

# GOALS OF NEP 2020 REGARDING EQUITY AND INCLUSION

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## Abstract

*In India's educational environment, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 signifies a paradigm shift toward the development of an inclusive, egalitarian, and learner-centered system. The goal of the policy is to remove long-standing obstacles that have traditionally prevented some communities from receiving high-quality education. It is based on the understanding that education is not only a tool for personal growth but also a vital instrument for guaranteeing social justice, equality, and national development. NEP 2020 aims to establish routes that ensure no child is left behind, irrespective of gender, socioeconomic background, geographic location, disability, or language identity, by integrating inclusion at the core of its vision.*

*From early childhood care and education to higher education and lifetime learning, the policy lays out a thorough and multidimensional framework to promote fairness and inclusion at all educational levels. By guaranteeing that every child has the chance to enroll and continue their education until at least the secondary level, with special consideration given to underrepresented and disadvantaged groups, it places a high priority on universal access. This covers initiatives like open schooling systems, scholarships, gender inclusion grants, and infrastructural assistance for rural and indigenous communities.*

*Targeted assistance for marginalized and socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), such as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), minorities, and children with disabilities, is a fundamental component of the NEP. In order to guarantee that education appeals to students from a variety of backgrounds, the policy addresses systemic disparities and highlights the significance of flexible curricula, culturally sensitive pedagogy, and locally relevant learning.*

*The importance of linguistic diversity in fostering inclusivity is also emphasized by the NEP. Understanding the close relationship between language and identity, it promotes multilingualism to promote inclusion and national cohesion while also supporting the use of the mother tongue or regional language as the primary language of teaching until at least Grade 5.*

*The policy also recognizes the revolutionary potential of technology in closing quality and access disparities. NEP 2020 envisions a future where all learners can take advantage of innovations in educational delivery by investing in accessible technologies for learners with disabilities, fostering digital literacy, and growing online education platforms. In addition, it emphasizes professional development and teacher training, giving teachers the knowledge and empathy they need to create inclusive classrooms that value and celebrate difference.*

*Essentially, NEP 2020 adopts a comprehensive, adaptable, and inclusive approach to education, moving away from a one-size-fits-all strategy. Its main goal is to provide an educational system that equips students to become responsible, compassionate, and involved citizens in addition to imparting information and skills. The goal of the strategy is to make India's educational system a truly democratic place where all students have the chance to succeed by combining equity, inclusion, and excellence.*

**Keywords :** National Education Policy 2020, NEP, Equity, Inclusion, Disadvantaged Groups, Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), Universal Access, Multilingualism, Teacher Training, Digital Education, Social justice, Equality, Marginalized communities, Gender inclusion, Infrastructure support, Scholarships, Open schooling, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Minorities, Children with disabilities, Culturally responsive pedagogy, Linguistic diversity, Mother

*tongue / regional language, Multilingualism, Digital literacy, Online education, Holistic education, Learner-centered system.*

## **Introduction**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 by the Government of India is a historic reform to establish an intellectual, inclusive, equal and accessible system of education to all students, in addition to being a truly revolutionary one. A generational change in the vision of education, the National Policy on Education (NEP 2020), a successor to the National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986, 34 years old, moves India in line with the demands of the twenty-first century. Importantly, the policy is quite consistent with the UN 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development: the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) asks nations to ensure equitable access to and high-quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities to everyone. This fact reflects the commitment of India to education as one of the national priorities, and as a universal right in the world community.

It is well anchored in the notion that education is a powerful means of social change and extends beyond structural changes. NEP 2020 puts education at the heart of building a just and equitable society by explicitly stating in its words that education is the one most effective instrument in achieving social justice and equality. This perspective recognizes that the benefits of education extend far beyond individual development; the impact is ripple-like, reducing the gap, removing structural barriers, and opening the gates that allow group progress.

In this regard, the NEP has been very keen on offering universal learning opportunities to ensure each child and adult receives the instruments they require to perform positively regardless of their socioeconomic status, caste, gender, religion, geography, and ability. In addition to access, the focus is on the equity of experience and outcomes, where students do not only exist within the system but are provided with the instruments they require to succeed within the system.

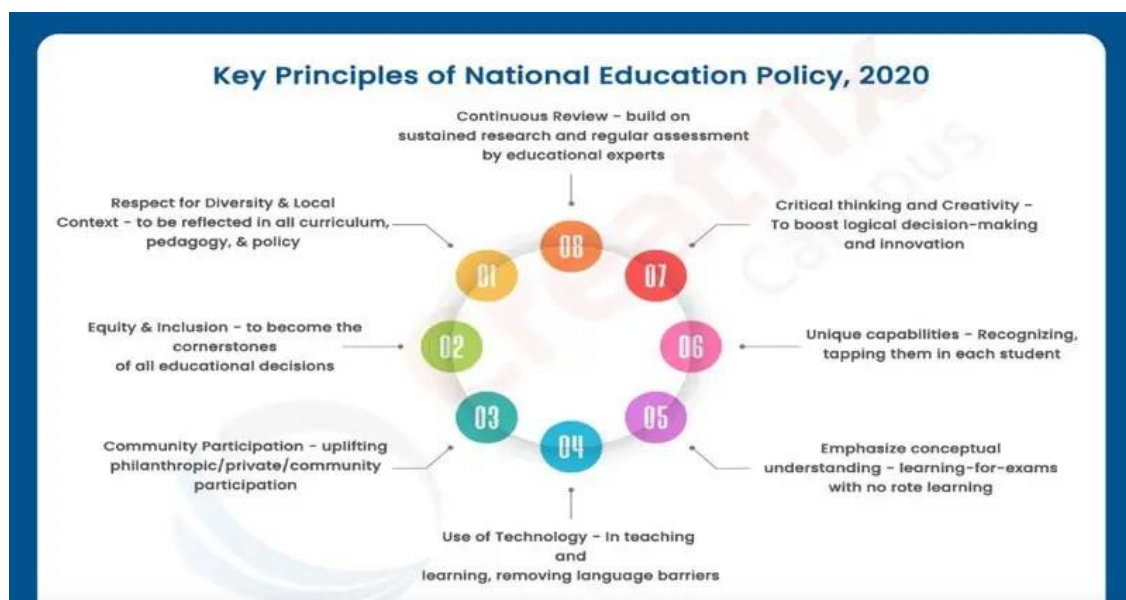
By placing social justice, inclusion and equality at the centre of NEP 2020, India will be where education is a great equalizer, leveling differences, embracing diversity, and developing a generation of learners capable of making meaningful contributions to society. In so doing, it highlights the value of education as a collective responsibility and basic right that is central to the values of democracy and the development aspirations of India.

## **Core Principles and Vision for Equity and Inclusion**

The NEP 2020 is built on foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability, and Accountability. Regarding equity and inclusion, its core vision includes:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provides a solid foundation of equitable and inclusive education system by identifying various fundamental principles. One, it promotes Universal Access and Participation by seeking to ensure that all children, irrespective of their backgrounds, including those with disabilities and those who belong to marginalized communities, have the primary right to quality education, both in the form of early childhood care and education (ECCE) and higher education. Secondly, the policy will Bridging Social and Economic Gaps: it will be proactive in reducing disparities in access, participation, and learning outcomes that occur due to multiple socio-economic, cultural, and geographical divides. Third, the NEP focuses on Holistic Development, which supports a holistic education that fosters not only cognitive capabilities, but also critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and ethical principles, thus enabling everyone to reach his or her own potential. Finally, it promotes the

creation of Flexible and Inclusive Learning Environments, through developing flexible and responsive learning environments, which not only serve all students, but also those with disabilities and students with different languages. The following figure shows the key postulates of NEP 2020.



### Targeted Interventions for Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGS)

The NEP 2020 refers to Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) as one of the problem areas that will be the focus of interventions. These organizations are widely divided according to.

NEP 2020 focuses on inclusion and the needs of the socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). These are groups with different identities, including gender identities, especially female and transgender identity; socio-cultural identities, including Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and minority geographical identities, e.g. students in villages, small towns, aspirational districts and remote areas; and different types of disabilities e.g. learning disabilities. The policy will also focus on the disadvantaged in the social-economic context, including migrant communities, low-income households, urban poor, orphans, and children under vulnerable situations such as trafficking victims.

The policy contains specific measures to help these groups. Such incentives increased financial aid by providing scholarships, and encouraging the provision of free ships and scholarships by private institutions of higher learning. They propose conditional cash transfers, and other incentives, including provision of transport facilities like bicycles to ensure that disadvantaged family students attend and retain school. The NEP 2020 also presents Special Education Zones (SEZs) in regions where the concentrations of SEDGs are high, wherein the policies will be applied with increased attention and emphasis. In addition, the policy suggests some adjustments in the curriculum and pedagogy, which is more flexible and multidisciplinary (including arts, crafts, humanities, sports, languages, values, etc.), which makes education more inclusive and relevant.

To tackle the existing disparities at an early age, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) should be universalized so that children in deprived communities aged between 3 and 6 years will get basic learning opportunities. In parallel with this, development of infrastructure is prioritized, with a particular focus on the establishment of educational facilities in underserved and rural communities, complete with disabled-friendly facilities. Lastly, NEP suggests bridge courses and other academic support to disadvantaged students to bridge the learning gap and to simplify the transitional process through the levels of education. These overall strategies indicate the desire of NEP 2020 to be equitable and thus to establish a learning environment which recognizes, values, and promotes diversity.

## **Addressing Specific Dimensions of Inclusion**

### **Children with Disabilities (CwD)**

NEP 2020 embraces the commitment to mainstream education of children with disabilities (CwD). It also highlights the significance of delivering the high-quality teaching and personalized intervention, along with the properly designed support systems, in the inclusive classes. Teachers have an extremely important role to play in this change and the policy places a lot of emphasis on thorough training of teachers who must learn how to identify early learning deficiencies and how to meet the needs of the various learners. Learning materials and classroom environments that comprehensively address multiple disabilities are promoted and available through assistive technologies. The deficiency of trained personnel is also identified by the policy and as such it has proposed the implementation of special educators in every school complex. It will allow freedom and quality to children with benchmark disabilities by allowing home schooling opportunities. Additionally, NEP 2020 offered the National Assessment Centre- PARAKH that will focus on designing a comprehensive and fair assessment framework, specifically to offer sufficient support to kids with learning disabilities.

### **Gender Equity**

NEP 2020 suggests several interventions to eliminate the problem of persistent gender gaps in education. Gender gaps in school enrollment and retention are expected to be significantly reduced by the continued support and upgrade of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) which are residential schools of girls belonging to disadvantaged groups including SC, ST, OBC, minority groups, and families below poverty line (BPL). Also, the policy emphasizes the need to establish healthy and conducive learning conditions among girls in every learning institution. In plans such as Samagra Shiksha 2.0, NEP proposes special funding and special interventions that are specifically aimed at girls and other socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs).

### **Linguistic Diversity and Multilingualism**

NEP 2020 identifies the linguistic diversity that India is blessed with as a core strength of the country and suggests a structure of education that fosters the concept of multilingualism. One of the most critical suggestions is offering the lessons in the native or local language, particularly in the initial years (up to Grade 5) to facilitate or promote understanding, overcome learning barriers, and develop higher order cognition. In addition to the initial years, the policy helps to learn more than one language that not only facilitates academic development but also helps to understand other people and be united as one nation. Moreover, NEP proposes the

standardization of Indian Sign Language (ISL) and its inclusion in the school curriculum as the means of providing an inclusive learning opportunity to deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

### **Digital Inclusion**

In an ever-digitizing world, NEP 2020 recognizes the dire necessity to close the digital divide to enable equitable access to education opportunities. The policy suggests that it should utilize technology to offer digital and online education, particularly to students in distant, rural, underserved areas, and students with physical or economic limitations. It promotes designing inclusive digital platforms and tools that can be accessed by all learners (including those with disabilities). Universal access to devices, connectivity, and digital literacy are considered key to the democratization of education in the 21st century.

### **Implementation Strategies and Monitoring**

Equity and inclusion objectives of NEP 2020 will depend on the implementation of effective and receptive implementation systems. The continuous professional development and training of educators to deliver inclusive pedagogical practices and sensitize them to the needs of diverse learners (and learners with marginalized backgrounds specifically) is a fundamental pillar. Community involvement is also vital because it encourages community stakeholders, parents, and civil society to participate in integrating the children into the learning environment. NEP 2020 promotes decentralization of administration and responsibility too to allow the local education authorities and educational institutions to adapt implementation plans to local conditions and perform best. Evidence-based solutions are necessary because one has to determine the needs of Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) and to meet their needs, one has to collect the data correctly and track student progress and development systematically. Lastly, the policy emphasizes the importance of greater government investment in education, pledging to increase it to 6 percent of GDP as a precondition to creating a high-quality, inclusive, and equitable education system throughout the nation.

### **Challenges and Future Directions**

Although NEP 2020 is a broad and ambitious document on how equity and inclusion in education can be realized, there are challenges critical to its successful implementation. Funding is one of the top priorities since the broad reforms and specific interventions provided by the policy demand continuous and significant financial support. Concurrently, there is a need to centralize the development of infrastructure especially in remote and underserved areas so that every student can access safe, inclusive, and well-equipped learning spaces. Another significant challenge is teacher capacity building, as the number of able educators is simply enormous, and needs to be trained and sensitized to inclusive practices. Moreover, the digital divide remains a major issue, particularly among students in rural and disadvantaged regions who do not have access to reliable access to technology, connectivity, or digital literacy. Attitudinal barriers are also still present, as some of the most ingrained societal prejudices against marginalized groups, such as those with disabilities, can be a barrier to inclusive efforts. Lastly, we need well-developed mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the effects of the policies on these groups are monitored and that implementation gaps are identified and addressed promptly. These are the challenges that must be overcome in order to translate the inclusive vision of the policy into practical change on the ground. The NEP 2020 highlights were as described below.



## Conclusion

The National Education Policy 2020 demonstrates a large investment in delivering an inclusive and equitable education system in India. The plan creates a firm foundation of a more equal and inclusive society through a focus on universal access, specific support of different disadvantaged groups, multilingualism, and technology and teacher preparation. In a bid to ensure that all the kids are given the opportunity to learn and excel government, learning institutions, civil societies, and communities should collaborate in a manner that helps to effectively translate this into reality.

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