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Impact of Inclusive Education in the 21st Century

(with special reference to NEP2020 and KCF 2023 Draft)

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Abstract

In India, numerous policies are formulated regarding educational reformations of nation. We witnessed several significant changes in the sphere of education. The NEP 2020 stands as a significant stride in India's quest for providing equal access to education and its developmental goals. Its introduction was welcomed as a response to inequalities exists in India in the field of education. Additionally, The KCF 2023, a draft framework developed by the Kerala government, emphasizes equality in education. The paper intends to compare the inclusive elements exists in KCF 2023 and NEP 2020. Although these two policies differ slightly in structure and recommendations, they share some similar goals in terms of inclusion. The paper tries to glance over the similarities exist in NEP 2020 and KCF 2023 in terms of inclusion.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, NEP 2020 and KCF 2023

Introduction

Quality education is the global motto of today's education. The right to education aims to ensure everyone achieves their rights for quality and equitable education. An inclusive approach means that each and every individual are taken care of and it ensures all learners participation in educational process. Special focus is being given to them, those who are marginalized and excluded from the main stream and under achievers. There are several challenges that children from undeserved communities face in accessing quality education. It becomes multifold when it comes to children with disabilities from disadvantaged sections. Now a days most of our nations associated inclusive education to fulfill the diverse needs of individuals.

Since independence, our nation has been taking a lot of measures to reform the education sector and come out with various policies on education. All policies to date highlights the significance of inclusion of children. However, a significant number of our children are not participating in the mainstream. The Right to Education Act ensures that children from the ages of 6 and 14, regardless of any distinctions, individuals possess the entitlement to obtain unrestricted and obligatory education. (RTI 2009).

Inclusive education, as defined by UNESCO in 2000, aims to eliminate any obstacles in learning as well as ensure the involvement of every students at risk of being isolated or marginalized. It is a strategic method aimed at ensuring effective learning for all children. This approach addresses the common goal of diminishing and overcoming the denial of the

fundamental right to education at the primary level, while also enhancing access, involvement, and success in high-quality primary education for all individuals.

Objectives

1. To create awareness of impactfulness of inclusive education according to NEP 2020 and KCF 2023.
2. To have a detailed analysis of NEP 2020 with special focus on inclusiveness.
3. To have a detailed analysis of KCF 2023 draft with special focus on inclusiveness.
4. To have a better understanding of reformations being taken place in the field of education in India by focusing on NEP 2020 and KCF 2023 draft.

Need And Significance of the Study

We are living in an era which is changing at an ever-increasing rate. Everyone aspires for a quality education and better opportunities for survival. Inclusive education is one of the major dynamic changes that happened in our nation.

Inclusive learning teaches our children human values and significance of being considered each other. It makes them more patient and helping them understand what empathy is. They do learn not to hurt by themselves. While being exposed to different cultures, thoughts and opinions make them more open minded and varies their perspectives towards things. The concept is not confined into a classroom. It paves way for a broader concept, where we are acknowledging the diversities.

In India there are many policies are formulated. But there is a wide gap existing between the policy formulation and policy implementation. This has to be made under scrutiny and to ensure that every recommendation is implemented timely. The NEP 2020 is a major advancement for India's journey to universal access to education and, consequently, its national and developmental goals. Its introduction came as a welcome response to low literacy and high dropout rates and academic inflexibilities in schools. The KCF 2023 is also a draft framework developed by Kerala government, which lays emphasis on equality in education. Even though the two policies are slightly different in structure and recommendations, there are some similarities exist in terms of inclusion. Since inclusion is the need of the hour, we researchers and stake holders of education certainly shoulder the responsibility of its proper implementation for the welfare of the society.

NEP 2023 VS KCF 2023 (In terms of inclusion)

The NEP 2020 affirms that "Education is the most significant instrument for achieving social justice and equality" (NEP 2020). The Union Cabinet granted approval to this national policy on July 29, 2020. It is crucial to address the barriers, installation, and services that impact children with diverse needs if the policy is to be implemented successfully. The NEP incorporates disability inclusion into the entire framework of policy, including a special chapter on fair and comprehensive edification. This policy emphasizes the challenges, issues, and suggestions intended at closing the gaps that hinder participation and access for all students. The policy covers issues and recommendations related to including underrepresented student groups, like children with disabilities, under the SEDGs category. This term serves as a broad

classification that includes various gender identities, socio-economic and socio-cultural statuses, geographical locations, and disabilities (MHRD).

The National Education Policy 2020 states that education is the most efficient method for achieving social justice and equality. In order to fulfill its commitment to equity and social justice, the concerns regarding educational impediment, adeptness and service for Children with diverse Needs and various other SDG comprising students of diverse class, caste , region and socio economic strata need to be addressed. It is pertinent to note that the policy has a comprehensive chapter focusing on inclusive and equitable education detailing the issues, challenges and recommendations for bridging the disparity in access and enhancing the participation of learners from these groups. The policy is concerned about the declining enrollment ratio in school from standard one to twelve and this ratio is pronounced with students of SDG with the greatest fall among females within each of these groups especially so in the higher education. Many programs and policies, including conditional cash transfers for targeted scholarships, rewards for parents who send their kids to school, and the provision of bicycles for transferred students, have been proposed in the policy to address the issues of equity and access.

With the NEP 2020, inclusive education in India has entered new phase. This policy emphasizes the value of giving all students equal opportunities, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. The role of comprehensive education within the Indian educational framework is crucial. This approach seeks to guarantee that every student, including those with disabilities,

receives quality education in mainstream settings. It fosters a supportive atmosphere that appreciates diversity, enhances fairness, and cultivates mutual respect among learners.

In the realm of education, inclusivity plays a crucial role in fostering a diverse and equitable learning environment. As we delve into the Kerala Curriculum Framework 2023, it is imperative to explore the theme of inclusion that underpins the educational strategies and policies in the state. The draft was made public by general education minister V Sivankutty. The paper unravels how the upcoming curriculum framework places a strong emphasis on inclusivity, fulfilling the various needs of students across Kerala. Primary focus in this paper to explore the key differences of KCF 2023 and NCF 2020 in terms class structure and age pre- requisite, universal access etc.

Key Benefits of Inclusive Education

- **Promotes Diversity:** Inclusive classrooms mirror the real world, allowing students to engage with peers from various backgrounds, cultivating empathy and understanding.
- **Enhances Learning:** Students in inclusive settings benefit from diverse perspectives, leading to enhanced critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- **Supports Personal Growth:** Positive self-image is fostered by inclusive education, which increases students' self-esteem and confidence.

Universal Design

NEP 2020 and KCF 2023 both designs a universal structure for education. while NEP suggests four stages of education vis Foundational Stage (3-8), Preparatory stage (9-11),Middle

stage (12-14) and Secondary stage (15-18), KCF 2023 draft suggests a design consists of 3 stages vis Child Development Stage (3-5), Primary Stage (6-12) and Secondary and higher secondary stage (13-17).

Multilingual Education

According to NEP 2020, till 5th Grade, and ideally up to 8th Grade, the medium of instruction will be the student's native tongue, home language, or local language. Following this, Public and private schools will strive to teach the home or local language as often as possible. Both the state and federal governments need to put up a lot of effort to hire a sizable number of teachers of all regional languages spoken across the nation. Each state in India has the option to enter into specific bilateral contracts to recruit additional teachers from other states. These agreements would ensure the effective implementation of the three-language formula within their respective states and promote the study of Indian languages throughout the country. Students who learn in their local or home language will start studying science and mathematics in a bilingual format by Grade 6, enabling them to discuss science and other subjects in both their home language and English by the end of Grade 9. Recognizing the linguistic diversity in Kerala, KCF 2023 draft also emphasizes the importance of multilingual education. Students are encouraged to learn and appreciate multiple languages, fostering a sense of cultural pride and inclusivity. At the same time, it suggests mother tongue will be the medium of instruction.

Curriculum

NEP 2020 affirms that a new inclusive school curriculum will be developed with the help of well-trained teachers, social workers and counsellors. This curriculum is designed to instill values like “respect for all persons, empathy, tolerance, human rights, gender equality, non-violence, global citizenship and inclusion and equity” (NEP 2020). To cultivate respect to diversity, the curriculum incorporates knowledge regarding different cultures, religions, gender identities and languages. Similarly, KCF 2023 draft proposes a uniform curriculum for pre school education across the state, giving onus on gender equality and gender justice. It stipulates that the preschool textbooks should comprise 85% of pictorial representation. It can be reduced to 70%, at the primary level, further to 40% and 20% at the upper primary and higher secondary level. More than that it advocates an inclusive curriculum and a classroom which should have representation of tribal and transgender people.

Integration of Children with Special Educational Needs

"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" according to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016 defines inclusive education (RPWD ACT 2016). To achieve this goal, schools and school complexes will be provided with resources to support the integration of students with disabilities. Special educators with expertise in various disabilities will be hired, and resource centers will be established, if needed, specifically for students with severe or multiple disabilities. The RPWD Act will enable unrestricted access for all children with disabilities. The requirements of children with disabilities vary depending on their category. In order to ensure the

inclusion and full participation of every child with a disability, schools and school complexes will receive support.

The goal of India's educational system must be to help all children, regardless of their background or place of birth, so that no child is denied the chance to learn and achieve. This Policy restates that a primary goal of all education sector development programs will remain the reduction of disparities in school enrollment, participation, and learning outcomes among different social categories (NEP 2020). Anganwadi Centers will be refurbished with first-rate play equipment, certified teachers, and first-rate infrastructure in order to offer ECCE to all children. Within school complexes, these fully integrated, kid-friendly, well-ventilated buildings will be open to Anganwadi children, parents, and teachers.

KCF 2023 draft also proposes a uniform structure for Pre-School education and recommends a pre school education between the age of 3 to 5 years. It implies that facilitates the advancement of the comprehensive child development there might be a focus on engaging families and communities in early childhood care and education. The framework includes provisions for preschool teachers to obtain accessibility to professional development opportunities that aim to enhance their knowledge, skills, and competencies in inclusive practices.

Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups

The term "socio-economically disadvantaged groups" (SEDGs) refers to a wide range of people, particularly women and transgender people. The SEDGs include the disadvantaged

groups like SC's, ST's, OBC's and other minorities, broadly termed as socio-cultural identities, it also includes people with learning disabilities, students from small towns or villages, or people belonging to certain socio-economic conditions like migrant workers, victims of child trafficking, poor income households, child beggars, etc. Although it is well-established that overall student enrolment declines gradually from 1th Grade till 12th Grade, The decline is particularly noticeable in the SEDG categories mentioned earlier, with a greater decrease in the number of female students among all these categories.

The underrepresentation of certain groups in the Indian educational system is acknowledged by NEP 2020. The socio-cultural identities that fall under each of these SEDGs and are frequently even steeper in higher education can be used to classify socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) in general. This is especially true for gender identities, particularly those of women and transgender people (NEP 2020). NEP 2020 recommends an array of policies and programs, include targeted scholarships, conditional cash transfers, rewards for parents who send their kids to school, the provision of bicycles for transportation, etc., to address these disparities and access concerns.

Kerala curriculum 2023 draft emphasizes the creation of inclusive classrooms environments where all children feel welcomed, respected and valued. It advocates some strategies such as flexible grouping, collaborative learning and positive behavior support to make this possible in real classroom. The curriculum framework may advocate for individualized support and differentiated instruction to cater the unique needs of each child. This include the provision of specialized services, adaptations, and accommodations as necessary.

NEP 2020 recommends a continuous support for children with learning disabilities. The policy ensures proper training for teachers for early identification and interventions. It ensures the availability of assistive technology for their own development at their own pace. For proper assessment and certification centres like PARAKH will be established and they provide proper tools and guidelines for such assessment.

The KCF Framework 2023 draft recommends some kind of arrangements to make use of virtual reality and augmented reality in schools. It says that technology can also help in providing education suited to the potential level of students. It is highly beneficial to the differently abled students in inclusive classrooms. It also recommends some kinds of interactive digital textbooks which are disabled friendly. It suggests various assessments modes like projects, seminars, discussions, interviews, report etc.

Conclusion

In brief , the adoption of inclusive education practices, as defined by the NEP 2020 and KCF 2023, represents an important milestone in meeting the various vivid learning needs of students in the modern era. By promoting inclusivity, these frameworks foster holistic development in addition to academic , achievements, make sure that all children, regardless of background or aptitude , have way to high- quality instruction and growth opportunities. We hope this impact of inclusive education initiates extends for beyond the classroom, contributing the creation of a more equitable and inclusive society.

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