom

1. Lack of knowledge of types of learners leading to inability to identify different categories of SEDG
2. Insufficient or no training due to lack of readiness for inclusive classroom
3. Scarcity of Qualified and Trained Teachers/Special need Educators/ Support Staff
4. Breaking the stereotypes at once is not possible since it is not a one step goal but a time-consuming process.
5. Requires heavy workload as it needs to develop individualized lesson plans for SEDGs/ syllabus coverage/assessment disparities
6. Dealing with the parents of SEDGs and ensuring their cooperation and collaboration
7. Dealing with parents of regular children
8. Demand for attitudinal transformation as role of teachers are to be specific
9. Infrastructural barriers including buildings, campuses, toilets, libraries, laboratories and other facilities
10. Classroom Learning Environment like Class size, length of period, etc
11. Time constraint which in turn effects essential communication

CONCLUSION

Thus, in order to bridge the gap in the proper functioning of Inclusive Education in India, we should remove infrastructural barriers, attitudinal barriers and build school communities by developing school clusters for better support system. We may also improve the participation of the students by making learning meaningful, relevant and enjoyable, age and level appropriate and adopting Universal Design of Learning. Learning outcomes to be based on individual capacities, needs and learning preferences, differentiated instruction and assessment and competency based on continuous assessment. Build a collaborative culture of inclusive and equity- to all stakeholders be sensitized to requirements of all students; creation of an Inclusive Practices Support team in schools and higher educational institutions. Periodic reinforcement of training for effective implementation of inclusive and equitable education will fix accountability to some extent. As this comprehensive exploration concludes, readers will gain valuable insights into the symbiotic relationship between inclusive education and the National Education Policy 2020 in the context of Manipur. Crafted by a highly educated and experienced PhD expert, this article aims to serve as a beacon for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in Manipur, offering a nuanced understanding of how inclusivity can be championed to realize the transformative vision outlined in the NEP 2020 for the state

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Children who learn together learn to live together.

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