



Inclusion in Higher Education Institutions with reference to NEP 2020: An overview

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Abstract: In the present paper various aspects and current position of inclusion in higher education have been explored. Inclusion is an associated part of education from primary to higher level. Various provisions have been done in recent years and in NEP 2020 for inclusion in higher education institutions. The AISHE data shows decrease in enrolment of PWD students from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021. Emphasis on changes in Higher Education Institutions is required for inclusion according to the NEP 2020. These changes are related to physical, emotional and social accommodation of students with special needs. Social acceptance is a major aspect for inclusion. Higher education institutions can play an important role to imparting inclusion in society. Higher education is related to productivity, employability and empowerment. Inclusive education in higher education institutions can make a person more confident and independent. Many policies, schemes and other supports are provided by government for the pursuance of higher education. In new education policy 2020 also envisions the values of equality and justice to all. Everyone has a right to get barrier free higher education.

Key words: Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Students with Special Need (SwSN), PWD act 2016

Introduction:

The development of a modern society depends to a large extent on the nature and standard of higher education. The role of higher education is to prepare competent, knowledgeable and far-sighted people for assuming various higher responsibilities. The growing importance of knowledge in the modern world can hardly be overemphasized, especially in the era of globalization and in a global environment which is fiercely competitive. Particularly, higher education has enormous potential to promote prosperity in the developing nation (UGC,2006).

University is an apex body to illuminate the life of every individual with the light of knowledge. University is place where knowledge is generated and transmitted to other higher education institution and the society. Human is a social animal. For their better development they need social life and a society. Education and society always affect each other that's why both are necessary for the development of a country. University, higher education institutions and schools are reflection of society. A lack of diversity within the university community limits the educational opportunities and challenges available for students. Now inclusion is not a new term to introduce but in Higher Education Institutions it appears newly. In India very for the first time any concern about disabled persons shown by national education policy 1986. When special education was in progress. But the drawback of special education was it cut off an individual from the family and society. The Salamanca Statement (1993) focuses on inclusivity in education. Initiative taken in Salamanca Statement profoundly impacted the inclusivity in all the institutions from pre-primary to higher education level. A new concept is introduced to overcome with this, is inclusive education. In this new concept student is not like a problem but problem is whole education system which is not able to adopt and adjust with a special need student. There is a need to develop an education system which may fulfil the need of everyone. The philosophy of inclusive education believes in equal competency of each student with and without special need or disability. The success of inclusion depends on the acceptance of students of special needs along with their differences. In an inclusive setup everyone should be able to feel connected with one another and is given equal respect, support and encouragement to participate in the classroom. Inclusive education is not only for the students with special needs it is also for to sensitize the other students towards the problems and challenges faced by students with special needs.

Purpose:

The main purpose of writing this research paper is to know the periphery of inclusion in Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) in NEP 2020 and to understand inclusion in the context of students with special need (SwSN) in terms of disabilities and also to highlight the necessary transformations to adopt inclusion in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Methodology:

The methodology for this paper is conceptual discussion of the main points of new education policy 2020 focusing on inclusion in higher education institution. Analysis of the policies and their implications in new education policy 2020 by focused group discussion and searching the other literature in books, acts and on websites.

Meaning of inclusive education:

Inclusion in education means all the students in the same umbrella of education, which means in same classroom, same teacher and same institution from where they are traditionally excluded from mainstream of education. It includes students with special needs, schedule castes, schedule tribes, transgender, women, students with disabilities, language etc. In another way we can say that an education system that welcomes all the students and supports them to learn well, whoever they are and whatever their abilities or requirements are. This inclusion wants changes in education system according to the need of an individual. This is the responsibility of the system to make sure that teaching and the curriculum, campus, building of institute, classrooms, play grounds, transport and toilets are appropriate for all students at all levels. The purpose of Inclusive education means all students learn together in the same institution and no one should be excluded including students with disabilities.

Inclusion in NEP 2020:

Inclusion is for equity. India is a country of diversity; diversity in terms of food, culture, language, socio-economic status etc. New education policy 2020 has focus on accessibility and equity. Now what does equity means? Equity can be explained with a simple example. Suppose there are three students in a class and they are asked to observe a building from the window and write five lines on that building. These three students are of different heights and the one below the height of the window won't be able to see the building outside the window. Here there is requirement of implementing an inclusion so that all the three students can view the building equally. Why inclusive education is important to incorporate in colleges and other higher education institutions? There are three major cases which make inclusive education important-

The educational case: all students learn effectively with one another or together.

The social case: it contributes to more inclusive societies.

The economic case: it is cost effective

All India survey on higher education (AISHE) 2019-2020 and 2020-21 shows the enrolment of person with disabilities in higher education. There were 92,831 PWD students enrolled in higher education. Out of which 47,830 were male and 45,001 were female students in 2019-2020. Social Group wise distribution of PWD student is Female participation students is highest in ST group with 119 females per 100 males followed by SC (78). In the year 2020-2021 there were 79,035 PWD students enrolled in higher education, out of which 49,334 were male and 29,701 were female students.

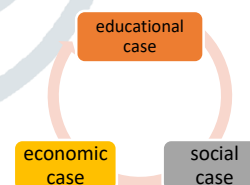


Table-1

Enrolment of PWD students in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 in higher education institutions-

Year	2019-2020	2020-2021
Total PWD students	92,831	79,035
Male PWD students	47,830	49,334
Female PWD students	45,001	29,701

In the session 2020-2021 there is a decrease in PWD students as compared to the session 2019-2020. There is an upsurge in the number of PWD students while the number of female PWD students have decreased drastically from session 2019-2020 to 2020-2021.

Table -2

Representation of Persons with Disabilities (PWD) students in 2020-2021

Social group wise distribution			
Category	% Out of total PWD		
	Male	Female	All
SC	8.2	8.3	8.3
ST	3.0	3.3	3.2
OBC	32.3	23.6	29.0
General	56.5	64.7	59.5
EWS (out of general)	2.9	4.5	3.5

The percentage of male and female PWD students in SC and ST category in the session 2020-2021 is comparable while in OBC the female PWD students are significantly less than male PWD students. However, in general and EWS category the number of female PWD students are significantly more than the male PWD students.

Periphery of inclusion:

Inclusion in education paves the way for achieving the goal of social justice and equality. In an inclusive society every individual has an opportunity to dream, thrive and contribute to the society and nation. There are many factors which hamper the inclusion of every individual in the society as communicational, cultural, economic, environmental, political, social etc. This new education policy 2020 has envision of a quality higher education to all. Higher education enables a person to accomplish and enlighten and productive contribution to the society. Higher education must provide the base for generation of knowledge and innovation to contribute in the economy of country. In new education policy 2020 inclusion is for SEDGs (Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups). SEDGs can be broadly categorized as follows:

1. Gender identities
2. Socio-cultural identities
3. Geographical identities
4. Disabilities
5. Socio-economic conditions

Gender identities include female and transgender individuals. Inclusion of transgender is unique because it is first time that any policy is concerned about transgender. Socio-culture identities consider scheduled caste, scheduled tribes, OBCs and minorities. Student belonging to villages, small towns and aspirational districts come under geographical identities. Disabled students which include having disabilities in learning. At last, the migrant's community, low-income households, children of victims of trafficking, orphans, children from urban beggars and urban poor are included under socio-economic condition group. All these groups are covered under inclusion at all levels of education from pre-primary to higher education.

Students with special needs in terms of disabilities:

A considerable size of total population suffers from various kind of disabilities. The causes may be different, either congenital, natural, catastrophes and man-made disorders etc. In very simple words a student with special needs is one who may have problems in thinking, seeing, hearing, speaking socially and moving independently. In India every person has a right to live a life with dignity and respect. PWD act 2016 provides the various rights to receive barrier free education, right of protection and safety, accessibility in voting, access to justice etc. but the most important right is right of equality and non-discrimination to provide a life with dignity and respect to a person with disability. The preamble of this act clearly states that it aims to uphold the dignity of every Person with Disability (PWD) in the society and prevent any form of discrimination. The act also facilitates full acceptance of people with disability and ensures full participation and inclusion of such persons in the society. According to PWD act 2016 "person with disability" means a person with long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others.

Meaning of inclusive education in PWD act 2016

“Inclusive education” means a 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.

- It improves learning for all students – both those with and without disabilities.
- It promotes understanding, reduces prejudice and strengthens social integration.
- It ensures that children with disabilities are equipped to work and contribute economically and socially to their communities.

Changes to adopt inclusion in Higher Education Institutions according to NEP 2020:

Inclusion is different from integration because inclusion emphasis on the changes in education system for making an inclusive setup and environment. Some more important steps should be taken by all higher education institutions to make themselves welcoming for inclusion. These steps are as follows:

- (a) In many higher education institutions, the course fee is much higher especially in private institutes which inhibits inclusive education, therefore, for increasing inclusion in HEI's all higher education institutions should lower down their fees for pursuing higher education and increase enrollment.
- (b) NEP 2020 along with UNESCO World Higher Education Conference (WHEC 2022) have suggested financial support to youth from low-income families (including scholarships) to promote students with special needs for higher education provide more financial assistance and scholarships to them.
- (c) Conduct outreach programme for promoting inclusion in higher education through creating new opportunities and scholarships and also making aware of the available opportunities and scholarships.
- (d) Make admissions processes more inclusive by making the admission process biasness free and through awareness to applicants, their family members and supporters about new government schemes and policies for promoting higher education.
- (e) Make curriculum more inclusive by making important changes in course and modification in its deliverability which will attract more and more students in a positive way. Elam, Carol; Brown, Gilbert in his paper include that to make institute inclusive it is necessary that students know about different people and their culture for that they must understand, appreciate, and value contributions of different peoples from divergent backgrounds. This provides positive educational benefits pertaining to cognitive and personal development. Curriculum to know the importance of every student should be encouraged to study other cultures, in context, to learn about the perspectives of others who live outside their experience.
- (f) Inclusion in higher education accomplish with empowerment in terms of employment. There are many courses in higher education which has no or very low employability potential. There is a need to increase higher education programmes having enough potential to generate new jobs possibilities and include self-employability with less input and easy accessibility.
- (g) Language is the means of communication but it is like a barrier for inclusion. Many students do not pursue their education due to language difference. In higher education institutions generally medium of instruction is English language. Many books and literature are available in English language. Books and important literature should be translated in Indian languages. That's why inclusion can also be promoted by developing more degree courses taught in Indian languages and bilingually. This should be assured that language is not a barrier in pursuance of a particular course.
- (h) Ensure all premises, campus, buildings and faculties are should be wheelchair and tricycle accessible. Physically disabled friendly motor bikes riding facilities from entry gate to classroom should be available there. These are the basic needs for inclusion in every higher education institution. This will not only increase enrollment number but will also facilitate in creating a healthy and better environment for the disabled ones.
- (i) Development of bridge courses for students that come from disadvantaged educational backgrounds. This will facilitate in completing the courses for untimely dropouts which will in turn attract a particular group of applicants leading to increase in inclusion.

(j) Awareness in society about inclusion is very important. Everyone has equal right to live a respectful life and contribute in the progress of society according to their capability. Sensitization for inclusion should be started from an intellectual to a common person. Ensure sensitization of faculty, counsellor, and students on gender-identity issue, students with special needs and other issues and its inclusion in all aspects of the higher education institutions.

(k) Every higher education institution has to follow strictly no-discrimination and anti-harassment rules. This will make a more inclusion environment for all the students which are coming from different demographical areas, different culture, different language, and are differently abled in their way.

Conclusion:

Inclusive classrooms offer a glut of advantages for students with and without disabilities. By introducing certain teaching methods and adapting the instruction to improve access, students can have better educational experience. According to Alur, “The inclusion of students of special needs into mainstream of education will inevitably result in their acceptance into society and also within their own families many of whom still hide away children with disabilities. If all children grow up together there is less likelihood of resistance towards and ostracism of the disabled. The character of children, the nation's classrooms, and of society itself will become more compassionate and caring”. NEP 2020 includes human values and respect to all, like empathy tolerance, gender equality, non-violence etc. We must understand the basic philosophy of ancient Indian civilization and inherent acceptance of diversity along with the integration of technology to achieve the goals of NEP 2020. David Mitchell (1999) advised some changes in curriculum that brings a big change in the inclusive education. They suggested that curriculum should be accessible for all and it also develops social skills to reduce or eliminate disruptive behaviour. All in all, inclusive ambiance can help cultivate a feeling of fellowship and acceptance, allowing for a more fulfilling learning experience.

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