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## A Critical Evaluation of NEP 2020's Promise of Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities

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### **Abstract:**

*The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 introduces a transformative approach to fostering an inclusive educational system that ensures equitable access for students with disabilities. Rooted in the principles of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016), the policy aspires to create barrier-free learning environments by focusing on teacher training, infrastructural improvements, and assistive technologies. However, despite its progressive vision, the NEP faces significant challenges in implementation, including inadequate funding, infrastructural deficiencies, and societal perceptions that perpetuate exclusion.*

*This paper critically examines the NEP's inclusion strategies, highlighting its impact on special education services and the structural barriers hindering its effectiveness. The analysis extends to the intersectional dimensions of gender, disability, and caste, revealing the compounded discrimination faced by marginalized groups. While the NEP 2020 lays a promising foundation for inclusive education, its success ultimately depends on sustained commitment from policymakers, educators, and communities to bridge systemic gaps and ensure meaningful educational participation for all students with disabilities.*

**Keywords:** NEP 2020, Education Policy, Disability, Women with Disability, Sustainable marginalized groups

### **Introduction:**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a transformative set of initiatives designed to overhaul India's educational framework, with a specific focus on integrating students with disabilities into mainstream education. The foundational elements of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) serve as the basis for the NEP 2020, which seeks to create an education system that provides equal access and opportunities to all students, including those with physical and cognitive disabilities. The policy's intentions reach far beyond simple access, as they include comprehensive approaches to develop supportive settings where students with disabilities can

succeed together with their peers.

While the initiative sets ambitious targets, such as teacher training enhancement and infrastructure development, it faces persistent and serious implementation concerns. The combination of inadequate resource allocation, prevailing societal perceptions about disability, and entrenched systemic obstacles poses significant threats to the effectiveness of these well-intentioned initiatives. The intricate interplay of gender, disability, and caste creates additional complexity within the educational landscape because individuals from marginalized groups encounter multiple layers of discrimination that obstruct their access to educational opportunities.

This paper endeavors to perform a critical examination of the NEP 2020's provisions, which delineate inclusion strategies for students with disabilities, while simultaneously exploring its effects on special education services. The exploration of how intersecting identities shape experiences within this framework will be conducted alongside an examination of accessibility challenges. Through an examination of these components, one can achieve a deeper understanding of whether the NEP 2020 truly delivers on its inclusivity promises or if it functions merely as a token gesture toward educational equity.

#### **Research Objectives:**

- 1 To critically evaluate the inclusion strategies for students with disabilities under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- 2 To assess the challenges in implementing inclusive education, including infrastructural, financial, and societal barriers.
- 3 To analyze the impact of NEP 2020 on special education services in India.
- 4 To explore the intersection of gender, disability, and caste in accessing education under NEP 2020.

#### **Research Methodology:**

This study adopts a qualitative research approach with a critical policy analysis framework. It relies on a secondary data analysis method, reviewing government reports, academic papers, and policy documents related to the NEP 2020 and inclusive education. A thematic analysis is conducted to identify key challenges, trends, and gaps in the implementation of inclusive education policies. The study is descriptive and analytical in nature. It involves a policy review and content analysis of the NEP 2020 and related legislative frameworks. The research highlights structural issues and suggests policy reforms based on findings from various academic and policy sources. Official government documents and reports on the NEP 2020 are used as secondary data. The research also referred to scholarly articles, books, and research papers on inclusive education and disability studies, as well as reports from organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, Census reports, National Sample Survey (NSS), and NGOs working in the field of disability rights and education. Thematic

analysis is conducted to categorize key aspects of the NEP 2020 related to inclusion, accessibility, and implementation. A comparative analysis is performed to examine the gap between policy intent and ground-level execution. Intersectional analysis is applied to understand how gender, caste, and disability collectively impact access to education.

### **Scope of the Research:**

The study focuses on the impact of the NEP 2020 on students with disabilities in India. It explores the broader implications for inclusive education, particularly in the context of infrastructure, teacher training, and policy implementation. The research considers intersectional barriers, addressing gender and caste dimensions alongside disability.

### **Limitations:**

- 1 The study relies entirely on secondary data, which may limit direct insights from students, teachers, and policymakers.
- 2 Implementation challenges vary across states, and the research may not capture localized disparities in depth.
- 3 The evolving nature of the NEP 2020's execution means that some findings may change as policies are further developed and revised.

### **Overview of NEP 2020 Objectives:**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents an ambitious effort to overhaul India's educational system through the promotion of inclusive education, which aims to support children with disabilities. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 serves as a fundamental goal for educational institutions, which must work toward delivering barrier-free access and necessary support to all students. The policy framework places a strong emphasis on developing an inclusive educational atmosphere by implementing a range of strategic approaches, including the early detection and intervention for learning disabilities, which are essential to achieving effective educational outcomes.

The NEP 2020 document sets forth a strong advocacy for the development of disability-friendly infrastructure alongside accessible technology in educational institutions to remove systemic obstacles that prevent disabled students from participating fully. The NEP sets forth an objective to advance teacher training programs through the inclusion of special education modules alongside cross-disability support components. This educational method equips teachers to address various student learning requirements while simultaneously building an inclusive atmosphere of acceptance and understanding in mainstream classroom settings.

The articulated goals stand as admirable milestones that mark considerable advancement toward educational inclusivity, yet widespread apprehensions about their feasible execution continue to persist. A critical demand exists for sufficient resource allocation and dedicated efforts from



educational authorities across all tiers to guarantee these goals become real-life enhancements for students with disabilities. The National Education Policy 2020 establishes a robust initial framework for inclusive education in India, yet its successful implementation remains contingent upon the effective execution of its directives and ongoing assessment of its effects on disabled students.

### **Inclusion Strategies for Students with Disabilities:**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents a range of inclusion strategies designed to integrate students with disabilities into mainstream education systems. A fundamental component of these educational strategies involves a focus on developing accessible learning spaces that support varied educational requirements in accordance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016). The National Education Policy promotes the development of specialized teacher training programs designed to equip educators with the necessary skills to support students with specific impairments, which helps create an inclusive classroom environment. Moreover, this study underscores the critical necessity of assistive technologies alongside accessible teaching materials, which together form the foundational elements required to improve educational experiences for students with disabilities.

The policy document emphasizes the necessity of infrastructural changes, which include ramps and accessible restrooms, alongside strategies for the early detection and support of children with learning disabilities. The implementation of this proactive approach serves to deliver timely support while simultaneously fostering an environment of acceptance and understanding throughout educational institutions. The establishment of resource centers has been proposed as a means to deliver continual support to educators and learners alike, thereby ensuring the availability of personalized assistance whenever it becomes necessary.

The multitude of promising initiatives face substantial obstacles when it comes to their effective implementation. The effectiveness of these inclusion strategies depends upon the provision of sufficient financial support and resources at state levels. The active participation of community members plays a vital role in developing perspectives about disability among educational institutions. The NEP, through the deliberate involvement of parents and community organizations in building inclusive educational institutions, works to remove systemic obstacles that prevent students from obtaining a quality education. The NEP 2020 establishes an educational inclusivity framework, but its actual effectiveness relies on overcoming implementation obstacles and building a supportive community atmosphere.

### **Impact on Special Education Services:**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's implementation presents profound implications for India's special education services, focusing on students with disabilities. Through its alignment with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, the NEP 2020 seeks to create an educational

setting that supports diverse learners by addressing their individual needs. The requirement for unobstructed access stands as a critical need, which demands infrastructural modifications like ramps and accessible restrooms within educational institutions. The policy requires teacher training programs to include specialized instruction on teaching methods for students with disabilities. The importance of this initiative lies in its role as a fundamental mechanism through which educators acquire the essential skills needed to effectively support a diverse student population.

Even though these progressive intentions exist, numerous challenges continue to present obstacles that threaten the successful achievement of these goals. The practical implementation of inclusive methodologies within special education services depends heavily on the availability of sufficient financial support and resource distribution across state and institutional platforms. A significant disparity remains between the creation of policies and their practical application across educational institutions because numerous schools continue to operate without the necessary facilities and trained staff required to meet the specific needs of disabled students. The complexity of establishing an inclusive educational environment becomes even more intricate due to prevailing societal perceptions about disability, which add additional layers of difficulty.

The successful implementation of the NEP 2020 into tangible improvements within special education services demands a thorough and exhaustive examination and resolution of these systemic problems. The realization of an educational environment that transcends mere inclusion to provide active support for students with disabilities in their academic pursuits demands unwavering and persistent efforts.

### **Challenges in Implementation and Accessibility:**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 encounters formidable obstacles during its implementation across India, especially when addressing the accessibility needs of students with disabilities. The policy sets out ambitious goals for inclusive education and barrier-free access, yet numerous practical obstacles prevent it from achieving its intended effectiveness. The situation regarding infrastructural deficiencies remains problematic as fewer than 40% of educational institutions possess ramps, while a mere 17% offer accessible restroom facilities. Such deficiencies represent direct violations of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act while simultaneously sustaining systemic exclusion.

In addition to existing educational challenges, the current system faces a significant shortage of educators who possess the necessary training to effectively meet the varied learning requirements of students. The National Education Policy 2020 requires teacher training programs to include special education strategies, but educational institutions show inconsistent implementation. The presence of this inconsistency results in inadequate inclusion practices that do not provide sufficient support to students.

Moreover, financial limitations represent a significant obstacle. A significant number of state governmental bodies encounter difficulties in providing adequate financial resources for essential modifications to educational facilities and materials needed by students with disabilities. The current financial deficit serves to further widen the already existing gaps in both educational access and quality.

### **Conclusion:**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a major advancement in efforts to improve educational access and inclusivity for students with disabilities. Through the establishment of specific goals designed to create an inclusive educational atmosphere, the NEP endeavors to eliminate historical obstacles that have traditionally excluded these individuals from mainstream education. The proposed inclusion strategies receive commendation because they focus on providing tailored support and resources designed to meet the specific diverse needs of students with disabilities. The integration of special education services into mainstream educational frameworks remains an area of significant concern because it is essential that both training and resources are sufficiently allocated to ensure effective implementation.

Even though it aims to be progressive, the system still faces ongoing difficulties with both implementation and accessibility. The persistent obstacles of insufficient infrastructure combined with a shortage of trained personnel and pervasive societal stigma collectively impede the attainment of equitable access to quality education for all students with disabilities. An intersectional examination which includes gender, disability, and caste dimensions uncovers systemic inequities that require resolution for the NEP to meet its objectives. Individuals originating from marginalized backgrounds encounter multiple intersecting disadvantages, which necessitate specific targeted interventions to address their unique needs.

The NEP 2020 establishes a strong foundational basis for advancing educational practices to include students with disabilities, yet its potential achievement hinges on the ongoing dedication of both policymakers and educators. To tackle current issues while simultaneously building a supportive environment where students from all backgrounds and abilities can succeed requires deliberate and sustained action.

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