

AN INTERFACE BETWEEN NEP 2020 AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Jarani Mao¹

¹ Department of Education, St. Joseph University, Dimapur, Nagaland

E-mail: Jaranimaheo@gmail.com

Abstract

Education to all and for all Children has been one of the major watchwords in the core of Indian Education since decades. The National Education Policy 1968 and 1986 with RTE Act 2009 had somehow led to improvement relating to access and enrolment of children to schools in India. According to U-DISE 2016-17, the enrolment rate of Differently-abled children is 1.09% in comparison with other children 98.91% and the enrolment drop rate from grade 1-12 is 1.1 % to 0.25. In fact, very few among these children rarely progress beyond primary level and mostly does not even get enrolled or access to education. National Education Policy 2020 came as a much awaited educational policy in the 21st century. Realizing such disparities in the existing education system in the country, NEP 2020 has made a tremendous attempt in refocusing and reassuring equitable and inclusive education in India. Prioritizing RTE 2009 and RPWD 2016, the new NEP has included various innovative recommendations for making education more inclusive. This paper attempt to review only on some highlighted recommendations for disabled and discussion on its possible implication.

Keywords:

Education, Inclusive, Disabled, NEP.

Introduction

India as a developing country has witnessed two types of educational system for a decade. One is Education in Special schools for children with disabilities and the other, Education in regular schools for normal children. Education for Children with disability begins to draw attention only in the second half of the twentieth century with various encouraging trends of developmental strategies and programs. Making education Inclusive has been one of the challenge to the existing exclusionary policies and practices of general educational system in our country.

Inclusive education being borrowed from alien country, the concept has still not obtained strong base in our educational system and the term itself is often misinterpreted or most often interchangeably used with the term integration. To define, the term inclusive education means that children from all categories with or without disabilities to be educated under the same roof in a regular classroom and the system of education to be liable to make necessary alteration to meet the needs of all children. Whereas, in integrated education children with disabilities are required to make adjustment with the existing school system with additional support and facilities.

Several attempts has been made in the past to make education inclusive in the country, however, despite all efforts, this area still remain insufficiently rolling due to multiple reason. As such NEP 2020, emanate with a diverse attempt to make education system further equity and inclusive in nature. Some of the new recommendations mentioned in the NEP2020 are discussed as bellow.

SEDGs (Socio-economic Disadvantaged Group)

The SEDGs in New NEP 2020 is categorized into the following; Gender identities that includes female and transgender, Socio-cultural identities including SC,ST,OBCs and minorities, students from villages, small towns and aspirational districts under Geographical identities, migrant communities, low income households, children in vulnerable situations, victims of trafficking, orphans, child beggars in urban areas and urban poor under Socio-economic conditions and Disabilities such as 21 types of disabilities in RPWD Act 2016 including learning disabilities.

SEZs- Special Education Zone

NEP recommended that regions of the country with large population from educationally-disadvantaged SEDGs should be declared as Special Education Zones, where all the schemes and policies are implemented to the maximum through additional concerted efforts, in order to truly change their educational landscape.

Schools for disabled

NEP 2020 recommends choices of schools to accommodate different levels of disabilities

- Regular or Special schools - Children with benchmark disabilities
- Resource centers- Children with severe or multiple disabilities
- Home- based – Children with severe and profound disabilities

NEP 2020 states, 'There will be an audit of home-based education for its efficiency and effectiveness in line with RPWD Act 2016.'

Involvement of parents/caregivers

NEP recommended that Resource centers in conjunction with special educators will support the rehabilitation and educational needs of learners with severe and multiple disabilities and will assist parents/guardians in achieving high-quality home schooling and skilling for such students as needed.

Technology-based solutions will be used for the orientation of parents/caregivers along with wide-scale dissemination of learning materials to enable parents/caregivers to actively support their children's learning needs.

Teaching methods and TLM

NEP recommended One to one teachers and tutors, peer tutoring, open schooling, appropriate infrastructure, suitable technology intervention to ensure access which can be particularly effective for Children with disabilities.

Assistive devices and appropriate technology-based tools as well as adequate and language-appropriate teaching-learning materials will be made available to help children

with disabilities, integrate more easily into classrooms and engage with teachers and their peers.

Discussion

- The traditional categorization of marginalizing the disabled in NEP 1986 has been moved to the broader categorization in NEP 2020, under the umbrella of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). This might remove the barrier and segregation of such children in the society in general and educational system in particular, developing positive attitude among educators and parents towards education of such children
- The broader categorization might decline the importance of focusing on the priority areas which otherwise may require much more attention comparing to other categories. It might reduce the scope of full coverage of children with disability under SEDGs.
- NEP 2020 resolves the confusion of the choices of schools by including the provisions for school of differently-abled children mentioned in RTE 2012 and RPWD 2016 such as neighborhood schools, special schools and home-based education. It provides freedom to the parents to choose the type of schools for their children to attend depending on the kind of disability.
- However, the fact that there is scarce of inclusive schools and special schools in many parts of the rural areas in our country will be a reality check towards attainment of this goal. The conditions of few schools providing inclusive education at present are also not sufficiently functioning or adequately progressing to meet the goal.
- The audit of home based education in line with the guidelines of RPWD may also not be valid because the provision in RPWD for inclusive education contains accessible buildings and classrooms and individualized support towards full inclusion. No proper guideline for home-based education has been provided- curriculum, technique and method of assessment etc.
- Giving priority to the quality of Home based education involving parents and caregivers are a good step towards attainment of the targeted goal. And which will also be the choice of many of the parent's keeping in mind the safety and security of such children. Research findings in the area of parental attitude have shown that more than 90% of parents of children with disability asserts possessive and protective attitude towards their children.
- There is a scarcity of resource centers and special educators. Technology-based solution to orient parents and caregiver might be a greater problem as for the success of this recommendation as it required parents/caregivers to be fully or partially techno-friendly and literate.
- Owing to regional disparities and differences, NEP recommendation on identifying SEZs is a good attempt to attain equity and inclusion.
- Declaration of SEZs will depend on the census report of such mentioned population and its authentication will depend on the sincerity and valid means of data

collection of any agencies or organization involve in collecting the data. If not, it might lead to a chance of excluding those regions which are exclusively in need of the provision mentioned for SEZs.

- Innovative teaching methods receded by research findings and TLM centering on technology based solution recommended by NEP for reassuring the quality of inclusive education is quite commendable.
- One-on-one teachers and tutors and technology interventions will be a greatest obstruction towards the attainment of goal precisely in a region where student-teacher ratio is imbalanced. And availability of technology remains one of the major deficiencies in many of the schools.

Suggestions

- Proper guidelines should be framed with eligibility criteria to ensure full coverage of mentioned categories of SEDGs.
- Check on the availability of inclusive and special schools and assess facilities and infrastructure of such existing schools.
- Check on the availability of resource centers and special educators in rural areas.
- Appropriate norms and standard to be framed to assess home-based education.
- Declaration of SEZs should be backed by valid authentication.
- Inclusive and Special schools to be equipped with latest technology and the special educators should be trained to be techno friendly in SEZs areas.
- There should be an alternate solution for parents who are illiterate or partially literate for providing home-based education.
- Teacher-student ratio should be checked and monitored in schools providing inclusive education.
- Orientation on awareness and knowledge about the available provisions and rights of Education for disabled children should be made compulsory for parents/caregivers and teachers in SEZs areas.

Conclusion

New Education Policy 2020, when viewed from the perspective of equity and inclusive education for disabled can revamp the status of such children in the society. With all its recommendations, the new NEP can be viewed as an innovative attempt to improve the existing concept of education for disabled. The success of which will depend on all the citizens from every walks of life, if not corresponding all other previous policies and framework, it will remain a mere policy in paper.

All the recommendations mentioned in NEP 2020 on equity and inclusive are worth researching and discussion. However, due to time constraints only few distinct recommendations are covered in this paper, leaving scope for further research and discussion on the same.

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F. P. Jaiswal
Principal
Don Bosco College
PB 430
Kohima-797001 Nagaland