INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND NEP 2020: CONCEPT, SCOPE & CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive Education (IE) is a new approach of educating the differently abled children with the normal ones under the same roof. The Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC) defines inclusion as "a term which expresses commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he / she would otherwise attend." The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) of 2005 and the SEN and Disability Act (SENDA) of 2001 envisages to avoid discrimination between the disabled and non-disabled children and to ensure equal access to academics and infrastructural facilities. The introduction of National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), by Union Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020 added much more to the scope of Inclusive Education. Chapter 6 of NEP 2020 deals with Equitable and Inclusive Education. According to NEP 2020, "Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality". It also states that our education system must aim to benefit Indian children in which no single child loses his / her opportunities to learn and succeed because of their circumstances of birth or personal background. As per MHRD statistics 2009 about 80% of rural population lives in our country without provision for special schools and there are an estimated 8 million children out of school because of gender, poverty, disability, caste etc. Study on IE and NEP 2020 identifies the need for further research to be conducted on some thrust areas like the challenges and barriers to inclusive education in India; the attitude of various stake holders

including students, teachers, parents and public to IE; the major problems faced by educational institutions in implementing IE; and the pros & cons of IE in NEP 2020.

KEY WORDS : Inclusion, Disabilities, Children with special needs, Inclusive Education (IE), NEP 2020.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusion is a universal right of human beings. It aims to inculcate all human beings irrespective of race, religion, gender, disability, status, cast, creed, income etc. Inclusion is nothing but giving equal opportunities and maintaining equality by removing all barriers and discrimination in public life. **Henry Ford** once said, "Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is a progress, working together is a success" and this might be the point of origin of the concept of Inclusive Education.

Inclusive Education (IE):

Inclusive education refers to the rights of children and their parent to access the main stream education in which the children's needs and the parents wants is satisfied. IE is a new approach of educating the differently abled children with the normal ones under the same roof. In inclusive classrooms we can see students of different learning styles, talents, powers and ability levels. It embrace a wide panel of multi talented students including ordinary learners, students with disabilities like physically handicapped, mentally retarded, multiple disorders, visual and hearing problems, transgender etc. Many educational institutions have made an attempt towards inclusion in education and studies proved that it led to great improvement in educational quality index. All students, regardless of any challenges, are placed in age-appropriate general education

classes in their own nearby schools to gain high quality instruction, interventions and supports that mould them to meet success in the curriculum.

NEP 2020 and Inclusive Education:

The National Education Policy states that there will be a special emphasis on socially and economically disadvantaged groups to make education inclusive and equitable. Socio-economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) can be broadly categorized based on gender identities (female and transgender), socio-cultural identities (scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, OBCs and minorities), geographical identities (students from villages, small towns, districts) and socio- economic conditions (migrant communities, low income households, poor situations, orphans, beggars, urban poor etc.). For the benefit of these disadvantaged groups, Special Education Zones will be created. Studies show that overall enrolments in schools decline from Grade1 to Grade 12 among SEDGs (NEP 2020, 6.2.). According to U-DISE 2016-17 data, about 19.6% of students belong to Scheduled Castes at the primary level; it falls to 17.3% at higher secondary level. These dropouts are very severe for Scheduled Tribes students (10.6% to 6.8%), and differently abled children (1.1% to 0.25%), and greater declines further for female students (NEP 2020, 6.2.1). NEP 2020 support multi disciplinary education and thus aims at the holistic development of students.

Several Researchers has made many attempts to conduct surveys and studied the literature related to Inclusive Education and its impact on educational institutions, students, parents, teachers, publics etc and reached their conclusions and hence the topic is very significant. The introduction of NEP 2020 added much more to the scope of Inclusive Education. It replaced

Integrated Special Education. This review paper on Inclusive Education explores various differentiated view points from several research scholars in different circumstances to reach a common conclusion.

Methlagl & Micheal analyzed 8398 papers dealing with I E during 1980 -2019. The objective of the study was to gain information on scientific productivity, international collaboration activities and to know the conceptual framework.[1] Descriptive analyses co-authorship collaboration analysis and co-word analysis were used for the study. Major studied research areas were disability issues, teaching practices, attitudes, social process, curricular issues, students & parents perspectives, intercultural education policy etc. The results of the study showed a fast growing body of research in I E over the years with intensive international collaboration patterns.

Ohba and Malenva made an attempt to study Inclusive Education and data were collected in five & nine public schools in Nairobi & Marsabit. Questionnaires and Interview method were used for the study and collected data from more than 126 teachers, 14 head teachers, country officials etc. The finding reveals that although integrated education system is dominated in Kenya. Local schools that accommodate learners with disabilities put much effort into creating an inclusive setting. This paper appreciates the challenges and potential associated with inclusive education and thus recommends deeper reflection on the operationalisation of inclusive policies in the context of Kenya.[2]

1.Methlagl, "Mapping Inclusive Education 1980 to 2019."
[2] Ohba and Malenya, "Addressing Inclusive Education for Learners with Disabilities in the Integrated Education System."

Inesto and Tovar in their paper showcases relevant initiatives to address inclusive and sustainable development through the objectives of UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) ensuring inclusive & equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.[3] In this paper several challenges on a achieving a more inclusive and sustainable open education are discussed, such as the need to use accessibility meta data standards to improve the research and sharing of Open Educational Resources (OER's) in open repositories, the recommendation to use frameworks like Universal Design for learning to provide inclusive design feedback and the benefits MOOCs.

Korsgaard and Merete's study target to discuss how thinking on inclusive education can be produced and evolved in a community of inquiry consisting of practitioners and researchers. This paper presents both a research process and an explorative theoretical endeavour to rethink how we might conduct research in education i.e., I E. The paper ends with a reflection on the possible influence on inclusive education of the framework presented and how it might lead to a more inclusive starting point for thinking about and researching the field of I E.[4]

Alessia and Marsili conducted a research in Italy. Italy is a country internationally known as a country with a long lasting tradition of inclusive education. Objective of the paper is to provide a frame on the educational policies that, since 1970's, have steered the school system according to a fully "inclusive" model and assessing the quality of inclusive processes. The methodology used in primary & secondary sources & the paper identifies 3 main focus points: The passage from the inclusive "Principle" to the teaching-learning practices, tools for answering

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[3] Iniesto et al., "Challenges to Achieving a More Inclusive and Sustainable Open Education."
[4] Korsgaard, Larsen, and Wiberg, "Thinking and Researching Inclusive Education without a Banister -- Visiting, Listening and Tact as a Foundation for Collective Research on Inclusive Education."

special educational needs and the tools to assess quality of inclusive process.[5] The paper outlines the need for defining new systematic research approaches that can validate this long education tradition.

Elmira – Nurshat conducted a study in a primary school in Kazakhstan using observation and interview method as tool and content analysis method to analyze data. Results revealed that teachers showed an atmosphere of mutual respect and love in classrooms with disabled students, are strict about classroom rules. A constructive feeling is given in friendship groups and general courses taught using straight – through method and question answer technique[6]. Technology supported trainings like games and visuals were provided. The research suggests preparation of a curriculum including the disabled.

Studies reveal that Integrating differently abled students or students with learning difficulties with the normal students is not at all easy for the educational institutions. IE is a major challenge for educational systems. In order to understand the background of teacher's attitude towards inclusive education many studies were conducted globally and open up new perspectives for training teachers in order to enhance the implementation of inclusive school policies. Parents or guardians of children with disabilities play a crucial role in supporting their child's learning and indeed it includes navigating the child from special schools to inclusive school. This may face various challenges like transportation barriers, remote learning, infrastructural issues, public attitude and even covid-19 restrictions.

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[5] Marsili, Morganti, and Signorelli, "The Italian Leadership on Inclusive Education."
[6] Nurshat et al., "Competences Given to Disabled Students within the Scope of Inclusive Education."

An historical review from Exclusion to Inclusion in western Australia across the past five decades by **Chris & Chambers** 2021 states that current practices regarding inclusive education vary enormously depending on a wide range of issues specifically the context and culture of education system. These were related to legislation and policy, support, curriculum, teacher education and parental choice**. Zaveri** (2001) developed an awareness model for disabled students, administrators and teachers of general schools on IE by printed media and interactive approach. The findings indicated that both the approaches were equal. The teachers felt inclusion desirable but not possible.

Major interventions for Inclusive Education

➢ Barrier free environment.

➢ Awareness creation.

➢ Identification and enrollment.

➢ Providing transport and support services.

➢ Training of teachers, parents and public.

➢ Conducting of day care centre.

➢ Curriculum adaptation and distribution of study materials.

➢ Assessment and corrective measures.

➢ Celebration of World Disabled Day.

CONCLUSION

Inclusion is a process of reducing the gap between learners with and without special educational needs. It helps special needs students to develop interactional skills because of the

exposure to a social environment and rejects the need of special schools. Even though IE have many good intentions, inclusive education in practice faces numerous challenges today. Inclusive pedagogy in light of social Justice, in a study conducted, in Swedish special education context, the author explores special educator's experiences, possibilities and challenges when applying IE. Finding reveals positive attitudes to the concept of inclusive class rooms. Teachers face more than a few grey areas that need to be put in place in order to achieve socially and cognitively inclusive class rooms. The major barriers to Inclusive Education are Special Education Needs, Attitudinal barriers, Curriculum framing, untrained teachers, Infrastructural Constraints.

Implementation of IE is possible only by the active involvement of the management, administrators, teachers and the parents of normal and differently abled children. To fulfill our constitutional responsibility and to develop a healthy citizenship and self reliance, practicing Inclusive Education is highly essential in the modern educational era.

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