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Professional Ethics of Teachers and the Challenges of Inclusive Education in the Light of NEP 2020.

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Abstract :

The National Education Policy 2020 NEP 2020 approved by the Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020, presents a new vision for transforming India's education system. It replaces the earlier National Policy on Education of 1986. NEP 2020 offers a broad and unified framework covering all stages of education from primary to higher education including Inclusive education aimed at making learning more holistic, flexible, and inclusive to meet the needs of the 21st century. This study examines the role of professional ethics in supporting inclusive education as intended by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. It highlights how ethical values like fairness, respect, and responsibility help teachers address diverse learning needs in inclusive classrooms. This paper identifies the key challenges such as lack of training, limited resources, funding and attitudinal

barriers. This study researcher used content analysis method and aims of the study to provide insights that can strengthen teacher preparation and create a more inclusive and equitable education system in line with the goals of NEP 2020.

Keywords : Inclusive Education, NEP 2020, Professional ethics of teachers, Challenges of inclusive education, Equality.

Introduction :

Ethics is an important part of every profession. Ethics are moral principles or moral guides to help individuals how to behave in different situations and study of what is right and wrong in human conduct. Professional ethics for teachers are generally understood as principles that promote the equitable enactment of professional responsibilities. Professional ethics serves educators in their moral obligation to act honestly, fairly and with respect for their students, coworkers, and parents. These work ethics help educators establish and maintain safe and caring teaching and learning environments and professional relationships of trust with students, their parents, and other educators. These relationships help honour and recognize a vision for the educational system to make significant advancements toward equity and equality. Inclusion in mainstream education is the guiding principle of NEP-2020; the idea of inclusive education outlined under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provides a reformational vision for the Indian education system based on ideas of equity and access to education for all students despite their differences in socio-economic status, and/or abilities and disabilities. The policy identifies that inclusive education can be actualized when teachers are able to establish inclusive classrooms where all students can thrive, and have a sense of belonging and respect for differences. From the perspective of a teacher, the ethical responsibility of inclusive education is to enact equitably learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their gifts, talents or barriers to learning.

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is India's first education policy of the 21st century. It highlights the importance of setting professional standards for teachers from primary to higher level and gives special focus on inclusive education.

Significance of the Study :

Professional ethics deals with moral values and principles for implementation of inclusive education teacher should be ethically sound without professional ethics teacher cannot make inclusive classroom environment. This study is significant to know how teachers' ethical conduct shapes inclusive education under NEP 2020, ensuring equitable learning for all while addressing systemic challenges, fostering social justice, and improving educational quality. This study is crucial to examines how educators can uphold ethical standards while addressing inclusivity in diverse classrooms as NEP 2020 emphasize, requiring teachers to adapt ethically to varied

learning needs. This paper highlights Professional ethics of teachers and the key challenges like inadequate training, resource gaps, and biases, offering solutions for fostering an inclusive environment. By aligning professional ethics with NEP's vision, the study ensures quality education for all, promoting social justice and sustainable development. It serves as a guide for policymakers, educators, and institutions in implementing inclusive practices effectively.

Statement of the problem "Professional Ethics of Teachers and the Challenges of Inclusive Education in the Light of NEP 2020".

Delimitation of the study

This study is delimited to Professional Ethics of Teachers and Challenges of Inclusive Education in Light of NEP 2020 – Ethics, Inclusion and Policy Impact only.

Objective of the study

1. To analyse the professional ethics of teachers in relation to inclusive education under NEP 2020.
2. To find out the challenges of Inclusive education under NEP 2020.

Review of related literature

Halder(2024) emphasised the importance of knowledge and implementation of Professional Ethics of the teachers for successful teaching. David and Anderson (2018) highlights how love, care, and biblical principles foster inclusive education, urging teachers to value all students especially those with disabilities by creating respectful, supportive, and accepting classrooms. Teachers are the makers of all other professionals. (Green,2010; Paschal, 2023) teachers have massive responsibilities as they are the inspiration, role models and motivators for thousands of learners both inside and outside the classroom. Pancholi & Maurya (2023) NEP-2020 are suggesting various pathways for inclusive education but the lack in implementation makes always gap in the education system in regular classrooms. (Paschal, 2023) lack of professional ethics in teachers has resulted in various unfortunate events and raised ethical issues in the contemporary world. Mitiku, Alemu & Mengsitu (2014) the study found that schools lack opportunities and proper systems for inclusive education. There are no admission criteria for students with special needs, and teachers do not create individualized education plans. Aneraye, Shirpurkar (2024) NEP 2020 holistic approach recognizes that children, including those with disabilities, have a variety of learning needs. Although the policy offers a thorough structure, efficient execution, resource allocation, and continuing monitoring and assessment are necessary for its successful implementation. Singh and Jaiswal (2024) emphasised how caring and love are important in teaching, especially for students with disabilities. It talks about how laws and history pushed schools to include all students it shows that biblical principles of love and kindness are very important in creating a supportive classroom for everyone.

After going through different review related to this study researcher has found very few study related to this topic. Recent studies highlight the critical role of professional ethics in teaching for successful inclusive education and emphasize the love, care, and respect for students with disabilities. Despite NEP 2020's inclusive pathways, implementation gaps persist due to insufficient teacher training and individualized support.

Methodology :

This study is based on an extensive review of secondary sources, including research papers, books, articles, and reports from national, international, and state agencies. It employs a descriptive approach to analyse the gathered data and information.

Data Analysis

Objective 1 To analyse the professional ethics of teachers in relation to inclusive education under NEP 2020.

National Education Policy 2020 has been developed to put the teacher at the centre of the fundamental reforms in the education system in India. National Professional Standards for Teachers - NPST in NEP 2020 hopes to achieve equitable access to the best quality education for all learners. The professional ethics of teachers in NEP 2020 will serve as part of the foundation for achieving the goals of inclusive education. Teachers are agents of social change and need to commit to ethical practices that promote equity, respect, and inclusion. Teachers are a significant part of our educational culture, and we need to contribute to an educational change in India which promotes equity and inclusion. In line with NEP 2020 recommendations, National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) was to develop a common guiding set of National Professional Standards for Teachers by 2022. NPST must ensure that students at all levels of school education are taught by teachers who are passionate, motivated, highly qualified, professionally trained and ensure that our students are prepared to engage and contribute to a democratic and just society. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 discusses professional ethics of teachers in relationship to inclusive education.

1. Commitment to Equity and Inclusion: Teachers must ensure that all students, regardless of their socio-economic status, physical abilities, or learning needs, receive equal opportunities to learn and succeed.

2. Non-Discriminatory Practices: Upholding ethical standards requires teachers to actively avoid any form of discrimination in the classroom. This includes being vigilant against biases related to gender, caste, disability, and socio-economic background.

3. Continuous Professional Development: Teachers have an ethical responsibility to engage in ongoing training and education to effectively implement inclusive teaching practices, as prescribed by NEP 2020.

4. **Adaptation of new Teaching Methods:** Ethical teaching involves the willingness to modify teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of students. This includes using differentiated instruction and ensuring that learning materials are accessible to all.

5. **Collaboration and Advocacy:** Teachers must work collaboratively with parents, caregivers, and special educators to advocate for the needs of marginalized and differently-abled students, ensuring they receive appropriate support and accommodations.

6. **Fostering a Respectful Classroom Environment:** It is the teacher's ethical duty to create a classroom culture that values diversity, promotes mutual respect, and encourages all students to support one another.

7. **Promotion of Empathy and Inclusion:** Teachers should model inclusive behaviour by promoting empathy and understanding among students, ensuring that the classroom is a space where everyone feels valued and included.

8. **Accountability and Ethical Standards:** Teachers are held to high ethical standards and are expected to be accountable for their actions, particularly in relation to how they treat and support students from diverse backgrounds.

The NEP 2020 reinforces the ethical responsibility of teachers to create an inclusive, supportive, and non-discriminatory learning space. By adhering to these principles, teachers will ensure equality and quality education for all learners, in accordance with the idea of equal opportunity in education as proposed by the policy.

Objective 2 To find out the challenges of Inclusive education under NEP 2020.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India aims to overhaul the country's educational landscape, with inclusivity as a key pillar. Despite its progressive stance, several challenges impede the successful implementation of inclusive education under this policy.

Infrastructure and Resources: Many educational institutions, especially in rural areas, lack the necessary infrastructure to support inclusive education. There is a dearth of specialized equipment, accessible buildings, and adequate learning materials tailored for students with diverse needs.

Teacher Training: Effective inclusive education requires well-trained educators who are adept at handling diverse classrooms. Currently, there's a significant gap in teacher training programs. Many teachers are not equipped with the skills to identify and support students with special needs or to implement inclusive teaching practices.

Awareness and Attitudes: There remains a societal stigma around disabilities and special needs, which can permeate into schools. Changing entrenched attitudes and creating a more accepting environment is essential for inclusivity but remains a significant hurdle.

Policy Implementation: The NEP 2020 outlines ambitious goals, but translating these into actionable, ground-level changes is challenging. The policy requires robust monitoring, clear guidelines, and effective execution strategies, which are currently insufficient.

Funding: Inclusive education demands considerable investment. Ensuring that funds are allocated appropriately and used efficiently is a persistent challenge. There is often a shortfall in financial resources, which hampers the development of inclusive infrastructure and programs.

Curriculum and Assessment: Adapting the curriculum to be inclusive while maintaining academic rigor is complex. Standard assessment methods may not be suitable for all students, necessitating alternative evaluation strategies that are yet to be developed and implemented widely.

Language and Cultural Barriers: India's diverse linguistic and cultural landscape poses additional challenges in creating a universally inclusive education system. Developing materials and training in multiple languages and contexts is a formidable task.

Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from policymakers, educators, communities, and stakeholders to ensure that the vision of inclusive education under NEP 2020 is realized.

Educational Implications

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents a transformative vision for inclusive education in India, placing teachers at the heart of this change. However, several challenges emerge when examining the intersection of professional ethics and inclusive practices.

Reinforcement of Teachers' Accountability and integrity: According to the NEP 2020, teachers need to adhere to the principles of ethical standards such as honesty, fairness, compassion, and morality in their commitment to all aspects of students' education and development.

Teacher Preparation and Training: The policy also calls for ongoing professional development and ethical training of the NPST as part of using the National Professional Standards for Teachers as a guide for ongoing professional improvement in teaching and a means to become ethically and morally responsible educator.

Empowerment through Autonomy and Responsibility: Teachers are considered more than just curriculum deliverers and course content experts; teachers are seen as moral agents and mentors to their students which encourages the development of a culture of reflective practice, ethical practice and caring regarding teaching and learning.

Moral Obligation to Inclusion: Teachers must perceive inclusion from the stance of ethics, not just as meeting a policy requirement.

Equitable assessment and fair practices: Teachers must minimize biases in assessment, even if they were not aware of their biases, and provide fair access to opportunities for all learners to demonstrate their strengths and abilities.

Major findings of the study

From the study researcher has found major findings these are mention in below.

Policy Support: NEP 2020 provides a strong policy framework advocating for the inclusion of children with disabilities, promoting equitable access to education.

Enhanced Teacher Training: The policy emphasizes the need for specialized training programs for teachers to equip them with skills for inclusive education.

Curriculum Flexibility: NEP 2020 encourages a flexible and adaptive curriculum that can be tailored to meet the diverse needs of all learners.

Use of Technology: Leveraging digital and assistive technologies to support personalized learning experiences for students with disabilities.

Strengthening Support Systems: Focus on creating hearty support systems, including special educators and counsellors, to ensure effective inclusion.

Community Involvement: Encourages greater community engagement and awareness to combat social stigma and foster an inclusive environment within schools.

Implementation Barriers: Variability in the implementation of inclusive education policies across states and schools due to a lack of clarity and consistent guidelines.

Conclusion of the study

The National Education Policy 2020 of India represents a significant milestone in promoting inclusive education practices that foster equity, accessibility, and diversity in the educational landscape. Ethical values such as fairness, respect, and accountability empower teachers to create equitable learning environments for diverse students. However, challenges like inadequate training, insufficient resources, and societal attitudes hinder effective implementation. While NEP 2020 provides a strong policy framework, its success depends on proper execution, funding, and continuous teacher development. Addressing these barriers through structured training, infrastructure improvements, and awareness campaigns is essential. By fostering an inclusive mindset and upholding ethical standards, educators can ensure that all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, receive quality education, aligning with the policy's vision of an equitable and inclusive education system.

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