



ROLE OF NEP 2020 IN REDUCING SOCIO-ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES IN INDIAN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: India has a rich and complex history of developing educational policies at local, state, and national levels. Over the years, the education system has been changed and improved to provide high-quality education to all residents. The National Education Policy 2020 aims for every child aged 3-6 to have access to quality early care and education by 2030. This study looks at the differences in education access based on socio-economic factors, using data from the 75th wave of the National Statistical Office (2021-22). It examines how a household's economic status and education level contribute to these differences. The research reveals notable gaps in education access between rural and urban areas, with girls and children from marginalized groups (scheduled castes and scheduled tribes) less likely to attend early childhood education, particularly in rural settings. Adjusting for home economic status and the educational level of the household head can significantly narrow the rural-urban gap in pre-primary education access. Additionally, inequalities in gender and socio-economic status are evident in how households invest in early education. These results highlight the urgent need for policies and commitments to reduce barriers for children in disadvantaged situations in India.

KEYWORDS: NEP-2020, 5+3+3+4 Curricular, Inclusive Growth, Socio-Economic, Disparities.

INTRODUCTION: Education plays a vital role in boosting the economy and engaging citizens in community life. It encourages critical thinking, builds skills and knowledge, and enhances social responsibility. The National Education Policy (NEP) provides a clear framework for the Indian education system. Its goal is to make education more inclusive and relevant, ensuring that all students find it engaging while developing

problem-solving abilities. The NEP aims to guarantee that every student can access quality education, helping them reach their full potential. Education is recognized as a human right and is essential for sustainable growth. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) of the 2030 Agenda highlights the aim of achieving inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for everyone by 2030. While all countries are committed to this goal, it is primarily the responsibility of the government to provide access to quality education. To tackle educational challenges and create fair and relevant systems for all learners, cooperation at global and regional levels is essential, along with the involvement of governments, civil society, businesses, and international organizations. India endorsed Goal 4 (SDG 4) in 2015, aiming to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning by 2030. To achieve this goal and the broader aims of the 2030 Agenda, significant changes to the education system will be needed to enhance learning opportunities.

A LOOK BACK AT INDIAN EDUCATIONAL POLICIES: The story of National Education Policies (NEPs) in India starts during British rule when only a small group of people had access to education, which the British used to maintain control. The first NEP was introduced in 1968 after India gained independence. Its aim was to promote social justice and economic growth through education. However, this plan only made partial progress because of insufficient political support and funding. In 1986, the government launched a new NEP focused on improving access to education, raising the quality of learning and encouraging vocational training. While this initiative helped boost primary school enrollment, it did not fully address the issues of access and quality in higher education. After a 34-year gap, NEP 2020 was introduced as a major update to India's education policy. This new plan aims to reshape the education system to meet the needs of the 21st century. It focuses on encouraging critical thinking and cross-disciplinary learning, ensuring that every student, regardless of their background, receives equal, accessible, and high-quality education.

India and sdg goal 4 with improvements in both the enrolment and completion of females in both primary and primary school, India had made considerable success in the field of basic education. The objectives of high-quality education and lifelong learning for all are shared by the new national education policy and Sustainable Development Goal 4. In addition to the government programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan aims to provide all Indians with high-quality education, and it is supplemented in this effort by other programmes including teacher training and higher education

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: Data for this study has been gathered from various secondary sources, including the NEP 2020 report from the Ministry of Education, the Economic Survey Report for 2022-23, and

several journals, magazines, and newspapers. These resources are essential for analyzing the data in this research.

MAIN OBJECTIVES OF NEW EDUCATION POLICY: The New Education Policy (NEP), launched in 2020, aims to transform the education system in India. Here are its key objectives:

1. **Providing Quality Education For Everyone From Early Childhood To Higher Education:** The NEP wants to ensure that all learners have access to quality education. This includes increasing enrollment, reducing dropout rates, and improving the overall educational experience.
2. **Encouraging Cross-Disciplinary Learning:** The NEP promotes learning that crosses different subjects. This approach helps students develop a wide range of skills, as well as critical thinking and creativity.
3. **Promoting Research and Innovation:** The NEP focuses on building partnerships between academia, industry, and government. It also aims to provide funding and support for research and development, fostering a culture of innovation in education.
4. **Enhancing Educational Quality:** The NEP suggests several ways to improve education, such as creating new curricula, training and developing teachers, using technology and online resources, and establishing accreditation processes for colleges and universities.
5. **Promoting Equality and Inclusion:** The NEP strives to create a more fair and inclusive education system. It addresses issues related to gender, economic status, language, and disabilities and offers support to disadvantaged groups.
6. **Strengthening Vocational Education:** The NEP proposes integrating vocational training into standard education. This will help students gain practical skills that are useful in the job market.
7. **Ensuring Global Competitiveness:** The overall aim of the NEP is to reshape the Indian education system by aligning it with the needs of society and promoting a culture of lifelong learning. It seeks to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in the twenty-first century.
8. **Introduction Of A 5+3+3+4 Curricular Structure:** The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to change the way we educate students. The old 10+2 system has been updated to a new 5+3+3+4 structure. Here's a breakdown of this new system the foundational stage lasts five years, covering two years of primary education for children ages 6 to 8

and three years of pre-primary education for kids ages 3 to 6. This stage focuses on developing basic reading and math skills through play and hands-on activities. The preparatory stage follows, lasting three years for upper primary school students ages 8 to 11. This level builds on what was learned in the foundational stage, enhancing skills like teamwork, critical thinking, and creativity.

Next is the middle stage, which also lasts three years for secondary school students ages 11 to 14. This stage provides a well-rounded education and emphasizes practical, real-world learning.

Finally, the secondary stage includes four years of high school for students ages 14 to 18. This level focuses on developing specialized knowledge and skills that prepare students for college or careers, offering a flexible approach to education. The 5+3+3+4 curricular framework prioritizes essential skills, cross-disciplinary connections, and vocational training. It aligns with the global trend toward competency-based education, promoting the learning of relevant knowledge and skills for the modern world.

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Previous Education Policies Faced Several Challenges, Including:

- Low quality of education
- Insufficient funding for education
- Limited opportunities for higher education
- Too much focus on memorization
- Gender inequality
- Absence of vocational training
- Language obstacles
- Lack of innovation and research

New Education Policy Actions Taken:

- Focus on providing quality education
- Increased funding for education
- Emphasis on skill development
- Promote gender equality
- Encourage research and innovation
- Flexible curriculum options
- Incorporate technology in learning
- Training programs for teachers
- Decentralize education systems
- Blend culture and values into education
- Support vocational education
- Promote multilingual skills
- Ensure inclusive education for all
- Improve assessment and evaluation methods

The goal of these steps is to tackle the main problems in the Indian education system and build a more inclusive and effective system for all students. The NEP 2020 is a detailed policy designed to improve education at every level while encouraging lifelong learning and skill development.

THE INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL POLICY: On July 28, 2020, the Indian Union Cabinet approved the National Education Policy (NEP), marking the third such policy in the country. The first was introduced in 1968, followed by a second in 1986, which saw updates in 1992. The NEP 2020 aims to reflect ongoing development trends in India. To align with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), this policy seeks to reform all parts of the education system, including its management and oversight. It emphasizes helping everyone unlock their creative potential.

One of the main goals of NEPs is to reshape the education system and bridge the gap between expected and actual learning outcomes. The policy is focused on ensuring equality for all, with special attention given to the socially and economically Disadvantaged (SEDG) group. Children with disabilities will have full access to regular education from early childhood to higher education.

The primary aim of the NEP is to provide all Indians with affordable, high-quality education. By 2030, it aims for a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 100% at all education levels. Key accomplishments of NEP 2020 include improved teaching methods and better teacher training. The policy covers primary, secondary, and higher education in both rural and urban areas.

The National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to tackle the growing inequality and unfairness in the education system. It recognizes issues like high dropout rates among certain socio-economic groups and disadvantaged minorities. This article briefly outlines the main proposals for inclusive education and highlights some key challenges the NEP will face.

SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS (SEDGS): The NEP 2020 highlights that many groups are not well represented in schools today. It combines factors like gender, culture, location, disabilities, and economic status to create a new group known as SEDGs, aimed at addressing their educational needs. The main goals of this plan focus on including these groups. Many individuals in these categories tend to drop out of school more often due to reasons like historical exclusion based on culture or lack of access for tribal communities. The NEP 2020 suggests various policies and programs designed to boost enrollment and representation, such as targeted scholarships, financial support for families to encourage school attendance, and providing bicycles for better transportation. However, this broad classification presents challenges. The policy

does mention the need for reservations and recognizes caste as a historical barrier. Yet, it overlooks the many ongoing challenges that hinder these groups from succeeding in education due to persistent discrimination from different sources.

RECOGNITION OF GENDERED IDENTITIES: The NEP 2020 recognizes that women and transgender individuals face the most challenges in every racial and economic group. It plans to start programs that provide bicycles to create cycling clubs and set up walking groups at schools. These initiatives aim to involve the community and offer support to these at-risk youth. Additionally, the policy proposes creating a "Gender-Inclusion Fund" to enhance education opportunities for women and transgender individuals, highlighting the importance of girls' education.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: The policy aims to include students with special needs in regular classrooms and recognizes their importance. It aligns with the goals of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016. To make teaching more inclusive and responsive to children's needs, the plan includes hiring special educators in every school complex. Students with serious learning challenges will have the option to home school and will have access to qualified teachers to help them continue their education with the best resources available. Additionally, teachers will be trained to identify learning difficulties in young children and to help those students succeed academically and emotionally. The National Evaluation Centre, PARAKH, will be created to establish fair evaluation systems for students with learning difficulties. Various educational strategies will be introduced to support this aim.

The National Education Policy (NEP) suggests creating Special Educational Zones (SEZs) in areas with large populations of socio-economically disadvantaged groups and where ambitions are high. The main purpose is to bring education to the most remote and underserved parts of India. To improve these underdeveloped areas, more funding will be allocated, and various government plans will work together. However, the policy does not clarify how these zones will be defined or what criteria will be used to identify them in both urban and rural settings. This new idea has the potential to significantly improve access to education in hard-to-reach regions, including urban areas with large minority populations.

STRATEGIES TO INCREASE ACCESS AND EQUITY:

EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTIONS

- Investing in early childhood education programs to provide a strong foundation for all children before they enter to formal schooling.

- Universal access to preschool programs and early intervention programs to reduce early learning gaps.

EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES:

- Equitable distribution of educational resources, including funding, qualified teachers, technology and teaching materials, to all schools regardless of their economic status.
- Targeted interventions will increase funding for schools in disadvantaged areas to fill resource gaps.

CULTURAL EDUCATION:

- Implement educational methods that focus on cultural aspects and experiences and integrate them into the curriculum.
- Training teachers to understand and meet the needs of students with different socio-economic backgrounds.

SUPPORT SERVICES AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:

- Provide other support services such as counseling, health services and after-school programs to meet the non-academic needs of students.
- Form partnerships with community organizations to create a comprehensive support network for students and families..

CONCLUSION: Addressing socioeconomic disparities in education requires a multifaceted approach beyond the classroom. By implementing strategies that focus on early intervention, resource allocation, culturally sensitive teaching, social inclusion and digital inclusion, educational institutions can work to create an environment course suitable for everyone. Integrating these strategies is critical to creating an equitable education system that provides equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background.

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