

Empowering Deprived
through Education

NEP-2020

Insights and Inputs



Vidya Bharati
Uchh Shiksha
Sansthan (VBUSS)
Noida



Indira Gandhi
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Prestige Institute
of Management
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(PIMR), Indore



“Educate and raise the masses, and thus
alone a nation is possible.”

- **Swami Vivekanand**

*(The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda
by Swami Vivekananda, Volume 8, Epistles - Fourth Series)*



“Purpose of Education is to moralize and
socialize the people.”

- **Dr. B. R. Ambedkar**

(B.R.Ambedkar: Writing and Speeches, Vol. 2-p-39)



A Report based on Brainstorming Consultation workshop

“This brainstorming was organised by Vidya Bharati Uchha Shiksha Sansthan (VBUSS) in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU) Amarkantak, Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (BPSMV), Sonapat, Prestige Institute of Management and Research (PIMR), Indore on 26th June 2021.”

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We remain thankful to all the senior academicians, social workers and academic administrators for joining us in the consultation. We thank all the speakers who have shared their valuable comments and suggestions. Their suggestions will be of immense help in putting forth a recommendation on the SEDG which will be submitted to the concerned ministry. We also thank all the participants who joined the consultation.

We also thank the moderator of the sessions and the team involved in organizing the discussion. Special mention and thanks to the editorial team of this report who have done a wonderful job in compiling all the ideas, suggestions and reflections and bringing the report as a great piece.

Warm regards

Vidya Bharati
Uchcha Shiksha Sansthan
Noida, New Delhi

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to put forward the recommendations of the National Dialogue on Socio-Economic Disadvantage Groups (SEDGs) organized by Vidya Bharti Uccha Shiksha Sansthan (VBUSS) in collaboration with three premier educational institutes. Equity and inclusion in higher education have been given top priority in the National Education Policy - 2020. The policy envisions ensuring equitable access to quality education to all students with special attention to socially and economically disadvantaged groups. Implementation of such policies could be an important step towards the upliftment of both individuals and communities out of disadvantaged states. This could be achieved by providing quality education to all aspiring youth of all sections of society. Quality education includes both conventional/traditional and modern/contemporary knowledge including the Bharatiya ethos/ values of our society. Students should be exposed to a holistic personality development environment to develop/build all the capacities of doing things for themselves and society with a global outlook and vision. The objective of VBUSS is in tune with the recommendations of NEP - 2020. In this context, various deliberations of this nature are being organized by VBUSS. The

critical comments and recommendations that could be generated through this discussion are of prime importance. The creation of Special Educational Zones to create a homogenous condition of society is an important recommendation. This is significant given how it is planned to reach the marginalised sections. The mapping of SEZ may be through the involvement and participation of both state and communities. It would be a milestone towards transforming India into a Vibrant Knowledge Society. The recommendations of these deliberations are useful to both policy makers and stakeholders.

Dr Kailash Chandra Sharma
National President, VBUSS

VBUSS AND ABOUT 'MyNEP INITIATIVE'

Vidya Bharati Ucha Shisha Sansthan (VBUSS) is a voluntary organization working in the field of education with a primary focus on policy implementation and structural reforms in India's Higher Education landscape. Inspired by the Honourable Prime Minister's call to People to take 'collective responsibility' of implementing the National Education Policy in 'letter and spirit', VBUSS has been extensively engaged in creating awareness, facilitating implementation, policy intervention, consultation exercises on NEP 2020. An online competition was also organized by VBUSS in September and October month of the year 2020 to create awareness on the significance of NEP 2020 amongst the student and citizen group. The competition drew huge recognition and inspiration from different corners of India. Policymakers, academicians, celebrated personalities have extended their support and association in this campaign. A large number of students and citizen group of 17,34,694 participants had registered online for the competition. The competition was conducted in eight major Indian languages so to encourage participants from all corners of India. Further to creating awareness among stakeholder's and to organize citizen engagement programs, a dedicated news portal "MyNEP" has also been launched. This Portal aims in offering one-stop information on all the events, updates, communications related to the NEP 2020 implementation in India. Through this portal, it is envisioned to capture the minds and thought processes

of stakeholders towards NEP 2020. Educative and informative sessions are being arranged through interviews and webinars on the various dimensions of NEP 2020 implementation. The portal also highlights the important decisions and initiatives taken by the governing bodies like MoE, UGC and AICTE. It also portrays the best practices, policy implementation approach and initiatives taken by the institutions and the voluntary organizations in making NEP 2020 successful. VBUSS has organized a series of informative and tutorial sessions designed to address the technical and logistic challenges in implementing NEP 2020 at institutions. 36 such webinars were organized, addressed by experts in both the school and higher education segment. The subject of the webinars were aligned to the key areas as highlighted by the Ministry of Education, GoI. VBUSS deemed it fit to raise the concerns of possible challenges in implementing the policy. At the same time, it is pertinent to raise to the concerned agencies the present situation of the institution and gaps in implementing the policy in its letter and spirit. To understand the complexities and dynamics of structural reforms a well-thought exercise of addressing the critical challenges of policy implementation was initiated by VBUSS through interviews with subject/domain experts. During the interview, the experts were requested to address the questions related to policy implementation and provide a feasible road map of the implementation process. These interviews have helped the implementing institutions in a big way by acting as a ready reckoner and suggestions to some of the pain areas.

Shiksha Path Pradeepika (‘शिक्षा पथ प्रदीपिका’)

VBUSS has published a book titled “शिक्षा पथ प्रदीपिका”. This book is a compilation of webinars abstracts, interviews transcripts, expert’s opinions, articles on some of the important aspects of NEP 2020 implementation, policy research analysis on the gaps of the present status and envisioned policy intervention. This book is an ambitious product of VBUSS that has been brought out with deep concern to address the possible challenges that may arise

during implementation. The webinars and interviews addressed by the subject experts have been reflected in this book in the form of transcripts. Many senior and esteemed domain experts of the nation have echoed their views about NEP2020 in this book through articles and comments.

Regional Seminar on NEP 2020 and Transforming Teacher Education

VBUSS strongly believes that it is pertinent to address the issues of Teacher Education and also engage teachers and institutions in this thought process of policy implementation across the country. With this view, a series of regional seminars on NEP 2020 and transforming teacher education were organized across the country in collaboration with the host institutions, colleges and universities. 24 such seminars were organized across the country on a similar theme.

National Seminar on Rejuvenation of the Teacher Education in 21st Century

As a culmination of thought process and synthesizing of diverse ideas a national seminar on “Rejuvenation of Teacher Education” was organized on 5th & 6th of May 2020 at Bhopal. The idea of this seminar was to bring to fore various ideas and concerns that were deliberated in the regional seminars. The seminar witnessed the participation of more than 200 faculty members from nearly 50 colleges/universities across India.

VBUSS INITIATIVES on VIRTUAL CONSULTATIONS

VBUSS is also playing a crucial and participatory role in contributing ideas and shouldering into building a foundation in establishing some of the administrative bodies that are advocated under NEP 2020. VBUSS has formed a working group that will conduct wide consultation and discussion on the structural reforms on the proposed institutions under NEP 2020. It has been planned to organize discussion/consultation on the important areas as mentioned below:

- Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)
- National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)
- National Research Foundation (NRF)
- Socio-Economic Disadvantage Groups (SEDG)
- National Higher Education Regulatory Council
- National Accreditation Council
- Higher Education Grants Council
- General Education Council
- Academic Bank Credit
- Promotion of Indian Knowledge System
- Education in Mother Tongue

We are working to organize these discussion/consultation in collaboration with a reputed university and institute of national importance. The outcome of these deliberations will be submitted to the concerned ministry and agencies in the form of a memorandum for necessary action and consideration.

VIRTUAL CONSULTATION WORKSHOP ON SEDG AND NEP-2020

Vidya Bharati Uchh Shiksha Sansthan(VBUSS), New Delhi in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU) Amarkantak, Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (BPSMV), Sonapat, Prestige Institute of Management and Research (PIMR), Indore' organised a virtual brain storming consultation workshop on SEDG and NEP 2020 under its "MYNEP programme". This workshop was attended by eminent academicians, educational leaders, social activists and policy makers working in the area of education and SEDG communities. The virtual consultation was organised on June 26, 2021, 10:30 am to 2:00 pm.

Participants, Dignitaries and Speakers

Many important educationists, policy makers, educational leaders academicians and social activist participated in the workshop. Among them five Vice- Chancellors, four eminent educational Administrators, five Deans and Head of the Departments of various universities and Institutes, four Directors, four social activists, three organizing secretaries of various social and educational organizations and many eminent academicians of various university centres and institutes of Higher education of the country attended the workshop. Some of the well known academicians and educational leaders like Prof Badri Narayan, Director, G.B. Pant Social Science Institute Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, Shri Harsh Chouhan, Chairperson, National Commission for Scheduled

Tribes, Prof Siddaraju, Member, University Grants Commission, Prof. Prakash Mani Tripathi, Vice-Chancellor, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU), Amarkantak, Shri. Anil Vajpayee, CEO, Prestige Institute of Management and Research (PIMR), Indore, Shri. Kedar Arvind Kulkarni, Sanghathan Mantri, Kalyan Ashram Manipur, Shri. Girish Prabune, Social Activist and Educationist, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, Transgender/ Hijra rights activist, Prof Kiran Hazarika, Member, Principal, University Grants Commission, Tengakhat College, Dibrugarh, Shir. Prafulla Akant, National Joint Organising Secretary, Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad, Prof. T. V. Kattimani, Vice-Chancellor, Central Tribal University, Andhra Pradesh, Prof. Sushma Yadav, Vice-Chancellor, Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya, Sonapat, Dr Ramanand Pandey, Director, Center of Policy Research and Governance, New Delhi, Kamalakant Pandey, Sakshama, Prof. E. Suresh Kumar, Vice-Chancellor, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, Dr. Sanjeev K Ningombam, Centre Coordinator, Dr. APJ Centre for Policy Research and Analysis, , IIM Shillong, Sh. Prakash Chandra, Organising Secretary, VBUSS, Sh. K.N Raghunandan, Joint Organising Secretary, VBUSS, Dr. Kailash Sharma, President, VBUSS, Dr. Manjushree Sardeshpande, Vice-President, VBUSS, Dr. Murli Manohar P, Member, VBUSS, Prof. Ipshita Bansal, Dean, Students' Welfare, Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (BPSMV), Sonapat, Dr. Ashok Verma, Assistant Professor, Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (BPSMV), Sonapat, Prof. Awadhesh Kumar Shukla, Professor & Head, Department of Botany, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU), Amarkantak, Prof. Alok Shrotriya., Director (Academic & Research), Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU), Amarkantak, Dr Anukool Manish Hyde, Professor and Head, HR & General Management,, Prestige Institute of Management and Research (PIMR), Indore, Dr Rupal Chowdhary, Associate Professor in Economics, From Prestige Institute of Management and Research (PIMR), Indore. Many other scholars participated as audience and contributed by their questions and comments on the NEP-2020.

Defining SEDG: Features and Futures

NEP creates a category “SEDG”, i.e. Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups, and includes minorities in it, besides SCs, STs, OBC, etc. ‘Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) can be broadly categorized based on gender identities (particularly female and transgender individuals), socio-cultural identities (such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, and minorities), geographical identities (such as students from villages, small towns, and aspiring districts), disabilities (including learning disabilities), and socio-economic conditions (such as migrant communities, low-income households, children in vulnerable situations, victims of or children of victims of trafficking, orphans including child beggars in urban areas, and the urban poor), (NEP-2020, 6.2, p.24). Since the existing educational system already has continuing provisions for SC, ST, OBC, and girls, the purpose of creating this new category “SEDG” is to bring out various marginalised groups together which may help in cohesive and equal educational planning. The NEP-2020 reiterates that while the Indian education system and successive government policies have made steady progress towards bridging gender and social category gaps in all levels of school education. Large disparities remain at the secondary level particularly for socio-economically disadvantaged groups that have been historically underrepresented in education while overall enrolments in schools decline steadily from Grade 1 to Grade 12. This decline in enrolments is significantly more pronounced for many of these SEDGs, with even greater declines for female students within each of these SEDGs and often even steeper in higher education.

A multiplicity of factors, including lack of access to quality schools, poverty, social mores & customs, and language have had a detrimental effect on rates of enrolment and retention among the Scheduled Castes. Bridging these gaps in access, participation, and learning outcomes of children belonging to Scheduled Castes will continue to be one of the major goals. Also, the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) which have been identified based on historically being socially and educationally backwards need special focus.

Tribal communities and children from Scheduled Tribes also face disadvantages at multiple levels due to various historical and geographical factors. Children from tribal communities often find their school education irrelevant and foreign to their lives, both culturally and academically. While several programmatic interventions to uplift children from tribal communities are currently in place and will continue to be pursued, special mechanisms need to be made to ensure that children belonging to tribal communities receive the benefits of these interventions.

Minorities are also relatively underrepresented in school and higher education. The policy acknowledges the importance of interventions to promote the education of children belonging to all minority communities, and particularly those communities that are educationally underrepresented.

The Policy also recognizes the importance of creating enabling mechanisms for providing Children with Special Needs (CWSN) or Divyang, the same opportunities of obtaining quality education as any other child.

NEP thoroughly focuses on formulating separate strategies to focus attention on reducing the social category gaps in school education as outlined in the following sub-sections. (6.2.1-4, p.25) The NEP-2020 commits to increasing Gross Enrolment Ratio up to 50 per cent by 2035. It is a commitment that certainly includes SCs, STs, OBCs and many other SEDGs groups in the educational landscape of the country in a bigger frame. It will distribute educational resources to provide social justice to the weaker sections of our society.

Special Education Zones (SEZs) for Deprived

To ensure the inclusion of marginal communities in the quality education space of India, the NEP 2020 proposed the policy strategy to identify special education Zones (SEZs). The SEZs will be the identified regions where significantly large populations from educationally disadvantaged SEDGs resides. In these SEZs, all the schemes and policies are to be implemented to the maximum through additional concerted efforts to develop the disadvantaged groups. This policy strategy will help to change the educational landscape of these areas.

Provisions for the SEDG in NEP 2020

- 1** The new education policy encourages the government to provide special scholarships and cash transfers for SEDGs. It ensures the strengthening of successful ongoing programs which will help in the educational inclusion of the marginal communities.
- 2** To expand the educational landscape in India the NEP-2020, plans to support alternative forms of schools run by various smaller and marginal communities in India. It outlines the policies to change the entire culture and environment of regular schools to make them dignified and comfortable educational zones for SC, ST, OBC, minorities and other SEDGs communities. The policy also promotes targeted hiring of teachers and leaders from minorities and other SEDGs. This recommendation may create more space for jobs in the educational sector for SCs, STs and other SEDGs.
- 3** The NEP-2020 suggests distance learning, one-on-one teachers and tutors'-peer tutoring, open schooling, appropriate infrastructure, and suitable technological interventions. It also ensures accessibility to all that can be particularly effective for certain children with disabilities.

Schools providing quality ECCE reap the greatest dividends for children who come from economically disadvantaged families. Meanwhile, counsellors and/ or well-trained social workers work with and connect with students, parents, schools, and teachers to improve attendance and as a result learning outcomes are especially effective for children in urban poor areas.

- 4 Its emphasis on primary and secondary education in their mother tongue may also make them competent to explore their own local and indigenous resources available in various local societies of India. The local knowledge, skills, indigenous technology, local products may be explored by the people who are deeply rooted in the languages, culture and social life of local societies. The various marginal social groups in India are very rich in terms of their traditional knowledge systems. The NEP-2020 recognizes the importance of their traditional knowledge in educational curricula and identifies strategies to transform these knowledge patterns to strengthen and empower them.
- 5 The NEP-2020 with all these recommendations and provisions ensures Samras Shikshit Samaj (SSS) in India. . In essence, this Policy aims to eliminate any remaining disparity in access to education (including vocational education) for children from any gender or other socio-economically disadvantaged group'. (NEP, 2020).
- 6 It is very important to note that the existing reservation policy will remain the same. The introduction of SEDG will be under the purview of the existing reservation policy only. The policy has not touched or amended the existing reservation policy of India. Whereas it is an initiative to make education more accessible to larger sections of less advantaged groups.

SPEAKERS INSIGHTS ON THE SEDG

Distinguished academicians working in premier institutes and organisations catering to the upliftment of the Tribals, SCs, STs, Women, Divyang, Transgenders and other marginalised sections had joined the Virtual brainstorming discussion on SEDGs that was held on June 26, 2021. They have presented critical comments, valuable suggestions and in-depth deliberations based on their vast knowledge and decades of experience in the field.



Prof. A.K. Shukla, Professor & Head, Department of Botany Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU), Amarkantak stated that education is important for a developed nation. Education not only imparts knowledge but provides employment too. He expressed his concern over the limited resources available in our country due to the population explosion. India is an agrarian

country. Before independence, 83% of people used to stay in rural areas and 70 years after independence 60% of people still stay in the rural area. The SEDG group is the most affected as far as the availability of resources to them is concerned. There are two groups in the SEDG- the rich and the poor amongst them. The

rich people of the SEDG avail themselves of all the benefits but the poor from these groups have remained poor. This is due to a lack of awareness of policies, plans and concessions available for them. Awareness should be spread by the Block level and Panchayat level administration. Some States like Assam have announced that big families will not receive any benefits. The number of people in the family is also a matter of concern when the allotment of resources is in question. The needy in the SEDG which also include the PWD, minority etc should be uplifted. Opening of schools every 2 - 3 km is essential. Availability of conveyance, trained teachers, good infrastructure, uniform, scholarships, facilities of library, toilets is very much required. Vocational education should be given to these groups. There are no health facilities for them. All these cause dropouts in large numbers. Policies to curb dropout should be framed. MSME training should be given to make them self-sufficient, generate self-employment too.



Prof. Ipshita Bansal, Dean, Students' Welfare Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (BPSMV), Sonapat stressed that the upliftment of women would be possible only by getting them educated and empowering them. More women should be included in the economic aspects. She shared her concerns for admissions to the SEDG especially the SCs and STs. Seats are

reserved for these groups but the administration is in a hurry to convert these seats to the general category just after a few months as this would help them earn their revenue. It is important to reach out to women in the nearby areas, in slums and villages, convince them to join college, explain the useful courses available for them. The budget of the families is less and hence girls' education is sacrificed. Scholarships need to be announced, full fee concessions need to be

made available for them after examining their economic conditions, cases with domestic violence not only at their marital place but also in their parent's homes. Gender equality is still not there in states like Haryana. Getting them enrolled for higher education is a herculean task.

She emphasises sensitizing teaching, non-teaching staff and administration which are of utmost importance. She mentioned that women administrators are necessarily not gendered sensitized and they should be properly trained. Socio-economic needs of women, empowerment of women should be focused on. She urged on the need of having a tailored course design for the women considering special needs like women empowerment, co-curricular activities, vocation education that could assist in self employability. She also highlights the necessity of building confidence in women that will enable them to think logically and assess the demand and supply and also in dealing with family members and businesses.

She stressed the need for a **curriculum** focusing on the all-around development of women and emphasis on their intellectual, practical, physical, spiritual, cultural strengths. She also stresses the added design of the curriculum including swimming, yoga, cooking, stitching, music and dance which are important for girls to prepare mentally when they leave their studies/jobs and giving priority to marriage, family and looking after the household. She also urged the importance of training martial arts which will give confidence and building strength both in health and mind.

Talking about the research she stressed the need of having women-centric research areas and topics that cover both challenges faced by them and achievement too. Mentioning having only one dedicated university of women in Haryana, she emphasis creating more women universities across the nation.





Dr Rupal Chowdhary, Associate Professor in Economics, Prestige Institute of Management and Research, Indore. M.P

praised the effort and contribution of private institutions and universities in upholding the spirit of SEDG. To bring SEDG into the mainstream for equitable and inclusive education, private universities are one of the best catalysts for SEDG. She recommended

that Career Guidance and Counseling Cell need to be formed in the Universities. Counselling of students, seminars; workshops should be arranged for skill-based career options. Counselling parents should be done to make them aware of the courses available for their wards. Faculty members should be counselled to avoid discrimination between non-SEDG and SEDG students. She also suggested that Financial help from voluntary organisations should be provided to the SEDG students. Skill-based **degree, diploma and certificate courses** related to organic farming, drawing, painting, photography, pottery should be made available for these groups to enhance employability. **Training in I.T Skills, soft skills**, should be given to these students. Internships in rural areas can give them practical knowledge. All these will the students to market their skills and enable placements in good companies. 5% extra seats for the SEDG students, providing them **free education** is recommended. Book, bank facility, internet facility, ebooks, wifi- facility will help them extendedly to overcome the infrastructural hurdles. **Mentorship**-faculty can provide them guidance. **A formal socialization** process should be done so that the SEDG students will gel with the other students. **The student exchange** programme will give exposure to their talents. **Exhibitions and promotion of their skills**, their art can be done at the national, state and district level. **Facilities like ramps, lifts** should be made available for divyang students.





Prof. Badri Narayan, Director, G.B. Pant Social Science Institute, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh emphasized that the NEP focuses on educating and empowering the marginalised communities. He reiterated that the old schemes for minority, poor and the marginalised should be strengthened and new innovative schemes should be launched.

He appreciated the **Special Education Zone** concept mentioned in the NEP, which he said is a very creative concept in terms of the educational development of the SEDG. This will map the regions dominated by marginal communities in population and help in chalking out plans for the dissemination of educational opportunities to the grassroots level. Until now the advantages and benefits have reached only to the rich and who were in a position to reap the benefits and concessions amongst the SEDGs but this NEP 2020 will ensure that the dissemination of educational opportunities will reach those who lack the means and awareness to cash in on the opportunities. So the empowering in this way will prepare the Givers and Takers in the same communities. There would be teachers coming from the same community, peers would be helping their fellow men. Their traditional and indigenous knowledge, their folk wisdom will be preserved, will get recognition. This will help in creating proper respect and dignity for the marginalised community and use their traditional knowledge to make space for them leading to their development.



Dr Harsh Chouhan, Chairperson of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, remarked that the rural areas and the geographically tough areas have primarily been devoid of high-quality education



because of the difficulties that are associated with these areas. The recommendations in the NEP 2020 hope in ending this void that has been created in these areas. Education is a necessity that should reach the remotest and farthest place. A new term that the NEP 2020 document introduces is Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). ‘While overall enrolments in school’s decline steadily from Grade 1 to Grade 12, this decline in enrolments is significantly more pronounced for many of these SEDGs and often even steeper in higher education’ mentions the document. Along with gender identities, socio-cultural, socio-economic identities, and disabilities, geographical identities too are included in the SEDGs. This will help these areas to get the necessary attention and incentives from the governments in the future.

The NEP 2020 has recommended that regions where there are significantly large populations from educationally disadvantaged SEDGs, should be declared Special Education Zones (SEZs). In these SEZs, all the schemes and policies are to be implemented to the maximum through additional concerted efforts. This will help to truly change the educational landscape of these areas.

The NEP 2020 also speaks about consolidating a large number of schools with very little strength of students and teachers into one complex. The schools are often spread in multiple numbers with a minimum no. of students. The geographical dispersion, challenging access conditions, and the very large numbers of schools make it difficult to reach all schools equally. The isolation of small schools also harms education and the teaching-learning process. The document has stated that teachers function best in communities and teams, and so do students.

Under ‘Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat’ initiative, every student in the country will participate in a fun project/activity on ‘The Languages of India’, sometime in Grades 6-8. In this, they’ll learn about the origin and script, etc. about the languages. The students will also be taught what geographical areas speak which languages and they’ll learn to say ‘commonly spoken phrases and sentences in

every major language of India and also learn a bit about the rich and uplifting literature of each’.



Prof. Siddaraju, UGC Member, Chairman opined that the NEP 2020 is built on the fundamental pillars of access, equity, quality, affordability, accountability, employment, and entrepreneurship. Talking about equity and inclusion in the higher education system and access to quality education as basic rights he emphasized that the marginal groups are deprived of quality education because of reasons such as lack of infrastructure, financial, constraints and inequity stuff etc which lead to dropouts. Special schemes and government funding to promote girl education and socio-economically deprived groups may be launched to facilitate them to pursue higher education. The development of a single-window portal for all scholarships to be provided, fellowships to be taken to the aspirants and timely disbursement of fellowships and scholarships is essential. First-generation learners may be given preference. The Center may direct all the state governments to promote the local languages or the study material to students may be provided in local Indian languages.



Prof. Prakash Mani Tripathi, Vice-Chancellor, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU), Amarkantak emphasised that the NEP 2020 talks about high-quality education as a right that must be guaranteed to every individual, emphasising for increased



accessibility of Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDG's).

A national scholarship portal will be set up and expanded to support, promote, and track the progress of the students receiving scholarships. Private institutions will also be encouraged to offer economic concessions to their students.

To ensure a successful transition of the SEDG's to higher education, high-quality centres will be set up to provide constant encouragement to these communities, and sufficient funds and resources will be granted to Universities and Colleges for this purpose.

A systematized arrangement with increased hostel facilities will be enabled for students coming from rural and backward areas. Such facilities are deemed to provide the necessary support needed for their inclusion.

It also states that the Centre and the State Governments will take necessary steps to ensure that books are made accessible and available at affordable prices pan India, including socially-economically disadvantaged areas as well as for those living in rural and remote areas.

The Policy provides for new modes of engagement. It furthers inclusion by disrupting language barriers and by allowing HEI (Higher Educational Institutes) students to choose a bilingual medium of instruction. The same will be available for both private and public schools.

This particular provision though received pushback from critiques, many have argued that through this provision only Hindi/Sanskrit will get priority over other languages. Without dwelling into this debate, if we examine the growing digital economy and the unavailability of Indian languages affecting access to vital information for many, this provision could prove to be well-received by the masses.

A report by FICCI analysed, that there could be a digital enfranchisement of about 200 million Indians only if the content is made available in the regional languages. NEP's emphasis on promoting multilingualism and reviving local languages will create a workforce that will significantly contribute to the diversification of the cyber content.

However, creating markets and demand for the local/regional languages is an added benefit, simultaneously enabling more awareness and revival of regional languages.



Shri. Anil Vajpayee, CEO, Prestige Institute of Management and Research (PIMR), Indore strongly opined that anything free is not respected. Wherever there have been free schools, attendance has been paltry, less than 10% even if you can provide loans to these people to be paid back later, they will realize its importance and they will take education seriously. There is no free lunch in this world.

If we keep doing that we will keep increasing the gap between the disadvantaged and the not disadvantaged people.

He gave the example of the telecom industry. In 1996-97, it was two telephones per 100 people in this country and today in less than 25 years we have one telephone for every individual of this country of 130 crore people, which means anybody having access to a phone has the access to knowledge, information and everything else that comes along with telecommunication. So, we've created a facility for information to flow to a lot of people who are using it properly, like the farmers in the villages are seeing prices of grain daily in real-time. However, a lot of people are only using it for listening to music, or to watch movies. That is the change that we have to bring about, higher education will come much after we have

initiated basic learning.

“The will to learn, the desire to grow, the desire to learn,” has to be inculcated through revolution, and we in the world are respected, for our telecom networks that have a huge network. And today, with the latest of Jio offerings, almost at a negligible cost, everyone is connected to the internet, this pandemic in the last 18 months has taught us something that we don’t need a classroom to teach/learn.

Given the explosive pace of technological development allied with sheer creativity, the NEP 2020 promotes student entrepreneurs with exposure to vocational education in partnership with industry and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). Integration of vocational education with educational offerings in all institutions by choosing focus areas based on skills gap analysis and mapping of local opportunities will develop entrepreneurial competencies and will go a long way to make vocational education a part of the larger vision of holistic education.

The technical sectors like engineering, technology, management, architecture, town planning, pharmacy, hotel management and catering technology continue to demand well-qualified individuals and hence closer collaboration between industry and institutions to drive innovation and research is actively encouraged in NEP.

Since these domains will become part of the multi-disciplinary education and curricula will be renewed, education will be entrepreneur oriented.



Shri. Kedar Arvind Kulkarni
Sanghathan Mantri, Kalyan Ashram, Manipur
explained that one of the fundamental principles of NEP 2020 is according the highest priority to achieving foundational literacy and numeracy by all students by

Grade 3, which we are committed to achieving by 2025. To translate this particular vision of NEP 2020, under the Atmanirbhar Bharat programme, a National Initiative for Proficiency in reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN) Bharat will be launched. This mission will cover the learning needs of nearly five crore children in the age group 3-11 years. A nationwide exercise to identify the learning gap, its probable reasons, and various strategies keeping in view local circumstances and the diversity of the country will be initiated. The national mission will develop a simple and common understanding of learning outcomes and align the efforts of the education ecosystem. The mission's progress will be measured based on children attaining the grade-level competencies. All state/UT governments shall immediately prepare an implementation plan for attaining this objective, closely track and monitor its progress. Teacher vacancies shall be filled as soon as possible, especially in disadvantaged areas. Teachers shall be adequately trained and supported to impart foundational literacy and numeracy to students who have fallen behind. Particular attention shall be laid on the nutrition and health of children. Nutrition shall be addressed through the provisions of healthy meals and regular health check-ups. The role of families and communities intertwined with teachers should be leveraged to increase the demand for education. He urged all the government, non-government and private organizations to develop an inclusive, integrated, and multi-sectoral approach for primary education. Foundational literacy and numeracy for all children must be the top-most national agenda. Quality primary education is the fundamental right of every child, and it is our responsibility that no child is deprived of this right. He asked everyone to collate their efforts required for bringing in the transformative change of overcoming learning poverty. The NEP 2020 aims to bring back 2 core dropout students into the fold of mainstream school education and attain a 100 per cent Gross Enrolment Rate in school education. At the same time it 'aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education including vocational education from 26.3 % (2018) to 50% by 2035', while adding 3.5 corer new seats to Higher

Education Institutions. The emphasis has been given to setting up Gender Inclusion Fund and Special Education Zones. This will be beneficial for underprivileged people. Bal-Bhabans will be established in every state. This will be a boarding school, where the students can take part in art, play, career-related activities.



Shri Girish Prabune, Social Activist and Educationist said that as enunciated in the Preamble to the Constitution of India, the Indian state strives for social, economic, and political justice. With an object to create social equity and perception of justice, the state is dragooned to form policies that discriminate positively.

In India, the ‘unequal’ class is an outcome of century-old structural oppression. Thus, to uplift the marginalized and to bring them into the mainstream, the concept of reservation came into existence. The rationale behind the reservation is to provide these people with an opportunity to thrive and contribute to the nation. The reservation is equally made applicable in public educational institutions.

The Indian reservation policy is unique in itself as it keeps the caste at the centre which is why it is criticized by the non-reserved section who finds it antithetical to institutional efficiency and merit-based incentives. Since its inception, the reservation was only available to Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) and later extended to Other Backward Classes(OBC) in 1993. The OBC reservation for the first time has pushed for the limit based on overall family income.

The policy discusses at length the need for inclusive and equitable education at all levels.

It highlighted several groups terming them Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) as the sufferers of the current educational system and recognizes the importance of affirmative actions. Though the policy has dedicated many paras highlighting the pertinence of inclusive education, it offers no strategies for making the present education system more inclusive and equitable. The policy simply omits to offer any suggestion or implementing guidelines to the governments or educational institutions which can become a means for achieving these goals.

The policy has suggested many measures in the educational system which can further alienate these SEDGs. One of the much-touted features of this policy is the introduction of a 4-year graduation program. Though it has allowed multiple exit options, the policy is silent on the financial support to these students. Further, the policy makes education more like gaining degree certificates without emphasizing holistic development and free-thinking knowledge. The sole purpose of the degree certificate programs seems to be securing employment and nothing else. Similarly, the policy's emphasis on vocational education and distance learning programs would move the economically restrained students toward these courses while the policy does not provide for how vocational training be made at par with classroom education.

The students from SEDGs lack skills in co-curricular activities and thus, found themselves vulnerable in the top-notch institutions occupied with the elite students. The policy does not take into consideration the need for additional support to overcome the cultural and class difference faced by the students.





Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, Transgender/ Hijra rights activist, stressed the creation of an awareness of inherent equality and removal of prejudices and complexes transmitted through the social environment, especially when it comes to school students who do not conform to the expectations from their sex (sex stereotypes).

There is no reference to include students of diverse sexualities, transgender- and gender-nonconforming students, despite a wealth of literature and published first-person accounts indicating that LGBT and gender-nonconforming students face bullying, harassment, physical and sexual violence in the education systems, and drop out at higher rates than other students.

Gender as a cross-cutting concept: NEP 2020 does include gender-related themes and provisions across the teaching-learning curriculum, foundational literacy and numeracy, teacher' training, teacher' recruitments et cetera; a closer look at the policy doesn't provide gender as a cross-cutting concept. The policy has to recognize that gender is not just a women and girls' issue, it also pertains to boys, men, lesbians, gays, bisexual communities, transgender communities, those with intersex variations, and those living with disabilities.

Gender and sexual identities are not pre-determined. Children continue to discover their gender and sexual identities through their adolescence and youth. An inclusive school environment should not fix behaviour into set gender and sexuality labels. It should enable healthy expression without stigmatising behaviour, which does not conform to existing oppressive norms.

The policy document conflates the definition of transgender persons and persons with intersex variations, who may or may not identify as transgender. This conflation is harmful to both groups.

NEP's section on transgender children is a welcome step but

should be phrased in broader terms to refer to all children who may not identify with or express themselves by the gender assigned at birth. ‘Transgender child is an insufficient descriptor: it would be preferable to change it to “transgender and gender non-conforming children”, an inclusive category adopted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerments 2014 report of the Transgender Experts Committee.



J. Lalitha, Assistant Professor, Dept. of

Education, Osmania University, Hyderabad

revealed that at least 1.6 million girls in India

remain out of school. A report by NCPCR

(2018) suggests that 39.4% of girls between

15-18 years of age are out of school. 57%

of girls drop out upon reaching the 11th

grade. Distance to school acts as a significant

roadblock. For every hundred elementary

schools (classes I to VIII) in rural India, there were only fourteen

offerings secondary (classes IX-X) and only six offerings higher

secondary grades (classes XI-XII).



In India, girls enrol late and drop out early. The progress of girls from primary to upper primary level is also lower than boys. Foremost reasons are lack of upper primary schools nearby; girls forced to support the family’s economic survival by childcare and household work and the gender cultural attitude towards girl’s education. The GoI will constitute a “Gender Inclusion Fund” to provide quality and equitable education for all girls. The fund will focus on ensuring 100% enrollment of girls in schooling and a record participation rate in higher education, decrease gender gaps at all levels, practising gender equity and inclusion in society, and improve the leadership capacity of girls through positive civil dialogues.

NEP 2020 focuses on the safety and security of school-going

girls both inside and outside of the campus. The schools have to ensure harassment, discrimination, and domination free campus before enlisting for yearly accreditation.

This will increase the attendance number of girl children in the class. The policy identifies social customs and gender stereotypes that prevent girls from accessing education and causing regular dropouts. The teachers, Anganwadi workers, and local social entrepreneurs will be trained to deliver proper counselling to girl childrens' families.

The curriculum will be gender-neutral, technology-oriented, and more adjunct to sustainable employment. It also recommended vocational training inside the school campus to acquaint with the first-hand experience of the workplace. In the end, NEP 2020 has a straight vision to reconstruct the nation's learning methodology and build a vibrant Bharat.

The dropout rate for girls in the upper primary level is very high at 18%, according to the Ministry of Education. Girls are not very encouraged to travel long distances to schools for fear of safety, lack of toilets, and public facilities in schools.

NEP 2020 also intends to decrease the gender imbalance among teachers (especially in some rural areas), by introducing alternate pathways for female teacher recruitment without compromising on merit and qualification in terms of both education and profession.

Under this policy, all educational institutions will be mandated to conduct awareness sessions on gender issues to break stereotyped gender roles. Alongside, importance is also given to creating harassment-free environments and equal treatment of genders, imparting legal protections and entitlements for girls and women. These training aim to make teachers and educational administrators aware of gender sensitivity and inclusive classroom management. The problem is that all the above-listed measures merely look like lofty promises covering the entire gamut lacking the critical measures on how these promises will be implemented, or how the progress will be mapped against what time range, putting forth an impression that

the intent behind the impressive list is weak and vague. Today in gender studies the debate is beyond the male-female binary but this policy is limited in its vision as it focuses only on female students with a brief mention on including transgender children in schools, bordering on tokenism.



Prof. T. V. Kattimani, Vice-Chancellor, Central Tribal University, Andhra Pradesh described that NEP 2020 has to trawl and analyze in-depth concerning the issues that our country is facing at the grassroots level- the paucity of training personnel and the lack of technological infrastructure in the rural areas. Also, the ECCE Programme focuses to attain learning in terms of cognitive

development, socio-economic development, physical development, and development in the form of communication, literacy, and numeracy.

NEP 2020 has seemingly failed to ponder on the needs of our country, where there is a massive divide in the name of the language, caste, resources, which in turn put up the immense difficulties to climb up the ladder of social and economic inequality. The government should try to eliminate the gap left in the NEP 2020 in terms of language problems, technological impediments and should aim at fostering the growth of every brain by giving access to all resources.

The NEP does give importance to education in tribal-dominated areas of the country. Every year, millions of very young students from the indigenous populations are introduced to academics but through a system and curriculum that is almost alien as they do not factor in, or at least make light of their need for, their native language.

Several states with a substantial tribal population have had multilingual education programmes based on mother tongue for the primary classes. But there still exists a gulf because the availability of tribal language teachers, training and curriculum development have not been dealt with. According to a World Bank assessment, at least 55% of Indian children are not proficient in reading. That India must remain firm in its focus on improving the quality of education in its tribal heartlands needs no emphasis. The NEP 2020 brings more focus to early childhood education but both the Centre and states must chart out the course through strong intent backed by public investment.



Shri. Prafulla Akant, National Joint Organising Secretary, Akhil Bhartiya Vidharthi Parishad explained that Policies are often not implemented properly, for instance even if the schools for urban slums are provided with computers they will lack internet connection; sometimes children are not even allowed to touch them, becoming skilled being a distant ambition. The standard of teaching

is low which directly affects the job opportunities they are offered in future. Many a time students pursuing higher education struggle for books, which due to their economic backwardness remains an expensive dream. Apart from this, they and their parents repeatedly prioritise earning rather than learning. They believe that education is a waste of time and money. Marginalised communities lack even an adequate amount of control over basic resources that some people possess abundantly. Overcrowded households with no electricity, and the steady appearance of cheap transistors, TVs and now, videos, make it difficult and sometimes impossible to concentrate on studies. Domestic violence under the influence of alcohol, women quarrelling at the common taps under frustration tends to distract children from

their studies. The major problem faced is that these children believe that they will not fit in the mainstream because of the economic difference and socio-cultural lag. Tribal children have major issues in the language or medium of instruction at schools. They mostly communicate in their own peculiar or vernacular language although they sometimes are well equipped with the skill of communicating in their state language as well. On top of that, it is seen that the methods of teaching are often ineffective, unattractive and seem tedious to a child. Nearly 50% of the children from this social group drop out while transitioning from primary to secondary grades (based on the 2011 census). Nearly 80% of them stop education when they are in grade X. There is almost a 14%-point gap between the literacy rates of the STs and the rest (2011 census) of the population (“Schooling of Scheduled Tribes in India,” n.d.). With such a considerable gap between literacy rates and horrifying statistics, we cannot normalise the illiteracy and poverty prevailing in this section of society.



Prof. Sushma Yadav, Vice-Chancellor, Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya, Sonapat: told that, the NEP 2020 recognizes issues like high drop-out rates among vulnerable minorities, reasons behind lesser participation of girl child in rural areas, needs of children living in difficult geographical regions, etc. The purpose of the Clinic was to critically analyze the measures suggested by the Policy to deal with such issues.



The pandemic operates in the background of a substantial number of children still being deprived of education even after the enactment of progressive policies and laws like the Right to Education Act 2009, education policies for girls, socio-economically

disadvantaged groups, etc., to achieve socio-economic rights. Even before the crisis, India was far from its educational and development goals. As per a report by the World Bank released this year (2021), the effect of school closure as a result of COVID-19 will not only impact learning outcomes but also contribute to one of the largest economic contractions. Being out of schools combined with reducing budgets and loss of family households may have a gendered effect leaving girls especially vulnerable.

The benefits of adhering to this safety value would be two-pronged, first: facilitating easy access to education for doubly marginalized groups like disabled SEDG children, and girls, who are more likely to drop out, and secondly: improving our community's infrastructure, and making it more inclusive, and sensitized towards important issues in the process.

Additionally, the policy aims to strengthen the framework of different types of incentives that have in the past, shown positive results. It also mentions the setting up of a gender inclusion fund to remove context-specific barriers that have stymied education for girls and transgender children in the past; to complement the same, walking to their schools collectively can promote a sense of comfort in the minds of families who are reluctant to send their daughters to school, however, the same fails to secure any credit in the absence of sensitization measures targeted at males, which should ideally be available for the whole community.

The girl child is often not allowed to continue with her studies due to problems starting from the prevalent practice of child marriage to taboos around menstruation. NEP 2020 appears to take a long leap rather than taking up the realistic steps in favour of marginalized communities predominantly and implantation of multi-level of entry should be implemented as soon as possible, which will help in reducing the dropout rate.





Dr Ramanand Pandey, Director, Center of Policy Research and Governance, New Delhi

described that the NEP 2020 recognises that certain groups are grossly underrepresented in the existing educational systems. To specially address their educational needs, the NEP has clubbed gender identities, socio-cultural identities, geographical identities, disabilities, and socio-economic conditions to create a new social group called SEDGs. The policy bases most of its objectives on creating inclusivity around these groups. These groups have higher dropout rates due to various reasons ranging from lack of accessibility for tribal communities (geographic) to historical exclusion of communities from systems of education for the socio-cultural identities categorization.

Recognising their special needs, the NEP 2020 recommends a series of policies and schemes such as targeted scholarships, conditional cash transfers to incentivize parents to send their children to school, providing bicycles for transport that have worked in the past to increase enrollment, to create more representation.

There are numerous challenges to this broad categorization, though. It is problematic as the policy does not recognize caste as a historical inhibitor and does not prescribe the need for reservations. Similarly, there is no acknowledgement of the multiple structural inhibitors that plague these communities from succeeding in educational institutions because of the constant discrimination that they face from multiple sources. Importantly, the policy does not acknowledge the need for affirmative action that is recognized as the bare minimum to give equal representation. There is no recognition of caste inclusion and affirmative action for teacher appointments either.

The NEP 2020 has done well by loudly recognizing the challenges faced by gendered categories, minorities and children with special needs. It has also done well in terms of proposing a

series of laudable steps including education SEZs to address the structural challenges of education in inaccessible regions. Yet, the new policy have some missing points on multiple fronts. While it may have proposed a new category by clubbing many socio-economic groups for administrative efficiency and better allocation of resources, it does injustice to these historic categories such as Dalits and Adivasis. By doing this, it fails to acknowledge the unique sets of challenges faced by these groups. Similarly, its silence on affirmative action for certain categories can throw up multiple challenges at the time of implementation. To cut the long story short, the roadmap proposed to promote equity and inclusion for special categories is paved with potholes.



Shri. Kamalakant Pandey,

Sakshama: spoke that the disability often stands as a wall between the children and education; in fact, it hampers the access of children to education. This fact is further solidified by the evidence that only half of the disability population is literate. In fact, in the age group of 3-35 years, only 62.5% of the disabled people have attended the schools.

The policy entails many provisions for ensuring inclusive education. This critically examines the education policy and hunts through the excessive ambitious provisions to cull out the true meaning of inclusiveness in the education sector for disabled children.

NEP 2020, in line with RPWD Act, embraces special schools as a viable alternative to regular schools for children with benchmark disabilities. Nonetheless, the new policy does not explicitly mention if the special schools will come under the Ministry of Social Justice or will be treated as regular schools under the Ministry of Education. Further, there are no concrete guidelines that have been framed or

mentioned under the policy with regards to the quality, certification, or curriculum of these special schools.

A little flexibility is always appreciable; however, the complete dearth of these guidelines hints towards the lackadaisical approach of the policymakers. The New policy also advocates for the standardization of the Indian Sign Language for teaching deaf children; however, it is unsettled if it will be applied to the schools dedicated specially for deaf children, where the means of speech therapy and lip-reading are preferred to sign language while teaching them. In light of the foregoing reasons, it would not be a far-fetched conclusion to state that the policy framework does not adequately provide for the regulation of these special schools for disabled children let alone paving the way for an inclusive space. These shortcomings in the NEP, in fact, further the idea of having only regular schools as the “vibrant institutions of excellence”.

NEP mentions the urgent requirement for the additional number of special educators for children with disabilities. However, it fails to address the reasons behind the meagre number of appointments. Special educators are encumbered with the problems like shortage of funds, delay in receiving remuneration, and unsuitable working conditions. Solutions to the existing foundational problems like delay in disbursement of salary and unsuitable working conditions are not covered in the document. The policy just mentions that special educators would be recruited with cross-disability training without any elucidation on if there would be any specialized institutions for their training or cross-disability training would be taken as just any other module in the training course. The policy should have provided for maintaining a separate cadre of special educators for children with multiple disabilities with their exhaustive training and sufficient emoluments so that there would not be any want for special educators for children with multiple disabilities.

NEP proposes the establishment of ‘special education zones’ for the ‘Socio-Economically Disadvantaged’ group, which comprises children with disabilities along with other socially deprived and

minority groups. This clubbing of children with disabilities along with other groups would make the disabled children compete with other disadvantaged groups if a certain proportion of reservation or benefits is provided to the ‘Socio Economically Disadvantaged’ group under the policy in the future, thereby defeating the objective of inclusive education of the policy. Also, there would be a segregation of education through the institutionalization of special education zones where socially disadvantaged groups would be studying under special education zones while the rest would be studying in the other institutions. Therefore, the creation of this extra-constitutional category can unintentionally be counterproductive by further leading to social and economic inequities in the country.

The NEP 2020 though ambitious in its vision, depicts the shallow understanding of ground realities. The use of different terminology like ‘inclusion, integration, children with special needs, differently-abled gives the most eloquent expression to the incoherent understanding of disability in society. Further, the overhauling of quality based higher education under the NEP 2020 is done through the introduction of a philanthropic private model of education. The implementation of disability reservation in government institutions and government-aided institutions is always in question, however, the coming of private players in higher education would have serious implications on the inclusion of the persons with disabilities in higher education. To create an inclusive and equitable society, the government and other authorities should focus more on budgetary allocation on disability education, improving working conditions for the teachers and special educators, removing attitudinal barriers and stereotypes regarding the disability, and taking steps in bringing more persons with disabilities in the mainstream of the society. Only then the goal of an inclusive and equitable society would be realized.



Prof. Vijay K. Kayat, Former Vice-Chancellor, Chaudhary Devi Lal University, Sirsa and **Prof. Sanjay Singh**, Vice-Chancellor, Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow **gave** their suggestions on equity and inclusion concerning SCs, STs and Other (EWS), issues on access/enhancement of GER and how to control drop-outs in case of SCs/STs, EWS categories in detail. Besides, the issues on caste-based discrimination and their exclusion from the portal of higher education barriers like poverty, financial hardship and other hurdles faced by these disadvantaged groups (SEdGs) have also been discussed.



Few other experts who gave Inputs/Suggestions/Feedback are Prof. (Dr.) D. Rajasenan, Director, Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy (CSSEIP) Cochin University of Science and Technology, Prof. Jasbir Singh, Director, Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy (CSSEIP), University of Jammu, Jammu, Dr Rashmi Jain, Director, Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy (CSSEIP), University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Prof. Sartik Bagh, Director, Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy (CSSEIP), Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow, Dr Rahul Ramagundam, Director, Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy (CSSEIP), Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi. Prof. (Dr.) Jagan Karade, Director, Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy (CSSEIP), Shivaji University, Maharashtra.

The suggestions and feedback from experts were also documented by Vidya Bharati Uchcha Shiksha Sansthan for further initiatives.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES, INSIGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Some very valuable strategic suggestions and insights for Implementations for SEDG empowerment through NEP-2020 emerged in this brain storming workshop are as follows:

1 To increase Access / GER and controlling dropout rate

- **Institutional Equity:** The colleges and universities established in the area of the larger population of SCs and STs or those institutions wherein students belonging to these groups are enrolled in the majority should be given preferential treatment in terms of the special financial package, recruitment of teachers belonging to the same caste/ tribe and linguistic groups.
- Reservation policy both for sanctioned seats of students and teaching positions of all private Higher Education Institutions should be implemented in letter & spirit.
- At least two Special Higher Educational Residential Institutions/colleges in tune with Navodaya School System should be established for SCs/STs stakeholders of the concerned districts.

- **Flexibility in admission:** The students whose final result is awaited or have some health problem may be allowed/promoted in the next academic session.
- The students from educationally backward districts and regions should be given deprivation points in admissions (on the pattern of JNU, New Delhi) such as 5 points for male students and 10 points for female students.
- First-generation learners or parents with little schooling or without assured income may be given preference in admission, scholarship and hostel accommodation.
- Every eligible aspiring student/candidate belonging to SEDGs who wishes to join a research programme for Ph.D. and another research degree should be mandatorily provided Supervisor/Guide by the concerned institution. And, it should be also mandatory for every teacher in University and Research Institute to allot 15% seats in case of SC and 7.5% in ST categories respectively or as per reservation policy of state government out of the seats allotted to him/her.
- The UGC Centres for the study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy working in various Universities should be allotted permanently instead of tenure-basis. Besides, teaching and non-teaching positions in these Centres should also be sanctioned by Govt. of India or by UGC. The staff already engaged in these centres or to be engaged in future should be recruited permanently. These centres should be allowed to run the bridge and short-term UG/PG Courses for the students belonging to socially and economically disadvantaged groups.
- Educational Counsellors should be appointed at both College and University level who will take numerous steps for promoting GER and mitigating/eliminating all barriers that lead to dropout at various levels. They will also launch awareness programmes for enrolling the students of SCs/STs in Higher Education.

- Short Term Bridge Course with credit points should be introduced for SEDGs after Secondary Education so that gaps occurred between General Students and SCs/STs in terms of communication skill, knowledge, Language etc. be bridged up and they do not drop the Higher Education.
- Regional Languages Promotion Centre should be established at College and University levels. And priority in establishing such Centers should be given to the remote area, tribal areas and educationally backward areas.
- Distance Learning Centre should be established for the promotion of SEDGs education along with e-learning mode of education.
- Hostel facility should be provided to every girl, enrolled in College/ University, belonging to a vulnerable group i.e. SCs/ STs.
- Teacher and Student Manual should be prepared and implemented in each subject attuned with Indian Curriculum and Culture so that teaching is imparted coherently and scientifically and Indian ethos. This will help to annul the use of guides/help books both by teachers and students.
- A Single Window System should be introduced both at the College and University Campus to address various issues such as admission readmission, fee and scholarship and other grievances, etc.

2 To ensure Timely Financial Help and providing a Safe and Secure environment

- Special financial package and provision for the promotion of education of students belonging to nomadic, semi-nomadic and de-notified tribes should be provided by Union Govt., State Govts. and HEIs.
- The scholarships/ fellowships and incentive schemes should

be in agreement with National Dearness Index and be disbursed every month. Besides, College and University authorities are made accountable for timely disbursing the scholarship/ fellowships to students.

- MCM (Means cum Merit Scholarship) should be introduced at the PG level on the pattern of JNU, New Delhi. The student with a minimum grade is entitled to get such a scholarship. The Scholarship amount may be equivalent to the hostel mess bill.
- Railway Ticket concession may be given to PG and Research Students to visit hometown during winter and summer vacations.
- A Coordinator should be appointed at both College and University levels for maintaining coordination between funding agencies and HEIs.
- A Female Student Forum for students belonging to SCs and STs, EWS, should be established at each college and University so that they can get a platform to share their talent and it gives space to create learning and develop their exposure.
- Every HEI should be provided with effective, sufficient and safe infrastructure including multi-cultural classrooms. And vulnerable group-friendly environment in college campuses should be developed so that their proper care may be taken from all aspects.
- Short Term Research Programmes should be introduced for SEDGs (vulnerable groups) with credit points aiming to provide them research training/internship before they join Research Degree Programme.
- Programmes of Socializing students belonging to SEDGs with general group students at campus should be ensured as being a very important and inevitable aspect of inclusion.

Special Orientation and Induction Programmes should be organized twice a year at the campus.

- Govt. and HEIs should take initiative in creating a comfort zone among students from disadvantaged groups so that they easily adopt the new and changing educational environment.

3 To promote communication skills and technology

- Communication Skill Centers for SEDGs should be established at both Secondary Education and Higher Education level in each College and University so that their communication skill, knowledge is developed similar to General Category students so that they can compete with students of General and elite class.
- A well-equipped Computer Centre along with teachers and staff should be established for students belonging to SEDGs at College and University campuses.
- Each student belonging to SEDG should be provided a computer for taking down notes.

4 To increase awareness about the creation of an inclusive environment

- Teachers Sensitizing Programmes aiming to change the mindset in favour of equal and respectable behaviour towards students of marginalized and underprivileged section in particular and their masses, in general, should be organized by authorities of HEIs.
- One week compulsory Social Outreach Programme/ Camp for every student be held in Slum Area/Habitational area of vulnerable groups (SCs/STs) and tribal areas in a year as part of curriculum/ course.
- The college and University should sign a Memorandum of

Understanding (MoU) with NGOs and Social Organizations mutually and work together for eradicating those social customs, traditions and practices that lead to justify and continue caste discrimination and untouchability, etc.

5 Monitoring progress related to GER/ Admission of SEDGs in Colleges and Universities.

- Establishment of Equity and Inclusion Centre in Every University.
- A committee comprising officers/professors and outside members belonging to SCs/STs and EWS categories are attached with this centre.

6 Special cautions and suggestions for Scheduled Tribe Children emerged from IGNTU (Indira Gandhi Tribal University, Amarkantak) experiment:

- I. Physical access to schooling should be concentrated on.
- II. Hostels are critical for children. Seasonal migration is common in several tribal areas. Facilities like seasonal hostels should be provided in all such areas/blocks with a high incidence of migration to help retaining children in the village when the parents migrate. In some very remote tribal pockets, for example in northeastern states, teachers posted to schools are unable to get local accommodation on rent.
- III. Teacher absenteeism is a major problem in the remote areas.
- III. Qualified and trained teachers are needed to teach in tribal-dominated schools. There must be a special effort to create a cadre of teachers from the tribal community/youth.
- IV. Bilingual / multilingual education programmes that start with education in the child's mother tongue and then transit to the regional/ State language and English need to be

- implemented on a larger scale, especially in remoter tribal areas.
- V. The strategy for intensive work for the creation of curricular materials, training of teachers, academic support, evaluation and community involvement.
 - VI. Teachers should be able to speak the language of the children.
 - VII. Teaching-learning materials need to incorporate the life situations of children to which they can relate.
 - VIII. Certain tribal groups e.g. denotified tribes, nomadic tribes that move from place to place would need special attention because of their specific life situations.
 - IX. Special training programme for teachers and resource persons to deal with issues of diversity and discrimination within the classroom.
 - X. Improve decentralized planning process to identify needs and strategies for disadvantaged groups at block and district levels.
 - XII. Promoting researches for identifying strategies aimed at equity that has had a favourable impact. Also dissemination and sharing of identified good practices.
 - XII. Allocation of resources preferably for promoting education of disadvantaged groups.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Some key recommendation emerged from this workshop are as follows:

1. Awareness of SEDG should be made to the general public and targeted stakeholders.
2. Opening of schools every 2 to 3 km is essential.
3. Availability of conveyance, trained teachers, good infrastructure, uniform, scholarships, facilities of library, toilets is a great necessity.
4. Vocational education should be given to these groups. Vocational training is made at par with classroom education.
5. There are no health facilities for them. All these cause dropouts in large numbers. Initiatives to reduce dropout rates should be taken.
6. MSME training should be given to make them self-sufficient, generate self-employment too.
7. Girl students should be provided with scholarships, full fee concessions etc.
8. Reservation of the seats for SEDG groups should not be converted to general in a hurry.
9. Sensitizing teaching, non-teaching staff and administration is of utmost importance.

10. Curriculum focusing on the all-around development of the women- should include skill development, martial arts, training in driving etc.
11. Career Guidance and Counselling Cell for all the SEDGs, mentoring facility.
12. SEZ Special Education Zones help in chalking out plans for the dissemination of educational opportunities to the grassroots level-Givers and Takers from the same community will be beneficial like the teachers, peer groups etc.
13. Indigenous knowledge and folk wisdom should be preserved
14. Creating respect and dignity for the marginalised community by promoting their knowledge, giving recognition to their skills.
15. Access to education in geographically tough areas which have been devoid of high-quality education.
16. The isolation of small schools also harms education. A cluster model could be beneficial to make maximum utilisation of the resources.
17. Promotion of the local languages, the study material to students may be provided in local Indian languages.
18. Instead of emphasizing more on free education, the will to learn the desire to grow, the desire to learn, that has to be inculcated through revolution.
19. Integration of vocational education with educational offerings in all institutions by choosing focus areas based on skills gap analysis and mapping of local opportunities will develop entrepreneurial competencies
20. ‘Transgender children is an insufficient descriptor: it would be preferable to change it to “transgender and gender non-conforming children”.
21. The existing gulf due to non -availability of tribal language teachers, training and curriculum development should be

- reduced.
22. Literacy rate, living conditions of the SEDG, availability of resources to them need to be improved.
 23. Maintaining a separate cadre of special educators for children with multiple disabilities with their exhaustive training and sufficient emoluments so that there would not be any shortage of special educators for children with multiple disabilities.
 24. The Centre and states must chart out the various courses through strong intent backed by public investment.
 25. The NEP 2020 policy should be implemented properly. Implantation of multi-level of entry should be implemented as soon as possible, which will help in reducing the dropouts.
 26. The unique sets of challenges faced by historic categories such as Dalits and Adivasis should be addressed.
 27. It should be explicitly mentioned whether the special schools will come under the Ministry of Social Justice or will be treated as regular schools under the Ministry of Education.
 28. There should be concrete guidelines framed or mentioned under the policy with regards to the quality, certification, or curriculum of the special schools.
 29. The means of speech therapy and lip-reading should also be advocated in addition to the preferred sign language while teaching deaf children.
 30. To create an inclusive and equitable society, the government and other authorities should focus more on budgetary allocation on disability education, improving working conditions for the teachers and special educators, removing attitudinal barriers and stereotypes regarding the disability, and taking steps in bringing more persons with disabilities in the mainstream of the society. Only then the goal of an inclusive and equitable society would be realized.

WAY FORWARD

To contribute to the making of democratically carved New India as proposed by PM Narendra Modi, the NDP 2020 evolved as a central conceptual argument to provide access to education to all and especially for SCs, STs, OBCs, Divyang, Women, Transgender and many other forms of marginals. Indian Society is indeed suffering from multiple marginalities since long back, that is why NEP-2020 sensitively tried to map various forms of vertical as well as horizontal marginalities. It has also conceptualized and outlined various programmatic strategies to provide social justice to the weaker, marginal and subaltern sections of society through education. The NEP 2020 has appeared as a charter of commitment for proper, dignified and quality inclusion of SCs, STs, OBCs, Divyang, girl, women, and various other forms of marginalities that has emerged in our society due to various socio-economic, historical, cultural and developmental reasons. It makes various creative and path-breaking provisions to reduce inequality through educational intervention.

A discussion with the experts working on the socio-economically disadvantaged groups have brought many issues to the forefront which have not been addressed in the National Education Policy or the policy does not indicate the provisions. There are so many measures suggested for the upliftment of the SEDG but how these critical measures would be implemented, how the progress would be mapped and against what time range is also a question of utmost importance. Creating awareness of the various reservations,

concessions, schemes available for the SEDG group should be given the topmost priority. Availability of higher education institutions nearby, availability of local language, relevant curriculum, trained teachers, vocational and skill-based education at par with classroom teaching, sensitizing teaching and non-teaching staff regarding the SEDG group. Recognising caste as a historical inhibitor and recognition of caste inclusion and affirmative action for teacher appointments needs to be addressed. Tribal areas, geographical tough areas should be focussed on and ways and means to provide education to these people will help in tapping the potential of these disadvantaged people. A special curriculum for the empowerment of women is a must. Transgender individuals face discrimination in workspaces. These individuals are not accorded the basic respect that citizens deserve, and even though there has been a judicial abolishment of Article 377, conversations around identity are still considered taboo and have led to multiple cases of discrimination in the past against these individuals. Transgender are the worst represented minority. Plans to increase enrollment for these students, and ways to solve discrimination that these individuals face once inside educational institutions will curb dropout rates. A roadmap of how education will be made accessible to persons with disabilities should be specified. The change in the curriculum would make sure that children with learning disabilities don't feel excluded in the extremely competitive environments that Indian schools operate today. The criterion and the determining factors regarding the special education zones should be specified.

CONCLUSION

Discrimination, harassment, deprivation and exclusion in any form not only lead to cause injustice to vulnerable groups but also oppose the overall progress of society. India, wherein the society is highly diversified, certain social groups such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes in particular and other economically weaker sections in general, despite the constitutional safeguards, sometimes face multifaceted discrimination and systematic exclusion in various walks of life.

It is significant to note that education which has been one of the leading instruments both in promoting and preventing social mobility the discrimination and exclusion predominantly work as a force. And, it is the higher education wherein the students belonging to disadvantaged social groups usually face exclusionary treatment, discrimination by some teachers and peers during their studies. As a consequence, it makes it difficult to survive in an institution where the lower caste students do not find adequate institutional support and social space and they are forced in dropping out of their studies. Further, they are also sometimes systematically filtered out with the arguments of merit criteria and quota policy.

The NEP-2020 while offering an exclusive section on Equitable and Inclusive Education (EIE) seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long opportunities for all sections of society by 2030. Its commitment to EIE is rooted in the global education development agenda of Goal-4 of Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs), which was adopted by India in 2015. The policy targets to provide quality education to students of all sections and particularly to those who have been historically marginalized and disadvantaged. Fortunately, it aims at achieving the target of Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in the case of SCs and STs in NEP-2020 from 23% and 17.2% respectively to 50% by 2035. This target may be achieved by adopting the measures and strategic initiatives suggested in the present report.

The discussions, deliberations and dialogue with the representatives of the SCs, STs, OBCs, Divyang, Women, Transgender, Physically challenged, Tribals and other marginalised sections of the society have resulted in understanding the challenges from the close quarters and their invaluable suggestions would go in helping out to realise the dream of equity, inclusion and education for all, empowering the marginalised in the real sense.

Appendix:1

ORGANISERS BIO-NOTE



Vidya Bharati Uchcha Shiksha Sansthan (VBUSS) is a voluntary organization working in the field of education with a primary focus on policy implementation and structural reforms in India's Higher Education landscape. The core concept and ideal of VBUSS are to address the emerging needs of quality education and to reflect on the framework of Bharatiya knowledge, concepts, practise, philosophy and approach. The organisation has emerged as a transforming voice and movement led by learned, eminent educationists, scholars and concerned citizens of modern-day India. VBUSS firmly believes that a conducive education ecosystem could be developed through contact, dialogue, discourse and coordination among the institutions of higher education. VBUSS has been actively engaged in constructive engagement, developing thought processes, policy intervention and recommendations. Engaging stakeholders in synthesising the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is one of the activities that VBUSS strongly commits and advocates.

In the recent years since its inception, the organisation has been relentlessly engaged in numerous activities to promote, create awareness, decoding NEP 2020. Having done a series of thought processes and submitting policy recommendations VBUSS is also playing a crucial participatory role in policy implementation and practice.



Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU) Amarkantak

The Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak has been established by an Act of the Parliament of India. It came into existence by the Indira Gandhi National Tribal University Act, 2007 and came into action in July 2008. The jurisdiction of the University extends to the whole country and it is fully funded by the Central Government through the University Grant Commission. The university caters to the tribals' long-cherished dream of higher education.

Indira Gandhi National Tribal University is fast marching ahead to fulfil its objectives and mission. Located in a tribal belt, this University is poised for meeting the expectations of society in general and the tribal population in particular. It is preparing students for leadership in a multicultural world enriching through teaching, research, creative and outreach activities to meet the aspiration of the nation. Its main focus is on the preservation and enrichment of cultural heritage and tradition of the tribal people and at the same time, it thrives for the improvement of their socio-economic conditions.



Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya (BPSMV) Sonapat

Today's Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya is the dream come true of Bhagat Phool Singh Ji, who established a Gurukul for girls at Khanpur Kalan in 1936. Even after the demise of Bhagat Phool Singh, his equally dynamic daughter Subhashini Ji not only took control of Gurukul but worked vigorously in expanding the Gurukul in terms of its various constituent institutions like BPS Memorial Girls' College (1967), BPS College of Education (1968), MSM Ayurvedic College (1973), BPS Mahila Polytechnic (1984), TIG Bhainswal Kalan(1999) and PSD Girls' Law College (2003).

The State Government under the leadership of Shri Bhupinder Singh Hooda, the Honorable Chief Minister of Haryana took cognizance and upgraded the erstwhile Gurukul to the status of a University exclusively for women in August 2006 and christened it as Bhagat Phool Singh Mahila Vishwavidyalaya, which happens to be the first State Women University of North India. Since then BPSMV has undergone a complete transformation, a 75 years old Gurukul started with only three girls has turned into a modern university with approximately 7000 girls on its rolls studying in various programmes.



Prestige Institute of Management and Research (PIMR), Indore

Prestige Institute of Management and Research (PIMR) has played a pioneering role in building the edifice of high professional and business oriented professional management education and has contributed to Indore being transformed into a national education hub. The widely acknowledged success of this flagship institute has prompted the Prestige Education Society to set up similar Management Institutes at Gwalior and Dewas.

Both these Institutes have also steadily moved up in quality, popularity and national ranking among leading business schools of India. It has been their vision to provide top quality management education to budding professionals as well as budding entrepreneurs. The Annual International Conferences of the institute on current management and economic issues attract faculty and students not only from leading Institutes in India but also abroad. Series of national workshops and seminars throughout the year provide the students with a very stimulating practical orientation. The placement record has been very encouraging with several leading national and global companies from manufacturing, services and finance sectors coming annually for campus interviews.

Appendix:2

INPUTS AND INSIGHTS: BULLET POINTS

- SEDG for better opportunities with limited resources.
- Opening of schools especially for vocational education.
- Availability of conveyance, trained teachers, good infrastructure, uniform, scholarships, facilities of library, toilets etc. should be the major concern.
- SEDG for marginalized section especially for empowering women.
- Focus should be on women education
- Providing scholarships and full fee concessions for them.
- To design courses/curriculum in such a way so that it can fulfil the socio – economic needs of women section.
- SEDG in main stream for equitable and inclusive education, private universities are needed.
- Establishing Career Guidance and Counselling Cell,
- Providing Scholarships by Universities,
- Creating Skill based degree, diploma and certificate courses.
- Training in I.T.Skills , soft skills
- Free education and mentorship is recommended.
- Focus should be on Special Education Zone to map marginalized communities.

- It will prepare the Givers and Takers in the same communities.
- Recognition of traditional and indigenous knowledge, Folk wisdom.
- Concessions among marginal in educational opportunities.
- Education should reach remote and far away areas.
- Special focus should be given to recognize geographical identities.
- Large populations from educationally-disadvantaged SEDGs, should be declared Special Education Zones (SEZs).
- Focus must e on ‘The Languages of India’ under ‘Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat’ initiative.
- Special schemes and government funding to promote girl education and socio economically deprived groups.
- Single widow portal and timely disbursement for all scholarships to be provided.
- First generation learners may be given preference.
- Must promote the local languages.
- A national scholarship portal needed to be set up.
- Private institutions must be encouraged to offer economic concessions.
- A systematized arrangement with increased hostel facilities.
- Books are made accessible and available at affordable prices.
- Creating markets and demand for the local/regional languages is an added benefit.
- Provide loans to people to be paid back later system should be generated in education system.
- Facilitation of Information technology to all the places.

- Technological development allied with the sheer creativity should be promoted.
- Skills gap analysis and mapping of local opportunities needed to develop entrepreneurial competencies.
- Closer collaboration between industry and institutions is needed to drive innovation and research.
- Highest priority is to achieve foundational literacy and numeracy.
- National Initiative for Proficiency in reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN) Bharat will be launched.
- Teachers must be adequately trained.
- New Bal Bhavans, Gender Inclusion Fund and Special Education Zones must be set up.
- Meets the need for inclusive and equitable education at all levels.
- Highlights the pertinence of inclusive education.
- Multiple Exit options helps in face off financial support.
- Vocational training be made at par with classroom education.
- Creation of an awareness of inherent equality and removal of prejudices and complexes.
- Gender and sexual identities like LGBT communities should be focused on.
- Transgender and gender non-conforming children should be an inclusive category.
- Focus should be on increasing the attendance number of girl children.
- It identifies social mores and gender stereotypes that prevent girls from accessing education.

- Proper counselling to girl childrens' families is needed.
- Introducing alternate pathways for female teacher recruitment is in need.
- ECCE Programme focuses to attain learning in terms of cognitive development.
- Elimination of the gap left in the NEP 2020 in terms of language problems needs to be addressed.
- Primacy to education in tribal-dominated areas of the country is needed.
- Multilingual education programmes based on mother tongue for the primary classes is must.
- Adequate amount of control on basic and infrastructural resources like technology.
- To lessen economic difference and socio-cultural lag.
- Methods of teaching must be improved.
- Vernacular teaching and learning should be promoted.
- High drop-out rates among vulnerable minorities must be on focus.
- Facilitating easy access to education for doubly marginalized groups like disabled SEDG children, and girls.
- Improving our community's infrastructure, and making it more inclusive, and sensitized towards important issues.
- Need of gender inclusion fund for removing context-specific barriers.
- Implantation of multi-level of entry should be implemented as soon as possible.
- Policies and schemes such as targeted scholarships, conditional cash transfers to incentivize parents are needed.
- Equal representation is needed for teacher appointments.

- Identifying the challenges faced by gendered categories, minorities and children with special needs.
- Focus must be on inclusiveness in the education sector for disabled children.
- Should develop more special schools for disabled children.
- Increment in additional number of special educators for children with disabilities is needed.
- Implementation of disability reservation in Private institutions is also needed.
- Equity and inclusion with respect to SCs, STs and Other (EWS) is suggested.
- Access/enhancement of GER must be increased.
- Must control drop-outs in case of SCs/STs, EWS.
- Caste based discrimination and exclusion from higher education should be checked.