



# **Voices for Change**

**Role of Education in Addressing Social Issues**

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**Dr. Babli Choudhury  
Dr. Shefali Sharma  
Dr. Pranay Pandey  
Dr. Shampa Sarkar**

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**VOICES FOR CHANGE: ROLE OF EDUCATION IN ADDRESSING SOCIAL  
ISSUES**

*by: Dr. Babli Choudhury, Dr. Shefali Sharma, Dr. Pranay Pandey,  
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## PREFACE

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Education has long been recognized as a powerful catalyst for social transformation. It shapes individuals' perspectives, fosters critical thinking, and empowers communities to address pressing societal issues. *Voices for Change: Role of Education in Addressing Social Issues* brings together diverse perspectives on how education can be a driving force in overcoming social challenges such as inequality, discrimination, poverty, and environmental concerns.

This edited volume is a collection of insightful contributions from educators, researchers, policymakers, and social activists who explore the intersections of education and social change. The chapters present empirical research, theoretical reflections, and case studies that highlight the transformative potential of education in different socio-cultural contexts. From formal schooling to community-based learning, from policy interventions to grassroots initiatives, this book explores the multifaceted role of education in fostering a more just and equitable society.

The book is structured to provide a comprehensive understanding of education's role in addressing social issues. The initial chapters examine the foundational theories and historical perspectives on education as a tool for change. Subsequent sections focus on contemporary challenges and innovative educational practices that promote inclusion, empowerment, and sustainability. The final part of the book offers forward-looking insights into policy recommendations and future directions for integrating social justice principles into education.

As editors, we believe that meaningful dialogue and collaborative efforts are essential for driving educational reforms that contribute to social equity. This book is intended for scholars, educators, students, and policymakers who seek to understand and enhance the role of education in creating positive societal change. We hope that the ideas presented here will inspire further research, discussion, and action to make education a more effective instrument of social progress.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the contributing authors for their valuable insights, the reviewers for their constructive feedback, and the publishing team for their support. We also acknowledge the educators and activists worldwide who work tirelessly to harness the power of education for a better future. We invite readers to engage with the diverse perspectives in this book and join the ongoing efforts to use education as a force for meaningful and lasting change.

*Dr. Babli Choudhury*  
*Dr. Shefali Sharma*  
*Dr. Pranay Pandey*  
*Dr. Shampa Sarkar*

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# **HARMONIZING GENDER EQUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH GENDER RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY: A SOCIO- CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE AND WAY FORWARD**

Sonia Dogra <sup>1</sup>, Prof. J.N. Baliya <sup>2</sup>

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## **Abstract:**

In educational contexts, gender inequality persists as a persistent challenge that affects learning opportunities and outcomes at different educational levels. In order to address and lessen gender inequities in educational settings, this study investigates the idea of gender-responsive pedagogy. The significance of appreciating and respecting a range of gender identities and experiences is emphasized by gender-responsive pedagogy, which incorporates this understanding into instructional strategies and curriculum development. Teachers may design more equitable learning environments by implementing inclusive tactics and cultivating a culture that questions conventional gender norms. This paper attempts to understand the fundamentals of gender-responsive pedagogy, analyze theoretical frameworks, and explore useful strategies for teachers to reduce gender-based differences in classrooms and foster an inclusive learning environment in educational institutions. This study seeks to provide actionable insights for educators and policymakers who are enthusiastic about achieving gender equality in education by highlighting the ways in which gender responsive pedagogy can contribute to a more just and equitable educational system.

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**Keywords:** *Gender Inequality, Gender Stereotypes, Gender Norms, Higher Education, Gender Responsive Pedagogy*

### **Introduction:**

In ancient India, women were once revered as equals to men, enjoyed access to education and actively involved in religious ceremonies. They played crucial roles in society and were honored for their insights and achievements. As time passed, these rights gradually eroded, and societal norms began to confine women to more rigid gender roles. On the eve of independence there were less than 10% women out of all students enrolled in higher education. Women's enrollment has increased to 47.8 % in 2021-22. In central universities, deemed universities, and government-aided institutions, the number of female students per 100 male students has also increased dramatically. However, gender inequalities in education still prevail even after the huge expenditure by the government. These inequalities are mainly socio-economic and socio-cultural in nature. Role expectations from the past are the cause of gender inequality. Consequently, there is a significant dropout rate among women who are engaged or recently married. The main issues include, attempting to lower the dropout rate and raise the gross enrolment ratio in higher education, both of which are strongly correlated with socio-cultural factors in addition to economic factors. Rather than just increasing the quantitative variables like government spending and the number of universities, the focus should be on improving the quality of education and altering the socio-cultural paradigm to enable women to benefit from the increased capacity and spending in the higher education sector. A number of studies have demonstrated a strong association between female education and several vital signs of development (Kalyani Bondre, 2013). Educational institutions can play important role in reducing gender inequality by incorporating gender responsive pedagogical practices. Gender responsive pedagogy can be instrumental in more equitable and inclusive education at all levels by minimizing gender biases.

### **Understanding Gender Equality:**

Gender equality is the enjoyment of equal opportunities in terms of rights, resources, protection, and education. A world that is peaceful,

prosperous, and sustainable to live in is built on the foundation of gender equality. Gender equality promotes the growth of the present generation and increases the productivity of future generation. Higher education for women is becoming more and more significant since it is essential to the development of the country and the accomplishment of Sustainable Development Goal 4.3, which states that all women and men must have equal access to high quality, reasonably priced technical, vocational, and tertiary education by 2030. Because of the government's various initiatives to support girls' education, the figures on the ratio of male to female enrollment in higher education is also roughly equivalent. But still inequality persists in higher education in India due to rigid social practices.

### **Social Construction of Gender:**

The term "gender" describes the distinctions and hierarchies that exist between male and female. The cultural constructs of the diverse roles that men and women play in society are explained by gender. Moreover, gender examines the factor of developing women's conduct in accordance with the social norms. As a conceptual framework gender examines the underlying connections of inequality that exist between women and men, in different of spheres of life, including the home, the workforce, education, politics and other spheres of social life etc. Women have never had complete equality on par with males in any culture on the globe. They experienced discrimination, inequity, and exploitation everywhere (Rao, 2008). The system of dominance is supported by gender construction. This gender construction upholds the power structure in society. Gender as an inequitable system of interactions offers a range of options available to men and women in the areas of work, the production process, and access to resources and authority, conforming to particular gender norms, and sex segregation in the employment, education and the labor market. Socially constructed gender norms give rise to gender stereotypes which ultimately result in discrimination and unequal treatment with women folk in all spheres of their life including education

### **Gender Stereotypes in Higher Education:**

Gender stereotypes are broad beliefs or assumptions about the traits or qualities that men and women are expected to have, or the roles they

are expected to fulfill in society (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR). Hence, a gender stereotype is detrimental when it restricts the ability of both men and women to advance their professional or personal qualities and make decisions on their goals and lives. Gender stereotypes in higher education significantly impact both the academic experience and career outcomes of students. These stereotypes often manifest through implicit biases that affect faculty expectations, student interactions, and institutional policies. Research has demonstrated that female students, particularly in STEM fields, frequently encounter stereotypes that suggest they are less competent than their male peers. These biases can undermine their academic performance and discourage them from pursuing advanced degrees or careers in these fields (Carrell, L. J., Page, L. A., & West, J. E., 2010). Research indicates that women in male-dominated fields like engineering and physics often face implicit biases that question their abilities and contributions, leading to lower self-confidence and increased attrition rates in these disciplines (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012). These stereotypes give birth to gender inequality in education. Gender disparity in education is a persistent problem, especially for girls in rural and under developed areas. In India's pursuit of a universal education system, gender inequality is a significant problem and obstacle. The government has initiated various schemes to address the issue of gender disparity that girls encounter in the classroom. The gender gap in education demonstrates how our society's societal attitudes on education have a substantial impact on female children's engagement. Some of the main causes of gender inequalities are societal norms, practices, and attitudes of society, poverty, illiteracy, and inadequate employment opportunities (Manjulata and Sapna, 2018). While women outnumber men in overall college enrollment, there are still noticeable regional and subject-specific gaps. Women represent just 42.5% of students from undergraduate to PhD levels in STEM fields, underscoring the urgent need for initiatives that inspire and empower more girls to explore and excel in these critical disciplines.

### **Challenges faced by Female Students in India:**

Government has taken various initiatives to provide world class facilities in order to improve the situation. According to AISHE Report 2021-22 there are total 1,168 universities, 45,473 colleges and 12,002

autonomous institutions. From 1964 to 1966, the Kothari Commission has prioritized equitable opportunity for women in academic settings. The National Policy of Education (2020) has placed emphasis on balancing gender parity and fostering equality in institutes of higher learning but, still there are various challenges faced by women in assessing higher education in India. These include -

- **Negative attitude of parents:** Female students encounter additional difficulties as a result of parents' negative attitudes on their daughter's education and their favorable attitudes toward their male child's education.
- **Lack of female teachers:** It is another challenge in schools that give rise to gender inequality in education. It is observed that, most of the parents feel their daughters are safe if female teachers are there. Otherwise they seem to be reluctant in sending them in educational institutes.
- **Insecure Atmosphere:** Insecurity of female students in institutions stop parents to send their daughters for higher learning. Every day we hear incidents of molestation and assault. Whether it is doctor trainee or kindergarten girl, no one is safe.
- **Affordability:** High tuition and other fees is another issue that comes up and contributes to the gender gap in education. Most of the parents prefer to spend money on education of male child rather than girl child due to marriage constraints. Besides, all can't afford the expenses of education, that leads to low enrolment of girls .
- **Digital Divide:** The digital divide describes the gap between those who have access to modern digital tools, such as the internet, computers, smart phones, and online learning resources, and those who lack this access. This divide is shaped by various factors, including location, socio-economic status, gender, age, and education. In education, the digital divide poses significant challenges for marginalized groups, particularly girls and women in rural or impoverished areas. Without technology, these students miss out on online learning, educational resources, and opportunities, widening existing inequalities.
- **Same Pedagogy for all:** In spite of individual differences, most of the teachers use common teaching- learning methods for all. This further marginalizes girls and women in educational settings.



- **Gendered Curriculum:** It reflects gender biases and perpetuates stereotypical gender roles. This occurs through the way subjects are taught, the materials presented, or the portrayal of men and women in different professions, historical events, and texts. Gender biases within the curriculum restrict students' views of their own potential and future opportunities, particularly for girls. Example is gendered division of labor depicted in various social sciences books.

### **Understanding Gender Responsive Pedagogy:**

According to Chapin & Warne, “Gender-responsive pedagogy refers to teaching and learning practices that focus on the different learning needs of male and female students. It does not merely focus on addressing women’s and girls’ needs but also is about being conscious of the intersection between gender and learners’ needs to rectify the imbalances in society”. Gender-responsive pedagogy seeks to reduce gender disparities in education by incorporating gender awareness into teaching techniques. It entails developing curricula, managing classroom dynamics, and assessing students in ways that encourage inclusivity and support the learning and advancement of both men and women. This strategy aims to combat traditional instructional practices that may unintentionally propagate gender prejudices, so assuring equitable opportunity for all students. (Chapin& Warne, 2020). To put it practically, this implies that the classroom set-up, assessment, language use, learning activities, learning materials, methodologies, and content are scrutinized to respond to specific needs of boys and girls in the teaching-learning process.

### **Gender Equality in Higher Education Through Gender-Responsive Pedagogy:**

Implementing gender-responsive pedagogical strategies has the potential to promote gender equality both inside and outside of educational institutions and to assist all students' learning. By creating an atmosphere that supports equal chances, values diversity of viewpoints, and questions established gender norms, gender-responsive pedagogy seeks to address and rectify gender disparities in educational environments. For effective implementation of gender responsive pedagogy, it is expected that certain behaviors and approaches will be

displayed in the classroom. Teachers should, for example: Give both men and women an equal opportunity to ask and respond to questions in class. Make use of interactive techniques like role-playing, group projects, and discussions, and make sure that men and women participate equally (by providing additional support when required). Pay attention to how men and women are positioned when working in groups, and give the women leadership roles. Teaching and learning materials including desks and books are equally assessed by all genders present in the class., Exercise patience with both men and women who may be shy to speak. The below table is giving snapshot of strategies that can be instrumental in advancing gender equality in higher education in India -

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Curriculum Design</b>	<b>Awareness and Sensitivity by Critical Analysis</b>	Implementing gender-sensitive materials and teaching practices to raise awareness about gender issues and biases, encouraging students to challenge disparities.
	<b>All-inclusive Curriculum</b>	Ensuring all genders contribute to the curriculum, incorporating diverse perspectives, experiences, and achievements to challenge gender stereotypes (e.g. including female authors).
<b>Teaching Methods</b>	<b>Active Participation</b>	Encouraging equitable engagement from all genders through cooperative learning, group discussions, and activities that respect diverse viewpoints.
	<b>Responsive Feedback</b>	Providing feedback that supports each student's growth, correcting unconscious biases that may affect assessment and support based on gender.
<b>Classroom Environment</b>	<b>Safe Places</b>	Creating a respectful, harassment-free classroom where students can express themselves freely, with clear policies against discrimination and harassment.
	<b>Diverse Role</b>	Introducing role models from

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
	<b>Models</b>	diverse genders in various professions to challenge stereotypes and broaden students' aspirations (e.g., showcasing female and male astronauts, chefs, etc.).
<b>Professional Development</b>	<b>Training Educators</b>	Encouraging ongoing professional development for educators to understand gender dynamics and apply gender responsive teaching methods effectively.
	<b>Self Reflection</b>	Educators regularly reflect on their teaching methods and biases, fostering a classroom that promotes gender diversity, inclusion and empowerment.
<b>Policy Framing and Practice</b>	<b>Institutional Commitment</b>	Institutions must embrace gender equality through policies that promote gender-sensitive practices and address gender disparities in education.
	<b>Assessment and Adjustment</b>	Continuously evaluating the impact of gender-responsive initiatives and making necessary adjustments to ensure sustained progress towards gender equality.
	<b>Bridging the Digital Divide</b>	Ensuring equal access to technology for girls and women, promoting digital literacy and creating gender-responsive digital content to enhance learning and empowerment.

The above strategies and pedagogical practices can be instrumental in promoting equitable and fair learning environment, which can foster gender equality not only within the classroom but extending its impact into the broader community.

## Conclusion:

Gender equality in India has made notable progress over the years, yet there is still considerable ground to cover. While Indian women have historically encountered numerous obstacles, their achievements in various fields are a testament to their resilience and success. Despite these advancements, gender inequality continues to impact many areas of life. It's crucial for all of us to persist in our efforts toward a future where everyone, regardless of gender, enjoys equal opportunities and rights. By reflecting on historical lessons and actively advocating for current reforms, we can aspire to a fairer and more equitable society for everyone. By adopting gender-responsive pedagogy, educational institutions can cultivate a more inclusive learning atmosphere that supports every student, advances gender equality, and equips learners to interact with a variety of viewpoints and experiences in a global community.

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## Chapter – 2

# EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA: BRIDGING GAPS FOR A JUST SOCIETY

Dr. B. R. Kumar <sup>1</sup>, Dr. A. Madhuri <sup>2</sup>

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### Abstract:

Equity and inclusion in higher education are essential for building a just, progressive, and diverse society. In India, where disparities based on caste, gender, region, and socio-economic status persist, achieving equity in access to higher education is both a challenge and a priority. This chapter examines the landscape of equity and inclusion in Indian higher education, focusing on government initiatives, institutional policies, and societal challenges. The chapter begins by exploring historical and systemic inequities that have shaped access to higher education in India. It reviews key policies, such as reservation systems, scholarships, and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which aim to promote inclusion. Data analysis reveals significant progress in enrollment rates among underrepresented groups, such as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and women, but also underscores persistent barriers, including economic constraints, digital divides, and social biases. The chapter concludes with recommendations to strengthen equity and inclusion in higher education, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions, inclusive teaching practices, and greater collaboration between institutions, policymakers, and civil society.

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**Keywords:** *Equity, Inclusion, Higher Education, India, NEP 2020, Diversity, Marginalized Communities, Social Justice*

### **Introduction:**

**H**igher education plays a critical role in shaping a nation's social and economic future. In India, with its diverse population and deep-rooted social hierarchies, ensuring equity and inclusion in higher education is both a moral and developmental imperative. While significant strides have been made since independence, disparities in access and opportunities persist, particularly for students from Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and economically weaker sections (EWS).

The Constitution of India enshrines the principles of equality and social justice, which are reflected in policies such as affirmative action, reservation systems, and financial aid for marginalized groups. The introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has further emphasized the importance of equity and inclusion by promoting access, affordability, and quality education for all.

However, systemic barriers such as economic constraints, gender disparities, and lack of institutional support continue to hinder the realization of equitable higher education. The digital divide has emerged as a new form of exclusion, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the urgent need for inclusive digital infrastructure. This chapter explores the current status, challenges, and opportunities for fostering equity and inclusion in Indian higher education. It highlights successful case studies and provides actionable recommendations to bridge the gaps and create a more inclusive educational ecosystem.

### **Literature Review:**

Equity and inclusion in higher education in India have gained significant attention in recent years due to the persistent disparities in access and outcomes for marginalized groups. The Indian higher education system, although diverse, often reflects deep-rooted social, economic, and cultural inequalities that hinder the full participation of underrepresented communities such as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), women, and

individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Jamatia, 2023; Tyagi et al., 2021). The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) and other government initiatives have emphasized the need for policies aimed at creating equal opportunities for all students (Taimur, 2018).

Studies highlight that while affirmative action policies like reservations for SC, ST, and OBC students have increased enrollment, challenges such as lack of support systems, socio-cultural biases, and inadequate infrastructure persist (Feuchter & Fischer, 2023; Lang & Spitzer, 2020). Women, especially from rural areas, face additional barriers due to gender biases and safety concerns, exacerbating their exclusion from quality higher education (Walker et al., 2019). Further, students from economically marginalized sections often struggle to access necessary resources such as textbooks, internet connectivity, and participation in extracurricular activities (Tyagi et al., 2021).

To bridge these gaps, inclusive curricula, accessible financial aid, mentorship programs, and safe campuses are essential to create an environment that promotes equity. Comprehensive institutional reforms are required to ensure that higher education becomes a tool for social transformation, fostering an inclusive and just society (Noon, 2018; Tsergas & Fragkos, 2021).

### **Key Issues related to Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education in India:**

Equity and inclusion in higher education in India are central to addressing historical disparities and ensuring that all students, regardless of their social, economic, or cultural backgrounds, have equal access to educational opportunities. Several key issues persist in this context:

- **Access to Education:** One of the foremost challenges is ensuring equitable access to higher education. While enrollment has increased over the years, marginalized groups such as Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and economically disadvantaged communities still face barriers due to lack of infrastructure, geographical isolation, and financial constraints. Access to quality higher education in rural and remote areas is also limited.



- **Affordability:** The cost of higher education, including tuition fees, accommodation, and other expenses, remains a significant barrier for students from economically weaker sections. Scholarships and financial aid programs exist, but they are often insufficient or poorly implemented, making it difficult for these students to pursue higher education without significant debt or family burden.
- **Cultural and Social Biases:** Discrimination based on caste, gender, religion, and disability continues to persist in many academic institutions. Even though reservations and affirmative action policies exist, social prejudices often manifest in the form of exclusion, bullying, and a lack of adequate support for students from marginalized communities. Women, especially in rural areas, also face gender-based barriers in higher education, including safety concerns and societal expectations.
- **Curriculum and Pedagogy:** The dominant curriculum in many higher education institutions is often not inclusive of diverse perspectives, particularly those of marginalized groups. A lack of culturally relevant content and teaching methods that accommodate diverse learning styles may further alienate students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- **Support Systems:** There is a lack of adequate support systems, including mentorship, counseling, and peer networks, which can help students from marginalized backgrounds navigate the academic and social aspects of university life. This further hampers their ability to succeed in a competitive environment.

Addressing these issues requires comprehensive policy reforms, increased funding for scholarships, better implementation of affirmative action, and a greater emphasis on creating inclusive learning environments.

## **Data Analysis & Review: Key Findings**

### **1. Enrolment Trends:**

India has witnessed progress in higher education enrolment, particularly among marginalized groups and women, yet challenges remain in ensuring equity and inclusivity across fields of study.

**(a) Rise in SC/ST Enrolment:**

- The enrolment of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) students in higher education increased from 19% in 2010 to 23% in 2020 (AISHE, 2020).
- This improvement is a result of affirmative action policies, reservations, and targeted government schemes like the Post Matric Scholarship for SC/ST students.
- Despite this progress, many students face barriers such as discrimination, inadequate support systems, and cultural stigma, which hinder their retention and academic success.

**(b) Female Enrolment Trends:**

- Female enrolment in higher education has risen to 49%, reflecting a narrowing gender gap.
- Government initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Kanyashree Prakalpa, and scholarships for girl students have contributed significantly to this growth.
- However, gender disparities persist in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics), where female participation remains disproportionately low compared to other disciplines.
- Societal norms, stereotypes, and limited access to role models in STEM contribute to this gap.

**2. Economic Barriers:**

Financial constraints remain a significant obstacle for students from low-income families, leading to high dropout rates and limited access to higher education.

**(a) Dropout Rates:**

- Over 40% of students from low-income families drop out of higher education due to financial challenges, including tuition fees, living expenses, and costs of learning materials.
- The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges, with many families unable to sustain educational expenses.

**(b) Limited Reach of Scholarship Programs:**

- Scholarship programs, though essential, benefit only 25% of eligible students, indicating gaps in awareness, application processes, and accessibility.
- Many students lack the resources or guidance needed to navigate complex scholarship applications, while others are excluded due to strict eligibility criteria.
- Expanding the reach of scholarships and ensuring their alignment with actual needs can significantly reduce financial barriers.

**3. Digital Divide:**

The digital divide remains a critical issue in India, disproportionately affecting rural and marginalized students, particularly during the shift to online education amid the pandemic.

**(a) Urban-Rural Gap in Internet Access:**

- Only 28% of rural students have access to reliable internet, compared to 70% in urban areas (NSSO, 2021).
- Factors such as poor digital infrastructure, unaffordable devices, and low digital literacy in rural areas hinder equitable access to online education.

**(b) Impact of COVID-19:**

- The transition to online education during the pandemic severely affected rural and marginalized students, many of whom lacked devices or connectivity.
- The reliance on online platforms for learning widened educational disparities, as urban students were better equipped to adapt to the digital shift.
- Innovative solutions like community internet hubs, government-provided devices, and hybrid learning models can help bridge this gap.

#### **4. Faculty Diversity:**

Representation of marginalized communities in faculty positions remains alarmingly low, highlighting the need for systemic changes in recruitment and support mechanisms.

##### **(a) Low SC/ST Faculty Representation:**

- Only 7% of faculty positions are occupied by individuals from SC/ST communities (AISHE, 2020), despite reservation policies aimed at ensuring representation.
- Structural barriers, such as implicit biases in recruitment, lack of mentorship opportunities, and limited access to advanced academic qualifications, contribute to this underrepresentation.

##### **(b) Importance of Diverse Faculty:**

- Diverse faculty representation plays a crucial role in creating inclusive learning environments, providing role models for marginalized students, and ensuring varied perspectives in academic discourse.
- Increasing representation requires proactive measures, including targeted recruitment drives, support for SC/ST scholars to pursue doctoral and postdoctoral studies, and addressing systemic discrimination in academia.

While there has been progress in higher education enrolment and gender representation, significant challenges remain in addressing economic barriers, bridging the digital divide, and improving faculty diversity. Holistic and inclusive policies, along with targeted interventions, are essential to ensure equitable access and participation for all students, particularly those from marginalized and underrepresented groups. Strengthening support systems, expanding financial aid, and fostering diversity in academic institutions can pave the way for a more inclusive and robust higher education ecosystem in India.

#### **Conclusion:**

Equity and inclusion in higher education are essential for creating a just society in India. Despite policies such as reservations and scholarships,

barriers remain for marginalized communities in terms of access, affordability, and social integration. Financial constraints, societal discrimination, and a lack of inclusive teaching practices often prevent full participation in academic life. To bridge these gaps, it is crucial to enhance access to education and provide support systems like financial aid, mentorship, and infrastructure. Universities must also foster inclusive environments that celebrate diversity and adapt curricula to reflect varied social and cultural perspectives. Addressing these issues will ensure that all students, irrespective of their background, can thrive academically and contribute meaningfully to society. By making higher education more equitable, India can break the cycle of inequality, empower individuals, and create a more inclusive and just society, where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Targeted Policies:** Strengthen reservation systems and scholarship programs to ensure financial support reaches all eligible students.
- **Digital Inclusion:** Invest in digital infrastructure and provide affordable devices and internet access to rural students.
- **Faculty Diversity:** Increase representation of marginalized groups in faculty positions through targeted recruitment and capacity-building programs.
- **Inclusive Curriculum:** Develop curricula that reflect the diverse cultural, social, and economic realities of India.
- **Community Engagement:** Involve local communities in creating awareness about the importance of higher education for marginalized groups.

By implementing these measures, India can create an equitable and inclusive higher education system that empowers all students to achieve their full potential and contribute to nation-building.

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## Chapter – 3

# **TRANSFORMING LIVES: POWER OF EDUCATION IN PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND SUPPORT**

**Prof. (Dr.) B. C. Swain <sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract:**

Mental health is a critical aspect of overall wellbeing, and education plays a vital role in promoting mental health awareness and support. This chapter explores the transformative power of education in addressing mental health concerns and promoting wellbeing among students. It highlights the importance of integrating mental health education into school curricula and creating a supportive educational environment that encourages help-seeking behaviours. The chapter also discusses strategies for reducing stigma and promoting mental health literacy, as well as the role of educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in prioritizing mental health education and support. Furthermore, the chapter examines the impact of mental health issues on academic performance and overall wellbeing, and discusses the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing mental health concerns in educational settings. It also highlights the importance of teacher training and support, as well as the role of school counsellors and mental health professionals in providing mental health support services. By examining the complex interplay between education and mental health, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which education can transform lives by promoting mental health awareness and support. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to inform educators, policymakers, and stakeholders about the critical role that education plays in promoting mental health awareness and support, and to provide practical strategies for creating a

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supportive educational environment that promotes wellbeing and success for all students.

**Keywords:** *Mental Health Education, Education And Wellbeing, Mental Health Literacy, School Mental Health, Stigma Reduction*

### **Introduction:**

The importance of mental health in overall wellbeing cannot be overstated. Mental health is a critical aspect of our lives, influencing how we think, feel, and behave. It affects our relationships, our work, and our overall quality of life. Despite its importance, mental health has historically been neglected and stigmatized. However, in recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need to prioritize mental health and wellbeing. This shift in attitude has led to increased efforts to promote mental health awareness and support, particularly in educational settings.

The history of mental health education is a long and complex one. In the early 20th century, mental health education was largely focused on providing information about mental illness and its treatment. However, this approach was often stigmatizing and did little to promote mental health and wellbeing. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a shift towards a more preventive approach, with a focus on promoting mental health and wellbeing through education and community-based programs. This approach was influenced by the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing." Since then, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of mental health education in promoting overall wellbeing.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in efforts to promote mental health education and awareness. This has been driven in part by the growing recognition of the importance of mental health in overall wellbeing, as well as the increasing prevalence of mental health issues among young people. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), half of all mental health disorders begin by the age of 14, and three-quarters by mid-20s. This has led to a growing recognition of the need to provide mental health education and support in educational settings, in order to promote mental health and wellbeing among young people.

- **Promoting Mental Health Literacy:** Education plays a crucial role in promoting mental health literacy among students. This involves providing accurate and age-appropriate information about mental health, mental illness, and mental wellbeing. By teaching students about mental health, education can help them develop a better understanding of their own mental health and wellbeing, as well as that of their peers. This can also help reduce stigma and misconceptions surrounding mental health issues.
- **Reducing Stigma and Misconceptions:** Education can help reduce stigma and misconceptions surrounding mental health issues. By promoting a culture of acceptance and understanding, education can encourage students to speak openly about their mental health concerns. This can also involve providing opportunities for students to share their experiences and perspectives, and promoting positive representations of mental health in the media.
- **Building Resilience and Life Skills:** Education can provide students with the skills and knowledge they need to build resilience and manage stress. This can include teaching coping strategies, problem-solving skills, and emotional regulation techniques. By teaching students how to manage stress and adversity, education can help them develop resilience and improve their overall mental wellbeing.
- **Providing Access to Mental Health Services:** Education can provide access to mental health services, such as counselling and therapy. This can involve partnering with mental health professionals, community organizations, and families. By providing access to mental health services, education can help students receive the support they need to manage mental health issues.
- **Creating a Supportive and Inclusive School Environment:** Education can create a supportive and inclusive school environment that promotes mental wellbeing. This can involve promoting positive relationships, social connections, and a sense of belonging among students. By creating a supportive and inclusive environment, education can help students feel safe, valued, and supported.
- **Identifying and Supporting Students with Mental Health Issues:** Education can play a critical role in identifying students

who may be struggling with mental health issues. Teachers and educators can provide targeted support and referrals to mental health services. By identifying and supporting students with mental health issues, education can help them receive the support they need to succeed.

- **Fostering a Culture of Help-Seeking:** Education can foster a culture of help-seeking among students. By promoting a culture of openness and acceptance, education can encourage students to seek help when they need it. This can involve promoting positive messages about seeking help, and providing opportunities for students to practice help-seeking skills.
- **Providing Resources and Referrals:** Education can provide students with resources and referrals to mental health services. This can involve providing information about local mental health resources, support groups, and hotlines. By providing resources and referrals, education can help students access the support they need to manage mental health issues.
- **Encouraging Parental Involvement:** Education can encourage parental involvement in promoting mental health and wellbeing. This can involve providing parents with information and resources about mental health, and encouraging them to engage in conversations with their children about mental health. By encouraging parental involvement, education can help promote a culture of mental health support that extends beyond the school.
- **Monitoring and Evaluating Mental Health Initiatives:** Education can monitor and evaluate mental health initiatives to ensure their effectiveness. This can involve collecting data on student mental health outcomes, and using this data to inform mental health initiatives. By monitoring and evaluating mental health initiatives, education can ensure that students receive the support they need to succeed.

### **State of Mental Health: Challenges and Concerns:**

Mental health is a critical aspect of our overall wellbeing, influencing how we think, feel, and behave. Despite its importance, mental health remains a neglected and stigmatized issue, particularly among young people. The statistics are alarming: mental health issues affect one in four individuals worldwide, with half of all mental health disorders beginning by the age of 14. The consequences of neglecting mental

health are severe and far-reaching. Untreated mental health issues can lead to poor academic performance, social isolation, and even suicidal behaviours. Furthermore, mental health issues can have long-term effects on physical health, relationships, and overall quality of life. As such, it is imperative that we prioritize mental health and take proactive steps to address the challenges and concerns facing young people today.

- **Prevalence of mental health issues among students:** The prevalence of mental health issues among students is a growing concern. Research suggests that one in five students experience mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and eating disorders. These issues can affect students of all ages, backgrounds, and academic levels, highlighting the need for comprehensive mental health support in educational settings.
- **Factors contributing to mental health concerns:** Several factors contribute to mental health concerns among students. Academic pressure is a significant stressor, as students navigate rigorous coursework, exams, and the pressure to succeed. Social media also plays a role, as students compare their lives to curated online profiles, leading to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. Other factors, such as bullying, social isolation, and family problems, can also exacerbate mental health issues. By understanding these factors, educators and policymakers can develop targeted strategies to support student mental health.
- **Impact of mental health issues on academic performance and overall wellbeing:** The impact of mental health issues on academic performance and overall wellbeing cannot be overstated. Students struggling with mental health issues may experience decreased motivation, reduced concentration, and lower academic achievement. Mental health issues can also affect students' relationships, physical health, and overall quality of life. Furthermore, untreated mental health issues can lead to severe consequences, including suicidal behaviours and long-term mental health problems. By prioritizing student mental health, educators and policymakers can help students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

## **Education as a Catalyst for Mental Health Awareness:**

Education plays a crucial role in fostering mental health awareness by equipping individuals with knowledge, reducing stigma, and promoting emotional well-being. By integrating mental health education into curricula, society can encourage early intervention, resilience, and informed decision-making, ultimately creating a more supportive and understanding environment for mental well-being.

- **Role of education in promoting mental health literacy:** Education plays a vital role in promoting mental health awareness and literacy among students. By incorporating mental health education into school curricula, educators can provide students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to maintain good mental health. Mental health literacy is critical in helping students recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health issues, reducing stigma, and encouraging help-seeking behaviours.
- **Strategies for integrating mental health education into school curricula:** Effective integration of mental health education into school curricula requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach. This can involve incorporating mental health topics into existing subjects, such as health education, physical education, or social studies. Educators can also use real-life scenarios, case studies, and interactive activities to engage students and promote critical thinking and reflection.
- **Examples of successful mental health education programs:** Successful mental health education programs have been implemented in schools worldwide, demonstrating positive outcomes for students. For example, the Mental Health First Aid program, which originated in Australia, has been widely adopted in schools and communities globally. This program provides educators and students with the skills and knowledge necessary to identify and respond to mental health issues. Other successful programs, such as the UK-based MindEd program, offer online resources and training for educators to support student mental health.
- **Benefits of mental health education in schools:** By investing in mental health education, schools can help students develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to maintain good

mental health. This, in turn, can lead to improved academic performance, better relationships, and enhanced overall wellbeing. Moreover, mental health education can help reduce stigma, promote help-seeking behaviours, and foster a supportive and inclusive school environment.

### **Creating a Supportive Educational Environment:**

A supportive educational environment fosters inclusivity, emotional well-being, and academic success. By promoting empathy, open communication, and mental health resources, schools can create safe spaces where students thrive both personally and academically.

- **Importance of teacher training and support:** Teachers play a vital role in creating a supportive educational environment, and their training and support are crucial in this endeavour. Educators who receive training on mental health issues, trauma-informed care, and crisis intervention are better equipped to identify and respond to students' mental health needs. Moreover, teacher training programs can help educators develop the skills and confidence necessary to create a safe and inclusive classroom environment.
- **Strategies for creating a safe and inclusive classroom environment:** Creating a safe and inclusive classroom environment requires intentional strategies and practices. Educators can foster a positive classroom culture by promoting social-emotional learning, encouraging open communication, and addressing bullying and harassment. Additionally, educators can create a safe space for students to share their feelings and concerns by using restorative practices, such as "circle time" or "restorative circles."
- **Role of school counsellors and mental health professionals:** School counsellors and mental health professionals play a critical role in supporting students' mental health needs. These professionals can provide individual and group counselling, crisis intervention, and referrals to community resources. Moreover, school counsellors and mental health professionals can work with educators to develop and implement mental health education programs, provide teacher training, and support the creation of a safe and inclusive school environment.

- **Benefits of a supportive educational environment:** A supportive educational environment can have numerous benefits for students, including improved academic performance, increased social-emotional learning, and enhanced mental health and wellbeing. Moreover, a supportive educational environment can help reduce stigma, promote help-seeking behaviours, and foster a positive school culture. By prioritizing the creation of a supportive educational environment, educators and policymakers can help students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

### **Breaking Down Barriers: Addressing Stigma and Promoting Help-Seeking:**

Addressing stigma is crucial in encouraging help-seeking behaviors for mental health. By fostering awareness, open conversations, and supportive networks, education can empower individuals to seek assistance without fear of judgment or discrimination.

- **Impact of stigma on mental health help-seeking:** Stigma remains a significant barrier to mental health help-seeking, particularly among young people. The fear of being labelled as "crazy" or "weak" can prevent individuals from seeking help, leading to delayed treatment and poor mental health outcomes. Moreover, stigma can perpetuate negative attitudes and stereotypes, further exacerbating the mental health crisis.
- **Strategies for reducing stigma and promoting help-seeking behaviours:** Reducing stigma and promoting help-seeking behaviours require a multi-faceted approach. Educators and mental health professionals can play a critical role in promoting positive mental health attitudes and behaviours. Strategies include incorporating mental health education into school curricula, using social media campaigns to promote positive mental health messages, and providing accessible and confidential mental health services.
- **Examples of successful anti-stigma campaigns and initiatives:** Several successful anti-stigma campaigns and initiatives have been implemented globally. For example, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) "In Our Own Voice" program uses personal stories to raise awareness and reduce stigma. Similarly, the UK-based "Time to Change"

campaign has successfully promoted positive mental health attitudes and behaviours through social media and community-based initiatives.

- **Benefits of reducing stigma and promoting help-seeking behaviours:** Reducing stigma and promoting help-seeking behaviours can have numerous benefits for individuals and communities. By encouraging help-seeking behaviours, individuals can access timely and effective mental health support, leading to improved mental health outcomes. Moreover, reducing stigma can promote a positive and inclusive school culture, fostering a supportive environment where students feel comfortable seeking help when needed.

### **Conclusion:**

Mental health is a critical aspect of education that requires urgent attention and action. By acknowledging the prevalence of mental health issues among students, educators can work to create a supportive educational environment that promotes mental health awareness, reduces stigma, and encourages help-seeking behaviours. Through teacher training, curriculum integration, and community partnerships, schools can provide students with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to maintain good mental health and wellbeing. By prioritizing mental health in education, we can empower students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally, and set them up for success in all aspects of life.

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## **EMBRACING DIVERSITY AND STEERING THE POWER OF INCLUSION: A NARRATIVE**

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### **Abstract:**

The narrative presents contemporary nuances of diversity and inclusion through the lens of philosophical, sociological, economical and humanitarian perspectives. The quotes, voices and phrases on inclusion and its direct bearing on society and sustainable development. The role of education and the policy directives have also been envisaged briefly taking the toll on implementing strategies and rolling practices. The chapter also describes the hiatus between rhetoric and realities of conceiving inclusive education as a vehicle of social change. Strengthening the fabrics of diversity by embracing differences and creating equitable opportunities contribute towards creating inclusive societies. The relationship between diversity and inclusions are complementary and supplements each other to thrive and strive for renewed growth and relevant progress in the contemporary society. The role of inclusive education and recognizing Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Group (SEDGs) of learners as per National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has been underscored too. Capping the narrative, the chapter reiterates that diversity is not just a word which engulfs variations but it is rather a vibrant view that enlivens the concert of voices, perspectives, and experiences. Therefore, embracing diversity, unleashing its power to foster inclusion is not just a moral imperative but a catalyst for concerted progress, innovation and collective well-being.

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**Keywords:** *Diversity, Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Exclusion, NEP 2020, Strategic implementation*

### **Introduction:**

**D**iversity is any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another. It is about empowering people by respecting and appreciating what makes them different, in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, and national origin. In simpler words, diversity means being composed of differing elements. In a workplace, diversity means that the workforce is made up of employees with different races, gender identities, career backgrounds, skills and so on. Diversity is proven to make communities and workplaces more productive, tolerant and welcoming. Inclusion is the involvement and empowerment where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognized. It values and practices respect of talents, backgrounds and people's varied ways of life. So, a system that allows the people to express and also their expressions are allowed and their participation and involvement are welcomed and celebrated. The ambience of including and culture of inclusivity is thereby established. Here comes a ligand that connects the diversity and ploughs the bed for inclusiveness-the equity. It is the equal distribution of system's benefits and burdens irrespective of its members differences. Hence equity requires the will and action of a system to redistribute opportunities, situations and power. These are working definition by AICAD (2019). With these precepts, it often hammers in our mind that why diversity and inclusion are essential in any system? It is due to the following reasons-

Diversity and inclusion promote/provides-

1. Greater innovation and creativity
2. Diversity provides a range of skills
3. The business will be boosted
4. Happier employees
5. Increased productivity
6. Understand your customers
7. More talent to choose from
8. Higher revenues

Diversity takes various forms. These are -

(A) Internal Diversity: Race, Age, Ethnicity, National Origin & Cultural Diversity

(B) External Diversity: Education, Skills and Interests, Religion, Geographical location, Relationship Status, Socioeconomic Status, Experiences & Citizenship.

(C) Organizational Diversity: Work location, Job function, Department, Management Status & Level of Seniority

**World Views:** Political Beliefs, Knowledge of History & Cultural Events.

Having an embroidery of diversity across the systems and organs of society, and a mindset of inclusion, let us examine the relation between the two keywords 'Diversity and Inclusion'.

**Table-1: Relation between Diversity and Inclusion**

Sl. No	Diversity	Inclusion
1	Refers to the differences in social, racial, cultural, socio-economic backgrounds, geographical locations, age, interests, physical and mental abilities, etc. that make individuals unique.	Refers to the conscious efforts, behaviours, policies, and norms to make every person feel, seen, heard and valued with their unique potential.
2	The concept of bringing different people together in the same place.	The strategies and methods that help diversity work in an organization.
3	Achieved when recruiters/administrators/academics aim towards heterogeneity and fight any biases in the system/process.	Achieved when all members in an organization feel psychologically safe and included.
4	Relies on inclusion for successful execution	Is vital to diversity to work.

### **Exploration of the Narrative through Voices and Phrases:**

According to the Philosophical Dimension of Inclusion, Inclusive means a sense of belonging that is.,

- Feeling respected
- Valued for who you are
- Feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment

The Upanishads, an integral part of the Hindu philosophy purports-“Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” - the whole world is one single family. That means Inclusion is a broader interrelationship among people, across the society.

Quoting African concepts Ubuntu (Tuttu, 1999)-It is an ethic, or humanist philosophy, focusing on people's allegiances and relations with each other. It is sometimes translated as "I am because we are". In addition to this, Ubuntu according to Nelson Mandela, “A traveler through a country would stop at a village and he didn't have to ask for food, or, for water. Once he stops, the people give him food, entertain him. That is one aspect of Ubuntu, but it will have various aspects. Ubuntu does not mean that people should not address themselves. The question therefore is: Are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you to be able to improve?”

In the Chinese word, Xiaokang, which means - Being Well Off (i.e., All Inclusive). Xiaokang (Chinese: pinyin: xiaokang) is a term that describes a society basically "well-off" whereby the people are able to live relatively comfortably.

Adam Smith (1776), the Scottish moral philosopher said “No society can surely be flourishing and happy of which by far the greater part of the numbers are poor and miserable”

Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation advocated “No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive”.

### **Sociological Dimension of Inclusion:**

Social inclusion is an overarching framework for addressing various social policy issues, including –

- Income inequality
- Skill levels
- Education
- Health inequalities
- Housing affordability
- Work-life balance

An inclusive society is characterized by a widely shared social experience and active participation, by a broad equality of opportunities and life chances for individuals, and by the achievement of a basic level of wellbeing for all citizens.

### **Social Inclusion according to UNESCO:**

That no one should be left behind was the pledge of UNESCO. This was one of the defining features of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this world of complexities and changing scenarios, transformation in every nook and cranny of social context has reaped shifts. All these have pounded due to the impact of economic and social crises and other challenges. These changes have compounded in increasing inequalities within and among countries. The UNESCO's 2030 Agenda envisages peaceful, just and inclusive societies where all human beings can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality.

In the pretext of this narrative, it is noteworthy to mention few goals and their agenda towards equitable and inclusive atmosphere. For instance, Goals 10 and 16 directly address social inclusion. Goal 10 ambitions to reduce inequality within and among countries pinpointing on inclusion, equal opportunities and enhanced representation. Goal 16 on the flip side recognizes that inclusion is a predicament for sustained peace and ensures among other goals for the protection of fundamental rights of humans.

Looking at other Goals, which are multifaceted in nature and feature, it is evident that inclusion occupies a prominent seat in several other goals. Given these overarching multidimensional features, the following foci are of immense importance, like-

Goal 4 focuses on quality education through equitable and inclusive education

Goal 11 emphasizes on urban development with an inclusive set-up

Goal 8 and 9 address economic growth and industrialization

Goal 5 focuses gender equality and harnesses on the multidimensional form of social inclusion.

### **Economical Dimension of Inclusion:**

It ensures equal economic opportunities and resources irrespective of their backgrounds and situation. The key aspects strike a coherent chord to create more inclusive society where everyone can reach to their full potential and enjoy opportunities to thrive better. It includes-

- Equal access to economic opportunities
- Poverty alleviation
- Decent work and fair wages
- Social protection
- Financial inclusion
- Inclusive entrepreneurship
- Equitable distribution of resources

### **Humanitarian Dimension of Inclusion:**

The basic principles of humanitarian inclusion enlist-

- Humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence
- Non-discrimination
- Accessibility
- Respect for the inherent dignity of older people and people with disabilities
- Active and effective participation and equality of opportunities
- Respect for diversity, and acceptance of older people and people with disabilities
- Equality between people of different genders and age groups.

### **Cultivating the Power of Inclusion:**

Culminating diversity and inclusion in the purview of Inclusive Education, let us relook at the vision of NEP 2020. Mahatma Gandhi

believed that, ‘Be the change to make a change’ and Nelson Mandela once said, ‘Education is the most powerful weapon through which you can change the world’. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 brought about transformative changes in Education to meet the needs and aspirations of the global and contemporary learners. The policy documents and envisions (excerpts from NEP 2020 document, Ch-1: Introduction) -

- **Making India a global knowledge superpower:** An education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all.
- **Conscious awareness of one’s roles and responsibilities:** The curriculum and pedagogy of our institutions must develop among the students a deep sense of respect towards the fundamental duties and constitutional values, bonding with one’s country.
- **Reflecting a truly global citizen:** A deep-rooted pride in being Indian in thought, spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being.

With the above visions, NEP 2020 also recognizes the diversity in learners and also prescribes the strategies of policy implementation towards maximising inclusion and promoting inclusive growth. Coming out of the rhetorics, the practices vow to dwindle the dismal reality. A new classification of diverse learners has been grouped in the NEP 2020 termed as Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs):

**Table-2: SEDGs**

<b>Gender Identities</b>	<b>Socio-cultural Identities</b>	<b>Geographical Identities</b>	<b>Disabilities</b>	<b>Socio-economic Conditions</b>
Female Transgender	Scheduled Castes Scheduled	Learners from- Villages	Sensory, physical including	Learners from- Migrant communities



	Tribes Other Backward Class Minorities	Small Towns Aspirational Districts	learning disabilities	Low-income households Children in vulnerable situations Children of victims of trafficking Orphans Child beggars Urban poor
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### **Outlining Policies & Measures towards Inclusive Education:**

NEP 2020 puts forward the following steps to be taken by Governments to ensure an equitable, inclusive and quality education (excerpts from the NEP 2020 document)-

- Suitable Government funds for the education of SEDGs need to be earmarked.
- Clear targets for higher GER for SEDGs are to be set forth
- Gender balance in admissions to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has to be upgraded or increased
- Enhancing access by means of establishing more high-quality HEIs in aspirational districts and Special Education Zones containing larger numbers of SEDGs
- Required to develop and support high-quality HEIs that teach in local/Indian languages or bilingually
- Provision to be made for more financial assistance and scholarships to SEDGs in both public and private HEIs
- Conducting outreach programmes and events on higher education opportunities, career fostering and scholarships among SEDGs
- To develop and support technology tools for better participation and learning outcomes.
- Opportunity costs and fees for pursuing higher education need to be mitigated.
- Provisioning more financial assistance and scholarships to socio-economically disadvantaged students

- To make admission processes more inclusive
- Make curriculum more inclusive
- The increase in employability potential of higher education programmes must be ensured
- Developing more degree courses that can be taught in Indian languages and bilingually
- Ensuring that all buildings and facilities are wheelchair-accessible and disabled-friendly
- Developing bridge courses for students that come from disadvantaged educational backgrounds.
- To provide socio-emotional and academic support and mentoring for all such students through suitable counselling and mentoring programmes
- Necessary to ensure regular sensitization of faculty, counsellor, and students on gender-identity issue and its inclusion in all aspects of the HEI, across the curricula.
- There must be strictly enforcement of ‘no-discrimination and anti-harassment’ rules
- Developing Institutional Development Plans which must contain specific plans for action on increasing participation from SEDGs, including but not limited to the already stated items.

### **Conclusion:**

In this tapestry of world views and philosophical, sociological, economical and humanitarian views and narratives, it is established that inclusion is not a passive state but an active process. And diversity is not just a word which accumulates differences and variations but the vibrant view that enlivens the symphony of voices, perspectives, and experiences. Therefore, embracing diversity, unleashing its power to foster inclusion is not just a moral imperative but a catalyst for concerted progress, innovation and collective well-being. The journey of inclusion through education might have challenges. But it is through cross-pollination of ideas, we unlock our genuine potential and celebrate inclusion through valuing and respecting individuality. Thus, leveraging the power of inclusion, we not only create a better world for ourselves but also encourage solidarity of hope and opportunity towards a sustainable society.

There are benefits of fostering diversity and inclusion in every social sub system. It yields-

- Higher Employee Engagement
- Higher Innovation
- Increased Revenue and Profits
- Better Decision Making
- Higher Employee Retention
- Boost to Company Reputation

The role of education to promote equitable and inclusive education would actually pave ways to improve diversity and inclusion in the society and at workplace:

1. Educate People in Leadership Positions
2. Set up a Council
3. Focus on Hiring Diversely
4. Replace culture fit with Culture Add
5. Connect and communicate
6. Diversity and Inclusion training
7. Encourage and Enable Creativity and Innovation
8. Keep a check on Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

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# EDUCATION AS A CATALYST FOR BUILDING A FAIRER FUTURE: TACKLING DISCRIMINATION AND BIAS

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## Abstract:

This chapter explores the pervasive issues of discrimination and bias in society, focusing on their impact on individuals and communities, and the role of inclusive education in addressing these challenges. Discrimination and bias manifest across various social dimensions, including race, caste, gender, religion, and socioeconomic status, creating systemic barriers to equal opportunities. The psychological, social, and economic consequences affect marginalized groups, perpetuating cycles of inequality. By examining inclusive education models and strategies, particularly in India, the chapter highlights approaches such as curriculum reform, culturally responsive teaching, and diversity-promoting initiatives that foster empathy, critical thinking, and social justice. Case studies of successful educational reforms demonstrate tangible progress in reducing discrimination and building a more equitable future. Ultimately, education emerges as a transformative tool for dismantling stereotypes and biases, promoting fairness, and empowering marginalized communities.

**Keywords:** *Discrimination, Bias, Inclusive Education, Social Justice, Diversity, Educational Reform*

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## **Introduction:**

**E**ducation is a powerful tool for shaping a fairer and more just society. By fostering critical thinking, empathy, and understanding, it can serve as a catalyst for dismantling discrimination and bias in all forms. When students are exposed to diverse perspectives, cultures, and experiences, they are better equipped to challenge stereotypes and prejudices. Through inclusive curricula and thoughtful pedagogy, education can promote equality, empowering individuals to address societal inequalities. In this context, education goes beyond academic knowledge; it becomes a means of building awareness, encouraging social justice, and fostering a more inclusive and equitable future for all.

## **Overview of Discrimination and Bias in Society:**

Discrimination and bias are widespread issues that affect individuals and communities across various dimensions, including race, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability. Discrimination involves unfair treatment based on characteristics like race or gender, leading to disadvantages in areas such as education, employment, and healthcare. It can be explicit, through laws or policies, or implicit, embedded in societal norms and institutional practices.

Bias refers to unconscious preferences or prejudices that influence perceptions and decisions. It can be explicit, where individuals are aware of their prejudices, or implicit, where attitudes or stereotypes shape actions and judgments without conscious awareness. Both discrimination and bias impact opportunities and experiences for marginalized groups.

## **Prevalence of Discrimination and Bias:**

Discrimination and bias are deeply embedded in societies worldwide, manifesting in various forms depending on cultural, historical, and social contexts.

- **Race and Ethnicity:** Racial and ethnic minorities often face systemic discrimination through practices like segregation, racial

profiling, and unequal access to resources, as seen in countries like the U.S. and India.

- **Gender:** Gender bias affects women and gender minorities in education, workplaces, and homes, leading to barriers in leadership, wage gaps, and underrepresentation in fields like science and politics. Gender-based violence and harassment are also prevalent.
- **Socioeconomic Status:** Economic inequality leads to discrimination, with people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds having limited access to education, healthcare, and career opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty.
- **Disability:** People with disabilities encounter societal and structural barriers that limit their participation in education, employment, and society, along with discriminatory attitudes that hinder inclusion.
- **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity:** LGBTQ+ individuals face discrimination in many societies, including legal challenges, social exclusion, and violence, with insufficient protection and inclusivity in policies and education.

### **Manifestations of Discrimination and Bias:**

Discrimination and bias manifest in various forms, including racial, gender, socioeconomic, and cultural prejudices. These biases often shape social interactions, opportunities, and systems, perpetuating inequality and exclusion in society.

- **Microaggressions:** Microaggressions refer to small, often subtle comments or actions that can unintentionally demean or belittle individuals from marginalized groups. These can include making assumptions about someone's background based on their appearance, questioning their intelligence or capabilities due to their gender, or making dismissive comments about someone's culture or identity. While these behaviors may not always be overtly hostile, their cumulative effect can contribute to a feeling of being marginalized or undervalued, reinforcing stereotypes and perpetuating inequality.
- **Systemic Discrimination:** Systemic or institutional discrimination refers to the entrenched policies, practices, and structures within institutions that disproportionately

disadvantage certain groups. These can include biased hiring practices that favor candidates from certain racial or socioeconomic backgrounds, unequal treatment within the criminal justice system (such as racial profiling or harsher sentencing for minorities), or policies that exclude marginalized communities from accessing quality resources. Systemic discrimination operates at a larger scale, often embedded in laws, policies, and organizational culture, and can persist even in the absence of explicit prejudice or malice.

- **Stereotyping:** Stereotyping involves making generalized assumptions about individuals based on their membership in a particular group, which can lead to biased treatment. For example, assuming that all members of a particular race or ethnicity share the same characteristics, behaviors, or abilities—such as believing that all Asians are good at math—can negatively influence judgments and actions towards them. These stereotypes are often unconscious and can operate on an automatic level, influencing decisions and interactions without awareness. As a result, individuals are treated unfairly or judged based on inaccurate, generalized perceptions.
- **Bias in Media:** Media plays a significant role in shaping societal perceptions by portraying certain groups in specific ways. Misrepresentation or underrepresentation of marginalized groups in films, television, news, and advertisements can reinforce stereotypes and contribute to biases. For example, the lack of diverse characters in prominent roles, or the frequent portrayal of certain racial or ethnic groups as criminals or victims, can perpetuate harmful assumptions. This biased portrayal can influence public attitudes, making it harder for marginalized individuals to break free from these restrictive stereotypes and gain equal opportunities in society.
- **Access to Resources:** Discrimination also manifests in the unequal distribution of resources, which often leaves marginalized communities with limited access to essential services like education, healthcare, housing, and employment opportunities. For instance, lower-income neighborhoods may lack adequate schools or healthcare facilities, while individuals from marginalized racial or ethnic groups may face discrimination in housing, leading to residential segregation. These systemic barriers hinder individuals from marginalized



backgrounds from achieving success and upward mobility, thereby perpetuating cycles of inequality and social exclusion. The lack of access to quality resources further exacerbates existing disparities and limits opportunities for personal and community growth..

### **Impact of Discrimination and Bias on Individuals and Communities:**

Discrimination and bias significantly affect individuals and communities by limiting access to opportunities, resources, and fair treatment. These injustices can lead to feelings of alienation, diminished self-worth, and long-term psychological effects, while also perpetuating social inequalities and hindering the overall progress and cohesion of society.

- **Psychological Impact of Discrimination and Bias:** Individuals who experience consistent discrimination and bias often face heightened anxiety, living in a constant state of alertness as they fear mistreatment based on their race, gender, or socioeconomic status. This chronic stress can lead to mental exhaustion, emotional instability, and a pervasive sense of unease. In more severe cases, internalized biases worsen feelings of depression, hopelessness, and diminished self-worth, which can isolate individuals and create intense internal conflict.
- **Emotional Consequences of Discrimination:** The emotional consequences of discrimination are significant, frequently manifesting as depression, helplessness, and low self-esteem. Repeated exposure to bias, especially in critical areas such as employment, education, and healthcare, can lead individuals to feel unworthy of equal treatment and opportunities. Internalizing societal biases only intensifies these negative emotions, making it difficult to maintain a positive sense of self. Over time, these emotional burdens may result in deepening feelings of alienation and detachment from communities and support networks.
- **Social Alienation and Exclusion:** Discrimination can drive individuals into social isolation, causing them to feel disconnected from their communities. This is especially damaging for youth, who rely on a sense of belonging for emotional and mental well-being. Those who experience

discrimination often struggle to find role models or peers who share their experiences, increasing feelings of isolation. Over time, this exclusion deepens mental health challenges, reinforcing the belief that they are undeserving or incapable of belonging in society.

- **Economic Consequences:** Discrimination has tangible economic consequences, particularly in education and employment. In the educational system, biased materials, lack of representation, and unequal access to resources limit academic success for marginalized groups, hindering their future career opportunities. Employment discrimination, through biased hiring practices and wage disparities, limits professional growth and reinforces economic inequality. These systemic barriers contribute to income disparities, with marginalized groups facing higher unemployment and lower wages, perpetuating economic hardships.
- **Healthcare Disparities and Housing Inequality:** Discrimination in healthcare results in inadequate treatment and poorer health outcomes for marginalized individuals. Bias among healthcare providers can lead to misdiagnosis and neglect, while limited access to quality care exacerbates existing health disparities. Discriminatory practices in housing further limit access to safe and affordable living spaces, reinforcing cycles of poverty and segregating communities, which deepens social and economic inequalities.
- **Long-Term Societal Impacts of Discrimination and Bias:** On a broader scale, discrimination and bias reinforce systemic inequality, creating entrenched societal divisions. These divisions increase polarization, social fragmentation, and hinder cooperation, often leading to social unrest and instability. The exclusion of marginalized groups from key societal roles stifles progress, creativity, and innovation. Furthermore, countries with pervasive discrimination may face international condemnation and strained relations, damaging global efforts to promote human rights and cooperation.

### **Education as a Vehicle for Social Transformation:**

Education has long been recognized as a powerful tool for personal development and social transformation. It serves as a catalyst for

positive change by fostering critical thinking, cultivating empathy, and promoting social justice. In societies marked by inequality, education holds the potential to challenge entrenched social norms, bridge divisions, and empower individuals to become agents of change.

At its core, education can dismantle systems of oppression by providing individuals with the knowledge and skills to recognize and challenge injustices. Inclusive and equitable education fosters awareness about social, cultural, racial, and gender disparities, creating spaces for dialogue and understanding. By introducing students to diverse perspectives and histories, education allows them to question stereotypes and prejudices, which are often perpetuated through ignorance or misinformation.

Moreover, education equips individuals with the tools needed to address social issues such as poverty, inequality, and discrimination. It promotes a sense of civic responsibility, encouraging students to engage with their communities and participate in democratic processes. An education system that emphasizes values such as empathy, fairness, and respect can play a significant role in promoting social cohesion and creating a more just society. Students who are educated about human rights, equality, and the importance of social justice are more likely to advocate for policies that promote fairness and inclusion.

Education also plays a pivotal role in breaking the cycle of poverty. By providing individuals with access to quality education, societies can enable upward mobility, allowing individuals from marginalized communities to attain better employment opportunities and improve their economic standing. Education not only empowers individuals to pursue their aspirations but also contributes to the overall economic development of societies. Educated individuals are more likely to start businesses, innovate, and contribute to the workforce in meaningful ways, ultimately improving the quality of life for entire communities. In addition, education can foster a culture of peace and tolerance. Through the promotion of intercultural exchange, understanding, and mutual respect, education can help bridge divides between different social, ethnic, or religious groups. It encourages collaboration and cooperation, reducing the likelihood of conflict and promoting peaceful coexistence. Education is not just a means of acquiring knowledge—it is a powerful vehicle for social transformation. By shaping the minds

of future generations and promoting values of equality, justice, and social responsibility, education has the potential to create a more inclusive and equitable world. Through its transformative power, education can pave the way for a society that prioritizes human dignity, respect, and collective well-being.

### **Conclusion:**

Discrimination and bias continue to challenge societal harmony and progress, deeply affecting individuals and communities. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach, with education serving as a pivotal force for change. Inclusive education models, enriched with diverse narratives and perspectives, equip learners with the tools to challenge stereotypes, embrace diversity, and foster social justice. In India, innovative approaches to educational reform have shown significant potential in breaking down barriers and reducing inequality. By empowering individuals through education, societies can cultivate empathy, critical thinking, and inclusivity, paving the way for a fairer and more equitable world. The ongoing commitment to inclusive education and policy innovation remains essential to overcoming systemic bias and ensuring equal opportunities for all.

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# TEACHING FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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## Abstract:

In India, financial literacy plays a pivotal role in fostering economic empowerment, particularly in a country characterized by economic diversity, rural-urban disparities, and rapid financial inclusion. With the increasing penetration of digital payment systems, government welfare schemes, and access to financial products, the need for financial literacy has become more urgent. This chapter explores the contemporary Indian context of financial literacy, focusing on its impact on diverse demographic groups, including rural populations, women, and youth. The chapter reviews the role of government initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), digital finance platforms like UPI, and microfinance institutions in promoting financial inclusion. Challenges such as linguistic and cultural diversity, low levels of formal education, and digital literacy gaps are examined. Data analysis reveals a significant correlation between financial literacy and improved economic outcomes, such as increased savings rates, reduced debt dependency, and enhanced participation in government schemes. The chapter concludes with recommendations for policymakers, educators, and financial institutions to design culturally relevant, accessible, and scalable

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financial literacy initiatives to empower individuals and promote sustainable economic growth in India.

**Keywords:** *Financial literacy, economic empowerment, India, rural development, digital finance, financial inclusion, PMJDY*

### **Introduction:**

India is at the forefront of financial inclusion, driven by widespread access to bank accounts, digital payment platforms, and government welfare schemes. According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), over 80% of Indian adults now have access to formal financial services, largely due to initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY). However, financial inclusion without financial literacy has limited impact. Financial literacy in the Indian context involves teaching individuals to understand financial products, manage personal finances, and make informed decisions about credit, savings, and investments. While urban India has seen significant advancements in financial literacy, rural areas, which account for nearly 65% of the population, still lag behind due to barriers like low education levels, lack of digital infrastructure, and traditional reliance on informal financial systems. Women, who often face cultural and social restrictions, are another underserved demographic. Despite government efforts to promote financial inclusion for women, such as the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana and Mudra Yojana, financial literacy among women remains low.

This chapter explores the role of financial literacy in promoting economic empowerment in India. It examines the challenges, success stories, and opportunities to create a financially literate and economically empowered population capable of leveraging India's growing financial ecosystem.

### **Literature Review:**

A literature review on teaching financial literacy for economic empowerment in India highlights the critical importance of equipping individuals with financial skills to enhance their economic independence and decision-making abilities. Financial literacy in India has emerged as a key factor for improving financial inclusion, particularly among underserved populations such as women, rural

communities, and low-income groups (Sarma, 2012). Financial education empowers individuals to manage personal finances, understand savings, investments, and debt, which can ultimately improve their economic well-being (Jain & Jain, 2015).

Challenges in teaching financial literacy in India include socio-cultural barriers, lack of awareness, and the absence of standardized curricula for financial education (Chatterjee & Rao, 2020). Studies show that traditional educational methods do not effectively address financial literacy in Indian schools and colleges, resulting in a lack of practical financial skills among the youth (Pradhan & Kumar, 2018). Moreover, there is a gap in teacher training programs, which hinders the effective delivery of financial education (Nair, 2016). Additionally, economic disparities, gender inequality, and illiteracy further complicate the implementation of financial literacy initiatives (Ghosh & Chattopadhyay, 2020).

However, there are significant opportunities for promoting financial literacy. Digital platforms, government initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, and community-based interventions have the potential to reach a wide audience and address financial illiteracy (Patel, 2019). Financial literacy programs tailored to specific demographics, such as rural women, can play a transformative role in economic empowerment (Kaur & Gill, 2017).

### **Importance of Financial Literacy for Economic Empowerment in India:**

Financial literacy is a crucial tool for economic empowerment, especially in a developing nation like India. In a country where a large portion of the population still lacks access to formal financial education, improving financial literacy can significantly enhance individual financial well-being, contribute to national economic growth, and bridge the socio-economic divide.

In India, where financial inclusion is still a work in progress, many people remain unaware of basic financial concepts such as budgeting, saving, investing, and borrowing. Financial literacy can empower individuals by helping them make informed decisions, manage their finances effectively, and avoid financial pitfalls like debt traps and



predatory lending. This knowledge fosters a sense of control over one's financial future and can help individuals navigate the complexities of the modern financial system.

Financial literacy is also pivotal for enhancing women's economic empowerment. In rural areas, where traditional gender roles often restrict women's financial independence, education in managing money, opening bank accounts, and accessing financial services can break barriers. Empowered women can make informed decisions about savings, investments, and family welfare, thus improving their own socio-economic status and contributing to the well-being of their families and communities.

Moreover, financial literacy contributes to a larger economic impact by driving savings and investments, leading to increased capital for businesses and economic growth. It can also encourage the adoption of formal financial services like banking, insurance, and retirement planning, which in turn strengthens the economy.

Government initiatives, such as the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) and various financial literacy campaigns, are steps in the right direction. However, there is still a long way to go. In order to create a financially savvy population, it is essential to integrate financial literacy programs into the school curriculum and continue spreading awareness through community-based programs. Financial literacy is a foundational element for economic empowerment in India. By fostering financial awareness, individuals can improve their lives, contributing to a more robust and equitable economy.

## **Data Analysis & Review: Key Findings:**

### **1. Impact on Financial Behaviour:**

Financial and digital literacy programs in rural India have had a transformative effect on financial behaviour, promoting savings, reducing dependency on informal credit sources, and increasing the adoption of digital payment systems.

**(a) Increased Savings:**

- Financial literacy programs have led to a 35% increase in savings, particularly among rural households.
- These programs educate participants about the importance of financial planning, budgeting, and disciplined saving habits, fostering a culture of financial prudence.
- Increased savings empower households to manage unforeseen expenses, invest in education or small businesses, and improve their overall economic stability.

**(b) Reduced Reliance on Informal Credit:**

- A 25% reduction in reliance on informal credit has been observed due to enhanced awareness of formal credit options.
- Rural households, previously dependent on high-interest loans from informal lenders, are now leveraging bank loans, microfinance institutions, and government-backed credit schemes for their financial needs.
- The shift to formal credit sources reduces exploitation by moneylenders and promotes financial inclusion.

**(c) Adoption of Digital Payment Systems:**

- Digital literacy programs have improved the adoption of digital payment systems by 40%, enabling rural populations to participate in the digital economy.
- Mobile wallets, UPI platforms, and government initiatives like *DigiDhan* and *Aadhaar-enabled Payment Systems (AePS)* have made digital payments more accessible.
- Digital payments are fostering transparency, reducing transaction costs, and bridging the urban-rural divide in financial technology adoption.

**2. Economic Outcomes:**

Improved financial literacy has enhanced economic participation and security for rural households, especially among women and marginalized groups.

**(a) Participation in Government Welfare Schemes:**

- Financially literate households report higher participation in government welfare schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) and Mudra Yojana.
- PMJDY has facilitated access to no-frills bank accounts, insurance, and direct benefit transfers, while Mudra Yojana has provided credit support to small entrepreneurs.
- Awareness of these schemes has enhanced economic security, reduced vulnerability, and boosted entrepreneurial activities in rural areas.

**(b) Economic Contribution of Women:**

- Women participants in financial literacy programs contribute 30% more to household income by actively engaging in income-generating activities.
- Knowledge of financial planning enables women to start small businesses, access microloans, and manage household finances more effectively.
- Empowering women financially strengthens households, improves children's education and health, and fosters community development.

**3. Challenges:**

Despite notable achievements, significant barriers remain in expanding the reach and effectiveness of financial and digital literacy programs in rural India.

**(a) Limited Reach of Financial Literacy Programs:**

- These programs reach only 50% of rural populations, largely due to inadequate infrastructure, lack of skilled trainers, and logistical challenges.
- Language barriers further restrict the effectiveness of literacy efforts, as many programs are not available in local or vernacular languages.

- Expanding the network of trainers, leveraging digital tools for remote education, and tailoring programs to local contexts can improve their reach and impact.

**(b) Digital Illiteracy:**

- A significant proportion of rural populations remain digitally illiterate, hindering their ability to adopt and trust online financial systems.
- Fear of cyber fraud, lack of awareness about secure practices, and difficulty navigating digital platforms are common obstacles.
- Addressing digital illiteracy requires targeted training programs, simplified digital tools, and trust-building measures to alleviate concerns about cybersecurity.

**(c) Lack of Trust in Online Systems:**

- Rural populations often prefer cash transactions due to their familiarity and perceived safety compared to digital payments.
- Trust deficits in online systems stem from instances of fraud, technical glitches, and misinformation.
- Fintech platforms need to prioritize transparency, enhance security measures, and educate users about the benefits and safety of digital financial tools.

Financial and digital literacy programs have positively influenced rural India's financial behavior and economic outcomes, fostering savings, reducing informal credit reliance, and increasing digital payment adoption. However, challenges such as limited program reach, digital illiteracy, and trust deficits must be addressed to ensure inclusive and sustainable growth. Expanding literacy programs, tailoring them to local needs, and building robust digital infrastructure will be critical to achieving financial empowerment and economic resilience across rural India.

**Conclusion:**

Teaching financial literacy in India is a vital step towards economic empowerment, yet it faces significant challenges. These include a lack

of access to quality education in rural areas, language barriers, and cultural norms that hinder women's participation in financial decision-making. Moreover, the complexities of the modern financial system and the rapid pace of technological advancements require continuous efforts to keep the population informed. However, the opportunities for promoting financial literacy are substantial. Government initiatives, digital platforms, and community-based programs have the potential to reach a large audience and bridge the information gap. Integrating financial education into school curricula, along with focused campaigns for marginalized communities, can significantly enhance financial awareness. By overcoming these challenges and seizing the opportunities, India can build a financially literate and economically empowered population, contributing to sustainable development and reducing poverty across the country. Teaching financial literacy in India is essential for achieving economic empowerment, particularly in rural areas and among women and youth. While government initiatives like PMJDY, UPI, and FLCs have laid the groundwork for financial inclusion, their potential remains untapped without widespread financial literacy.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Culturally Relevant Programs:** Design financial education initiatives in regional languages with content tailored to local contexts.
- **Focus on Women:** Provide targeted financial literacy programs for women to bridge the gender gap.
- **Leveraging Technology:** Use digital platforms for scalability while addressing digital literacy challenges.
- **Early Education:** Integrate financial literacy into school curricula to instill lifelong habits.

By adopting these strategies, India can create a financially literate population that drives economic growth, reduces inequality, and enhances overall financial resilience.

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## **CULTURAL SENSITIVITY EDUCATION FOR A HARMONIOUS SOCIETY**

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### **Abstract:**

Cultural sensitivity education is important to build a peaceful and inclusive society. As globalization brings people from different backgrounds closer, understanding and respecting cultural differences become very important. This paper highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity education in schools, workplaces, and communities. It explains how cultural awareness reduces conflicts, promotes social harmony, and improves communication between diverse groups. This paper explores different ways to integrate cultural sensitivity into education, such as incorporating multicultural content in school curricula, training teachers, and organizing cultural exchange programs. It also examines the role of cultural awareness in workplaces, where it improves teamwork, innovation, and productivity. Apart from its benefits, cultural sensitivity education faces challenges, including resistance to change, lack of resources, and traditional perceptions. To address these challenges, this paper suggests strategies such as experiential learning, policy support, and community engagement. With the adoption of inclusive educational methods and promotion of open dialogue, societies can create environments where people respect and value cultural diversity. Investing in cultural sensitivity education today will lead to stronger, more connected communities and workplaces in the future. This step assures harmony

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among people of different backgrounds, which values each other's cultures and viewpoints.

**Keywords:** *Cultural Sensitivity, Diversity Education, Social Harmony, Inclusive Learning, Cross-Cultural Awareness*

### **Introduction:**

Cultural sensitivity education is important in today's diverse world. As globalization connects people from different cultures, learning to respect and understand various traditions, beliefs, and values becomes very important. Cultural sensitivity helps individuals to communicate effectively, work peacefully, and build positive relationships, which reduces conflicts caused by misunderstandings. In schools, cultural education allows students to appreciate diversity, prepare them to work in multicultural environments. In workplaces, cultural awareness improves teamwork, employee satisfaction, and productivity. Communities that encourage cultural sensitivity experience stronger social bonds and mutual respect among individuals from different backgrounds. Apart from its benefits, many societies still struggle with cultural biases and traditional perceptions. A lack of awareness often leads to discrimination, exclusion, and tension between different groups. Integration of cultural sensitivity education into schools, workplaces, and communities can help to address these challenges. Societies can create an environment where people respect each other's differences with the help of encouraging open discussions, promoting inclusive learning, and supporting cultural exchange programs. This chapter explores the importance of cultural sensitivity education, its impact on social harmony, and strategies for implementation. It also examines challenges faced in promoting cultural awareness and suggests ways to overcome them. Investing in cultural education is a key step toward to build a peaceful and inclusive society for future generations.

### **Understanding of Cultural Sensitivity:**

Cultural sensitivity is important in today's diverse world. It helps individuals to respect and appreciate different traditions, values, and beliefs. People can build stronger relationships, avoid

misunderstandings, and create a more inclusive society with the understanding of cultural differences.

**(a) Definition and Importance:** Cultural sensitivity means being aware of and respecting different cultural values, traditions, and beliefs. It involves to understand that people come from diverse backgrounds and may have different ways of thinking, behaving, and communicating. Cultural sensitivity is not just about accepting differences but also about appreciating them and adapting to them in various social and professional situations. The importance of cultural sensitivity cannot be overstated in today's interconnected world. In education, it helps students to learn about different perspectives, which makes them more open-minded and inclusive. In workplaces, it assures better teamwork, reduces misunderstandings, and promotes equality. In communities, it encourages mutual respect and reduces discrimination and conflicts. Without cultural sensitivity, individuals and organizations may unintentionally offend others, which leads to negative consequences such as workplace disputes, customer dissatisfaction, or even social divisions.

**(b) Role of Culture in Human Interaction:**

Culture plays an important role in shaping how people think, act, and communicate. It influences language, customs, traditions, social norms, and even decision-making processes. Every culture has unique ways to express emotions, show respect, and resolve conflicts. In human interactions, cultural differences can sometimes lead to misunderstandings. For example, a gesture that is friendly in one culture may be considered rude in another. Similarly, direct communication may be valued in some cultures, while others prefer indirect or delicate ways of expressing their thoughts. Understanding of these differences helps individuals to interact more effectively, which avoid misinterpretations and conflicts. Cultural sensitivity in human interactions promotes sensitivity and cooperation. When people recognize and respect cultural differences, they create an environment of trust and inclusivity. This is important in diverse societies, workplaces, and global business interactions, where effective communication and collaboration are key to success.

## **Role of Cultural Sensitivity in Education:**

Education plays an important role to shape individuals' attitudes and behaviours toward cultural diversity. Schools and universities serve as key platforms to promote cultural sensitivity, which assure that students understand and respect different traditions, beliefs, and customs. With the integration of cultural awareness into education, societies can encourage mutual respect, reduce discrimination, and prepare students for diverse environments in their personal and professional lives.

### **(a) Incorporation of Cultural Awareness in School Curricula:**

Introduction of cultural awareness in school curricula is important to build an inclusive mind-set from an early age. Schools can include lessons on global cultures, traditions, and histories, which help students to appreciate diversity. Activities such as storytelling, cultural exchange programs, and interactive projects can expose students to different perspectives. Subjects like history, social studies, and literature can be designed to represent a variety of cultures, which assure that students see their backgrounds reflected to learn materials. Schools can also celebrate multicultural festivals and encourage students to share their traditions. Upon doing so, students develop sensitivity, respect, and an open-minded approach to diversity.

### **(b) Role of Teachers to promote Cultural Sensitivity:**

Teachers play a crucial role to encourage cultural sensitivity in classrooms. They set an example through their words, actions, and teaching methods. Educators can create inclusive classrooms with the acknowledgement and respect diverse backgrounds, which avoid misconceptions, and address biases.

Training programs for teachers on cultural competence can help them to better understand their students' unique needs. Teachers can encourage discussions on cultural differences, use diverse examples in their lessons, and promote respect for all cultures. A culturally responsive teaching approach assures that students feel valued and included, regardless of their background.

**(c) Higher Education and Cultural Sensitivity:**

Higher education institutions also play a significant role to promote cultural sensitivity. Universities attract students from different regions and countries, which make it important to create inclusive learning environments. Courses on intercultural communication, global studies, and diversity management help students to understand cultural differences in a professional setting. Universities can encourage student-led cultural organizations, exchange programs, and seminars on diversity. With promotion of cultural sensitivity in higher education, institutions prepare students to work and collaborate effectively in globalized workplaces, which assure success in multicultural environments.

**Cultural Sensitivity in the Workplace:**

Cultural sensitivity in the workplace is important to create a positive and inclusive work environment. In today's globalized world, companies employ people from diverse cultural backgrounds, which make it important to respect and understand different perspectives. A workplace that values cultural sensitivity promotes teamwork, reduces conflicts, and improves employee satisfaction.

**(a) Benefits of Cultural Sensitivity in Professional Settings:**

A culturally sensitive workplace offers various benefits. First, it improves teamwork and communication with the assurance that employees respect each other's cultural differences. When employees feel valued and understood, they collaborate more effectively.

Second, it improves employee morale and job satisfaction. An inclusive work environment makes employees to feel comfortable with expressing their ideas and opinions, which leads to greater productivity and creativity. Third, cultural sensitivity helps companies to expand their business in international markets. Understanding of different cultural norms and business practices allows organizations to build strong relationships with global clients and partners. It also improves customer service with the help of serving to the needs of diverse clients.

**(b) Strategies to promote Cultural Sensitivity at Work:**

Organizations can adopt various strategies to promote cultural sensitivity. One effective approach is diversity training programs that educate employees about different cultures and how to interact respectfully. Another strategy is to create inclusive policies that support equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of their background. Encourage open discussions and cultural exchange activities can also help employees to learn from each other. Hire a diverse workforce and assure fair treatment for all employees supports an environment of respect and understanding. With the help of implementation of these strategies, companies can create a harmonious and productive workplace where everyone feels valued.

**Challenges in implementing Cultural Sensitivity Education:**

While cultural sensitivity education is important to create an inclusive society, implementation comes with various challenges. Many individuals and institutions struggle to integrate cultural awareness into daily practices due to deep-rooted beliefs, limited resources, and societal biases. Address of these challenges is crucial to make cultural sensitivity education effective and impactful.

**(a) Resistance to Change:**

One of the biggest challenges is resistance to change. Some individuals or groups may feel uncomfortable to learn about new cultures or adjust their behaviours. People often prefer familiar traditions and may see cultural sensitivity training as unnecessary or even threatening to their values. Overcome this resistance requires patience, open discussions, and highlight the benefits of cultural awareness in education, workplaces, and communities.

**(b) Lack of Proper Training Resources:**

Many schools, organizations, and communities lack the proper resources to teach cultural sensitivity effectively. There may be limited access for training materials, expert trainers, or well-structured programs. Without proper guidance, efforts to promote cultural awareness may be inconsistent or ineffective. Invest in educational

resources, expert-led training, and digital learning platforms can help to fill this gap.

**(c) Overcome Biases and Discriminatory Views:**

**Biases and Discriminatory views** are deeply rooted in society, which make it difficult to change perceptions. Many people hold unconscious biases that affect their interactions with others. To overcome this, continuous education, awareness campaigns, and real-life examples of cultural diversity benefits must be promoted. Encourage sensitivity and open-mindedness can help individuals to overcome biases and promote inclusivity.

**Strategies for Effective Cultural Sensitivity Education:**

To effectively promote cultural sensitivity, various strategies can be employed. These strategies involve active participation, institutional support, and collaboration across different sectors to create an inclusive environment for all.

**(a) Interactive and Experiential Learning:**

One of the most effective ways to teach cultural sensitivity is through interactive and experiential learning. This includes activities like role-playing, cultural exchange programs, and simulations that allow participants to experience and understand different cultural perspectives first-hand. Such activities help individuals to understand with others, which make the learning process more meaningful and impactful.

**(b) Policy Support and Institutional Commitment:**

For cultural sensitivity education to succeed, institutions must show strong commitment and support. This can be done with the integration of cultural awareness into official policies, curriculum, and workplace practices. Institutions should also provide resources, such as training programs and workshops, to educate employees and students on cultural diversity and inclusion.

### **(c) Community Engagement and Awareness Campaigns:**

Community engagement is important to spread cultural sensitivity beyond educational and workplace settings. Awareness campaigns, public discussions, and cultural festivals can encourage people to learn about and celebrate diversity. These initiatives can encourage respect, unity, and understanding within communities.

### **(d) Collaboration between Sectors:**

Collaboration between schools, businesses, governments, and non-profit organizations is key to promote cultural sensitivity. With work together, these sectors can create shared resources, policies, and programs that address cultural diversity, which lead to a more inclusive and harmonious society.

### **Future of Cultural Sensitivity Education:**

The future of cultural sensitivity education looks promising, as society becomes more interconnected throughout the globe. As diversity continues to grow in schools, workplaces, and communities, the demand for cultural awareness will increase. In the future, education will likely aim to use technology, such as virtual reality and online platforms, to enhance learning experiences and reach wider audiences. There will be increased priority given to make cultural sensitivity a lifelong learning process, integrated into all aspects of life, from early education to professional development. Collaboration between various sectors will become stronger, which assures that cultural awareness is promoted consistently. As more people encourage diversity, the goal of a harmonious and inclusive society will become more achievable.

### **Conclusion:**

Cultural sensitivity education is important to build a harmonious and inclusive society. It promotes mutual respect, reduces biases, and improves social harmony in schools, workplaces, and communities. While there are challenges, such as resistance to change and lack of resources, the benefits of cultural sensitivity significantly surpass these obstacles. Implementation of structured programs, interactive learning, community engagement, and policy support can assure that cultural sensitivity is taught effectively. Looking ahead, the future of cultural

sensitivity education is bright, with new technologies and cross-sector collaboration makes it easier to spread awareness. As societies continue to grow, prioritization of cultural awareness and education will assure that people from all backgrounds can live and work together peacefully. A future rooted in cultural sensitivity will lead to stronger, more inclusive communities where everyone feels valued and respected.

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# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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## Abstract:

Inclusive education is a fundamental right that ensures equal learning opportunities for all students, regardless of disabilities. It fosters diversity, equity and social inclusion by integrating children with disabilities into mainstream classrooms. Beyond physical inclusion, it requires adaptive teaching methods, accessible infrastructure, assistive technology and inclusive policies to accommodate diverse learning needs. Inclusive education benefits not only students with disabilities but also their peers and society by promoting empathy, cooperation and innovation in teaching. However, challenges such as inadequate teacher training, resource constraints, social stigma and policy gaps hinder its effective implementation. Addressing these barriers through specialized training, curriculum adaptation, assistive tools and community engagement is crucial for success. Schools and educators play a vital role in creating inclusive environments through collaborative learning, flexible teaching and individualized support. By embracing inclusive education, we foster a more just, compassionate and equitable society where every child can thrive academically and socially.

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Education, Disabilities, Equal Access, Diversity, Social Inclusion, Assistive Technology, Special Education*

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**Introduction:**

Children with disabilities often encounter significant challenges in accessing quality education, which affects their academic progress, social development and future opportunities. In many cases, inadequate school infrastructure, a lack of assistive technology and untrained teachers create barriers that prevent these students from fully participating in the learning process. Additionally, societal misconceptions and stigma contribute to their exclusion, making it difficult for them to integrate into mainstream educational settings. These challenges not only hinder the personal growth of students with disabilities but also limit their ability to contribute meaningfully to society. Inclusive education seeks to address these issues by promoting an educational framework that accommodates diverse learning needs. By implementing flexible teaching strategies, individualized support systems and accessible learning environments, schools can ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities, have the opportunity to succeed. When children with disabilities are given equal educational opportunities, they gain confidence, independence and essential life skills, ultimately empowering them to lead fulfilling and productive lives.

**Understanding Inclusive Education:**

Inclusive education ensures that every child, regardless of abilities or disabilities, has access to quality education. It goes beyond simply placing students with disabilities in regular classrooms, requiring changes in teaching methods, curriculum design and school infrastructure. This approach fosters an equitable and supportive environment where all students can thrive. By embracing key principles such as respect, collaboration and equality, inclusive education enriches the learning experience for everyone and helps build a more just and cohesive school community.

**Key Principles of Inclusive Education:**

Inclusive education is founded on the principles of equity, diversity, and accessibility, ensuring that all learners, regardless of background or ability, receive quality education in a supportive environment. It promotes respect, participation, and personalized learning, fostering a

culture where every student thrives and contributes meaningfully to their academic and social growth.

- **Diversity and Acceptance:** Inclusive education acknowledges that students have different abilities, backgrounds and learning styles. It promotes a culture where these differences are embraced and valued, ensuring that every student feels respected and included. By celebrating diversity, schools create a supportive and accepting environment for all.
- **Equal Participation:** Every student, regardless of their abilities or background, should have the same opportunities to engage in academic learning, extracurricular activities and social interactions. Inclusive education removes barriers that prevent participation, ensuring that all students can be actively involved in school life and reach their full potential.
- **Accessibility:** A key aspect of inclusive education is making learning environments accessible for all students. This includes modifying school infrastructure, implementing assistive technologies and adapting curricula to accommodate diverse learning needs. Ensuring accessibility allows students with disabilities to learn without obstacles and receive the necessary support to succeed.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Inclusive education encourages meaningful interactions between students with and without disabilities. Through teamwork and shared learning experiences, students develop mutual understanding, respect and a sense of belonging. This approach enhances social cohesion, helps break stereotypes and builds a more inclusive school community.
- **Flexible Teaching:** Teachers play a crucial role in inclusive education by adapting their teaching methods to cater to individual learning needs. Instead of using a one-size-fits-all approach, educators employ differentiated instruction, personalized learning strategies and additional support to ensure every student can thrive academically. This flexibility helps create an engaging and effective learning experience for all.

### **Benefits of Inclusive Education:**

Inclusive education fosters a supportive learning environment where diversity is embraced, promoting equity and social cohesion. It

enhances academic and social development, boosts self-esteem, and prepares students for a diverse world. By accommodating varied learning needs, it empowers all learners to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

- **Promotes Equality and Inclusion:** Inclusive education fosters a culture of acceptance by integrating students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms. This approach helps break down barriers, reduce discrimination and promote mutual respect among students. By learning together, children develop an appreciation for diversity and gain a deeper understanding of different abilities and challenges.
- **Enhances Academic Performance:** With the right support systems in place, students with disabilities can thrive academically alongside their peers. Inclusive education utilizes personalized teaching methods, assistive technologies and adaptive strategies to help all students reach their full potential. This approach ensures that every child, regardless of their learning needs, has the opportunity to excel in their education.
- **Encourages Independence and Confidence:** When children with disabilities are given equal opportunities to learn and participate, they develop essential life skills such as independence, resilience and self-confidence. These qualities prepare them for future challenges, whether in higher education, employment, or daily life. Inclusive education empowers students by providing the necessary support and resources to take control of their learning journey.
- **Builds a Compassionate Society:** Inclusive classrooms foster empathy, kindness and collaboration among students. By interacting with peers of diverse abilities, students learn to appreciate different perspectives and develop strong social skills. This inclusive mindset extends beyond school, helping create a more compassionate and supportive society where individuals value and assist one another.
- **Strengthens Community Bonds:** Schools that embrace inclusive education create a strong sense of belonging and unity among students, teachers, staff and families. This collective effort builds stronger social connections, promotes teamwork and encourages shared responsibility for every student's success.

A more inclusive school environment leads to a more connected and supportive community.

Inclusive education is more than just integrating students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms; it is about creating an equitable and supportive learning environment for all. By fostering diversity, ensuring equal opportunities and promoting collaboration, inclusive education benefits individuals and society as a whole, helping to build a more just and compassionate world.

### **Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education:**

While inclusive education offers a range of benefits for students with disabilities and society as a whole, its implementation faces significant challenges. These challenges often prevent its full adoption and success in many regions across the globe. Addressing these obstacles is crucial for ensuring that all children, regardless of their abilities, can access an education that meets their needs.

- **Lack of Trained Teachers:** Many educators have not received proper training to support students with disabilities. Without specialized knowledge, teachers may struggle to adapt their teaching methods, provide necessary accommodations and create an inclusive learning environment. This lack of training affects the overall effectiveness of inclusive education.
- **Inadequate Resources:** Schools often lack essential resources such as assistive technology, specialized learning materials and accessible infrastructure. In underfunded areas, students with disabilities may not have access to tools like braille books, hearing aids, or screen readers, making it difficult for them to engage with the curriculum effectively.
- **Social Stigma and Misconceptions:** Negative cultural attitudes and misconceptions about disabilities can lead to discrimination and exclusion. Some communities may doubt the abilities of students with disabilities, making it harder for schools to fully embrace inclusion. Overcoming these societal barriers is crucial for fostering a supportive learning environment.
- **Large Class Sizes:** Overcrowded classrooms make it challenging for teachers to provide individualized attention and support. When class sizes are too large, educators may struggle

to modify lessons or offer personalized assistance, which can leave students with disabilities at a disadvantage.

- **Limited Government Support:** In many regions, inclusive education policies are either weak or poorly implemented. A lack of government funding and commitment prevents schools from making necessary improvements, such as training teachers, updating infrastructure and providing learning aids. Without strong policy support, inclusive education remains difficult to achieve.

### **Strategies for Effective Inclusive Education:**

To overcome these challenges and ensure the success of inclusive education, it is crucial to adopt comprehensive strategies that address the existing barriers. These strategies should involve schools, policymakers, communities and families working together to create an inclusive environment that caters to the needs of all students.

- **Teacher Training and Professional Development:** Educators need specialized training in inclusive teaching methods, disability awareness and individualized strategies to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Ongoing professional development helps teachers stay current with best practices and tools.
- **Curriculum Adaptation and Differentiated Instruction:** Flexible curricula and differentiated instruction allow teachers to cater to various learning styles, ensuring all students can access the material and succeed. Adapting content and delivery helps meet the needs of all learners.
- **Use of Assistive Technology:** Assistive tools like screen readers, speech-to-text software and hearing aids remove barriers to learning, enabling students with disabilities to engage with the curriculum. Schools should integrate these technologies into daily teaching practices.
- **Collaboration with Specialists and Support Staff:** Teachers can work with specialists, such as speech therapists and psychologists, to develop individualized plans and provide targeted interventions, ensuring students with disabilities receive the support they need.

- **Parental and Community Involvement:** Involving parents and the community strengthens inclusive education. Encouraging parental participation and fostering community support enhances the educational experience for students with disabilities both inside and outside the classroom.
- **Government Policies and Funding:** Strong policies and adequate funding are essential for sustaining inclusive education programs. Governments must provide resources, infrastructure and professional development to support inclusive practices effectively.
- **Peer Support and Mentorship Programs:** Peer support programs, where students without disabilities assist those with disabilities, promote mutual respect and social integration. Mentorship fosters confidence and social skills for students with disabilities, creating a supportive school culture.

### **Role of Schools and Teachers in Inclusive Education:**

Schools and teachers are fundamental to the success of inclusive education. A positive, proactive approach from educators can create an environment where all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, feel valued, accepted and included. To achieve this, both schools and teachers must work collaboratively to break down barriers and implement strategies that foster inclusion. The role of educators goes beyond simply teaching academic content; they are also key in creating a culture of respect, understanding and equal opportunity for all students.

- **Developing Inclusive Policies:** Schools should implement clear policies that promote inclusion, protect the rights of students with disabilities and ensure equal access to education. These policies should outline procedures for addressing discrimination and exclusion, creating a safe environment for all.
- **Building Accessible Infrastructure:** Schools must ensure that their buildings are physically accessible, including ramps, elevators and accessible restrooms. Classrooms should also be designed for easy movement and adaptive technologies should be integrated to support students with various disabilities.
- **Encouraging Peer Interaction:** Promoting interactions between students with and without disabilities is essential. Group



activities and collaborative projects can help break down stereotypes, develop social skills and foster a sense of community and belonging.

- **Providing Emotional and Psychological Support:** Emotional and psychological well-being is critical for inclusion. Schools should offer counseling services to help students with disabilities build self-esteem and resilience and address any challenges they face in an inclusive environment.

### **Role of Teachers:**

Teachers are at the forefront of implementing inclusive education in the classroom. Their actions, attitudes and teaching strategies are critical to ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to succeed. Teachers play a key role in shaping the classroom environment and adopting approaches that meet the diverse learning needs of their students.

- **Creating an Inclusive Classroom Culture:** Teachers should foster a respectful, accepting and supportive classroom environment. This involves promoting empathy, celebrating diversity and setting clear behavior expectations. Encouraging students to value each other's differences helps create a positive atmosphere where everyone feels respected and included.
- **Implementing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs):** IEPs are tailored to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities, outlining specific goals, strategies and accommodations. Teachers collaborate with special education staff and parents to adapt lessons and assessments, ensuring that students can access the curriculum and make academic progress.
- **Using Multi-Sensory Teaching Methods:** Teachers should use a variety of teaching methods to engage students with diverse learning styles. Multi-sensory approaches—combining visual, auditory and hands-on learning—help accommodate different preferences, making learning more accessible for all students.
- **Maintaining Open Communication with Parents:** Regular communication between teachers and parents is key to the success of inclusive education. Teachers should keep parents informed about their child's progress, address challenges and collaborate on strategies for support, creating a strong partnership to support the student both at school and at home.

## Conclusion:

Inclusive education is essential for fostering an equitable and just society where all students, regardless of their abilities, receive equal opportunities to learn and thrive. It goes beyond merely integrating students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms; it requires adaptive teaching strategies, accessible infrastructure and supportive policies. While challenges such as inadequate resources, social stigma and lack of trained educators persist, addressing these barriers through proper training, assistive technology and community involvement can significantly enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education. Schools and teachers play a pivotal role in creating an inclusive learning environment that promotes diversity, respect and collaboration. By embracing inclusive education, we can empower students with disabilities, enrich the learning experience for all and build a society that values and supports every individual, ensuring a future where education is truly accessible to all.

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# **ADVANCING ETHICAL LEADERSHIP THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE VALUE-BASED EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES**

Prachi <sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract:**

The demand for ethical leadership in a globalized and complex world has become imperative as organizations and societies face unprecedented challenges. This paper examines the critical role of comprehensive, value-based educational practices in advancing ethical leadership, emphasizing their global relevance and necessity. Ethical leadership, underpinned by integrity, accountability, and fairness, is essential for fostering trust, promoting sustainable organizational cultures, and ensuring socially responsible decision-making. However, the cultivation of ethical leaders requires intentional educational frameworks that integrate ethical theories, decision-making models, emotional intelligence, and cross-cultural perspectives. By incorporating diverse ethical frameworks such as deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics, and emphasizing the development of emotional intelligence, educational institutions can equip leaders with the requisite tools to address complex ethical dilemmas across various global contexts. The paper posits that value-based educational practices must encompass both local and global ethical concerns, preparing leaders to navigate societal challenges such as sustainability, corporate governance, and human rights. Ultimately, this approach to leadership education ensures the development of leaders who contribute positively to organizational success and the broader social good, aligning personal values with societal imperatives.

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**Keywords:** *Ethical Leadership, Value-Based Education, Leadership Development, Emotional Intelligence, Cross-Cultural Leadership, Organizational Culture, Educational Frameworks*

### **Introduction:**

In an era marked by rapid globalization, technological advancements, and heightened societal scrutiny, the role of ethical leadership has become increasingly paramount in discussions concerning organizational success, public trust, and sustainable development. Leaders across the world are now confronted with complex and multifaceted challenges that extend beyond traditional concerns of profitability and efficiency, such as environmental sustainability, equitable labour practices, corporate social responsibility, and ethical decision-making. In this context, the expectation of leadership has evolved—leaders are no longer merely required to possess technical expertise or financial acumen, but must also embody a strong moral compass, making decisions that align with the greater good of both their organizations and society at large.

To meet these challenges, there has been a growing recognition of the need to intentionally cultivate ethical leadership through comprehensive, value-based educational frameworks. Such educational practices are essential for equipping future leaders with the cognitive, emotional, and moral tools necessary to navigate complex ethical dilemmas, foster transparent organizational cultures, and ensure the long-term sustainability of both the organizations they lead and the broader communities they serve. This paper aims to explore how value-based educational practices can advance ethical leadership, with a particular emphasis on their relevance in a global context. Through this exploration, the paper seeks to articulate the imperative of cultivating ethical leaders capable of addressing the moral complexities of an interconnected world.

### **Framework for Ethical Leadership Development:**

The structured framework for ethical leadership development, consisting of four key components: Leadership Objectives, Ethical Leadership (ELC), Interactive Leadership, and Leadership Impact

Assessment. Each component contributes to fostering ethical decision-making, integrity, and accountability in leadership roles.

**1. Leadership Objectives:** This part emphasizes the importance of setting clear goals for ethical leadership. Establishing well-defined objectives empowers individuals to navigate complex decision-making processes while maintaining integrity and accountability. These objectives serve as guiding principles, especially in turbulent environments where ethical dilemmas are prevalent.

**2. Ethical Leadership (ELC):** Ethical leadership involves understanding and applying key principles and values. The focus is on one core value supported by three related competencies to ensure a comprehensive grasp of ethical leadership. This structured approach helps leaders internalize ethical standards and apply them in real-world situations, fostering a culture of integrity.

**3. Interactive Leadership:** Engagement plays a crucial role in ethical leadership development. Interactive workshops and case studies serve as effective tools for enhancing learning experiences. These formats encourage active participation, critical thinking, and collaboration, promoting long-term retention of ethical practices. By immersing individuals in realistic scenarios, interactive leadership strengthens their ability to make ethical decisions in professional settings.

**4. Leadership Impact Assessment:** Assessment is essential in measuring the effectiveness of ethical leadership training. Leadership development programmes should include evaluation mechanisms, real-world applications, and continuous feedback. This ensures that ethical leadership principles are not only learned but also effectively implemented in practice. Feedback loops help refine leadership strategies, fostering sustained ethical behavior.

Overall, this framework provides a comprehensive approach to cultivating ethical leadership by integrating clear objectives, structured learning, interactive engagement, and ongoing assessment.

### **Integrating Ethics into Leadership Education:**

To effectively cultivate ethical leadership, it is imperative that educational programmes systematically integrate ethical principles and

frameworks into the core curriculum. The following strategies are crucial for embedding ethics within leadership education -

- **Ethical Theories and Philosophies:** A foundational component of leadership education is the exposure to a variety of ethical frameworks, such as deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics. By engaging with these theoretical approaches, students are empowered to critically assess ethical dilemmas from diverse perspectives, thereby enhancing their capacity to make informed, ethically sound decisions. Understanding these frameworks offers future leaders a robust toolkit for navigating moral quandaries that transcend cultural, organizational, and geopolitical boundaries.
- **Case Studies and Real-World Scenarios:** Case studies serve as a powerful pedagogical tool, providing students with tangible examples of ethical challenges faced by leaders in both historical and contemporary contexts. Analyzing these real-world scenarios enables students to apply theoretical ethical frameworks to practice, fostering critical thinking and enhancing their ability to evaluate the consequences of their decisions on various stakeholders. This approach also encourages the development of practical wisdom, essential for ethical decision-making in leadership roles.
- **Leadership and Emotional Intelligence:** Emotional intelligence (EQ) is a vital facet of ethical leadership, as it enables leaders to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics with empathy, self-awareness, and social acumen. In the global leadership landscape, leaders with high EQ are better positioned to cultivate trust, promote collaboration, and manage the emotional and social complexities of diverse teams. Therefore, leadership education must integrate training in emotional intelligence, focusing on self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and effective communication.
- **Moral Development and Character Building:** Ethical leadership education must prioritize the development of personal character, emphasizing virtues such as honesty, integrity, courage, and humility. These virtues form the bedrock of principled decision-making. Educational programmes should incorporate opportunities for self-reflection, mentorship, and

character-building exercises that facilitate the alignment of personal values with professional conduct.

### **Components of a Comprehensive, Value-Based Leadership Programme:**

A comprehensive, value-based leadership development programme must be multidimensional, emphasizing not only the acquisition of intellectual knowledge but also the cultivation of emotional, social, and moral capacities.

- **Curriculum Design with Ethical Focus:** The foundation of any value-based leadership programme lies in a curriculum that integrates ethical principles into its core structure. Essential courses should encompass ethics, leadership theory, corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainability, and social justice. These subjects must blend theoretical constructs with practical application, urging students to engage in critical reflection on their values and to assess the ethical implications of their prospective leadership roles.
- **Experiential Learning Opportunities:** Experiential learning offers a powerful mechanism for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Internships, service-learning initiatives, and leadership practicum provide students with tangible, real-world experiences that challenge them to apply ethical principles in dynamic, often complex settings. Such opportunities not only reinforce academic concepts but also enable students to cultivate the critical decision-making skills necessary for confronting and resolving ethical dilemmas.
- **Mentorship and Peer Learning:** Mentorship is an indispensable element in the development of ethical leaders, as it provides students with guidance from experienced individuals who can impart wisdom and share firsthand accounts of navigating ethical challenges. Through mentorship, students gain valuable perspectives on ethical decision-making, organizational culture, and leadership strategies, fostering the development of moral insight and practical judgment.
- **Self-Reflection and Continuous Learning:** A cornerstone of ethical leadership education is the promotion of continuous self-



reflection and personal growth. Leadership programmes should encourage students to assess their personal values, examine their ethical strengths and weaknesses, and engage in ongoing self-evaluation. Ethical leaders are characterized by their commitment to lifelong learning—constantly striving to refine their decision-making processes, broaden their ethical perspectives, and enhance their moral reasoning abilities.

- **Global and Local Perspectives:** A truly comprehensive value-based leadership programme must balance both global and local ethical considerations. Given the increasingly interconnected nature of the world, leaders must possess an acute awareness of global ethical issues such as environmental sustainability, human rights, and economic inequality. Understanding these challenges is crucial for leaders who seek to navigate the complexities of global markets, international governance, and transnational ethical concerns.

### **Impact of Value-Based Leadership Education on Ethical Leadership:**

When effectively implemented, value-based leadership education exerts a profound influence on both individuals and the organizations they lead. The following are key impacts of value-based leadership education on ethical leadership -

- **Enhanced Ethical Decision-Making:** Leaders who have been trained in ethical reasoning possess a heightened capacity to make decisions that are consistent with moral principles, even when confronted with external pressures to prioritize immediate financial or operational gains. The integration of ethical theories and practical case studies within leadership programmes enables students to evaluate decisions through a principled lens, thereby enhancing their ability to uphold ethical standards in the face of adversity.
- **Cultivation of Ethical Organizational Cultures:** Ethical leadership extends beyond individual decision-making; it is instrumental in shaping the broader culture of an organization. Leaders who exemplify ethical conduct serve as role models, setting the tone for organizational norms and practices. By prioritizing transparency, accountability, and respect for

diversity, ethical leaders create organizational environments where ethical behaviour is not only encouraged but expected.

- **Promotion of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** Ethical leaders, grounded in a strong foundation of values, are more likely to advocate for and champion corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. These leaders recognize the interconnectedness of business success and social, environmental, and economic well-being. They advocate for strategies that benefit not only their organizations but also the broader community, aligning business objectives with the principles of sustainability, social justice, and environmental stewardship.
- **Strengthening Trust and Loyalty:** Trust is a cornerstone of effective leadership, and ethical leadership plays a critical role in fostering this trust. Leaders who consistently demonstrate ethical behaviour build credibility and respect among their followers, thereby cultivating an atmosphere of mutual trust. This trust is essential for developing strong, productive relationships that enhance organizational cohesion and effectiveness.
- **Navigating Ethical Challenges in Global Contexts:** In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, ethical leaders must possess the ability to navigate ethical challenges that span multiple cultural, political, and economic contexts. Value-based leadership education prepares leaders to engage with diverse ethical issues through a global lens, incorporating a deep understanding of cross-cultural differences, international human rights concerns, and global sustainability challenges

### **Conclusion:**

Advancing ethical leadership through comprehensive, value-based educational practices is a critical endeavour in preparing leaders to meet the multifarious demands of an interconnected global society. The complexities of contemporary leadership necessitate individuals who possess not only technical and managerial expertise but also a profound commitment to ethical principles and moral reasoning. The integration of ethics into leadership education ensures that future leaders are equipped with the intellectual, emotional, and moral tools necessary to navigate the intricacies of ethical dilemmas, foster organizational integrity, and contribute to the broader societal good. Educational

institutions serve as pivotal agents in this transformative process, as they provide the framework within which future leaders acquire the knowledge and skills required to address both local and global ethical challenges. By embedding ethical theory, experiential learning, emotional intelligence, and cross-cultural understanding into the curriculum, these institutions cultivate leaders who are not only capable of making principled decisions but also of fostering organizational cultures that prioritize transparency, accountability, and social responsibility.

Ultimately, advancing ethical leadership through such educational practices is essential for creating a cadre of leaders who will guide organizations toward long-term sustainability, contribute positively to global development, and act as stewards of the ethical values that underpin social progress. In this regard, the importance of integrating ethics into leadership education cannot be overstated, as it ensures that leaders of tomorrow are equipped not only to navigate the challenges of today but also to shape a more ethical, equitable, and just global future.

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# EMPOWERING CHANGE: ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PREVENTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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## Abstract:

Domestic violence, or intimate partner violence (IPV), is a pervasive global issue rooted in gender inequality, societal norms, and a lack of awareness. Education serves as a transformative tool in addressing domestic violence by fostering awareness, promoting gender equality, and equipping individuals with critical life skills. Through formal, informal, and community-based learning, education challenges harmful stereotypes, enhances social-emotional competencies, and empowers individuals economically and socially. Programs such as social-emotional learning (SEL) and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) have been effective in preventing violence by promoting respect, consent, and healthy relationships. Despite challenges such as cultural resistance and inadequate policy support, integrating education into violence prevention strategies can create lasting social change. A holistic approach involving educational reforms, legal protections, and community engagement is essential for building a future free from domestic violence.

**Keywords:** *Domestic Violence, Education, Gender Equality, Empowerment, Violence Prevention*

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**Introduction:**

**D**omestic violence, also referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV), encompasses physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse within familial or intimate relationships. It is a global problem with devastating effects on individuals, families, and communities. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), approximately one in three women worldwide experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. The root causes of domestic violence are complex and often linked to gender inequality, societal norms, and a lack of awareness.

Education has the unique ability to shape attitudes, behaviors, and social norms from an early age, making it an essential component in efforts to reduce domestic violence. It is not just about academic learning but also about imparting life skills, promoting respect and equality, and challenging harmful stereotypes and gender norms. Schools, colleges, and community programs offer platforms where individuals can be taught to recognize unhealthy relationship patterns, understand the importance of consent and respect, and develop conflict resolution and emotional regulation skills. Moreover, education empowers individuals by providing them with the knowledge and resources they need to protect themselves and seek help when necessary. It helps dismantle the culture of silence that often surrounds domestic violence, encouraging open conversations and reducing stigma. For children growing up in violent households, education can provide a pathway to a brighter future, breaking the cycle of abuse and offering hope and opportunity. Education, however, has the power to transform these underlying factors. It can promote critical thinking, empower individuals, and challenge harmful norms and stereotypes. This chapter investigates how education at various levels—formal, informal, and community-based—can contribute to reducing domestic violence.

**Education as a Tool for Social Change:**

Education serves as a fundamental driver of social change, shaping individual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors while influencing broader societal structures. It has the potential to challenge deeply ingrained norms, promote gender equality, and empower individuals with the

knowledge and skills necessary to build a just and non-violent society. One of the most significant areas where education can drive transformation is in the prevention of domestic violence. By fostering social-emotional competencies, challenging harmful stereotypes, and promoting economic independence, education plays a crucial role in breaking the cycle of violence and fostering long-term societal change.

A critical component of education's transformative power lies in its impact on social-emotional learning (SEL). Durlak et al. (2011) emphasize the importance of SEL programs in schools, demonstrating that they lead to improved emotional regulation, empathy, and conflict-resolution skills. These programs help individuals develop healthier interpersonal relationships, reducing aggression and violent behaviors. By integrating SEL into curricula, schools can equip students with the tools to navigate conflicts constructively, fostering an environment of mutual respect and non-violence.

Beyond individual change, education plays a crucial role in shifting societal attitudes toward gender roles and violence. Heise (2011) underscores the importance of education in challenging harmful gender norms that perpetuate domestic violence. Gender-sensitive curricula and awareness campaigns can dismantle stereotypes, promote mutual respect, and encourage equitable power dynamics within relationships. For example, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programs have been effective in teaching young people about consent, healthy relationships, and gender equality, fostering a culture of respect and accountability. Furthermore, education contributes to economic empowerment, a critical factor in reducing vulnerability to domestic violence. Morrison et al. (2007) highlight the strong link between education, economic independence, and reduced exposure to gender-based violence. Women who attain higher education levels are more likely to secure stable employment, reducing their financial dependence on abusive partners. Additionally, vocational training and adult education programs provide economic opportunities, further strengthening individuals' capacity to leave harmful situations and advocate for their rights.

Despite these benefits, challenges such as cultural resistance, limited resources, and inadequate policy support can hinder education's role in driving social change. Addressing these barriers requires

comprehensive policy interventions, community engagement, and sustained investments in educational initiatives. By integrating education into broader violence prevention efforts, societies can make significant strides in eliminating domestic violence and fostering a culture of equality, respect, and empowerment.

### **Reducing Domestic Violence through Empowerment:**

Empowerment plays a crucial role in reducing domestic violence by equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to challenge oppression and assert their rights. Empowerment strategies focus on enhancing economic independence, fostering gender-equitable attitudes, and promoting active participation in decision-making processes. Education, economic opportunities, and social interventions are key mechanisms through which empowerment can disrupt the cycle of domestic violence, enabling individuals to build healthier and more equitable relationships.

Economic empowerment is one of the most effective ways to reduce domestic violence, particularly for women who may remain in abusive relationships due to financial dependency. Kabeer (1999) emphasizes that access to education, employment, and financial resources increases women's agency and ability to make independent choices. When women achieve financial stability, they are more likely to leave abusive situations, negotiate power within relationships, and resist societal pressures that condone violence. Microfinance programs, vocational training, and women's entrepreneurship initiatives have been shown to reduce vulnerability to domestic violence by providing women with the means to support themselves and their families.

In addition to economic empowerment, transforming gender norms is essential in preventing domestic violence. Barker and Ricardo (2005) highlight the importance of engaging men and boys in gender-equitable discussions and interventions. Traditional masculinity norms often perpetuate control and dominance over women, reinforcing cycles of violence. Programs that challenge these norms, such as community-based workshops and school curricula that promote gender equality, help reshape attitudes and behaviors. When men and boys are educated about healthy relationships, nonviolent conflict resolution, and the



importance of shared decision-making, they become allies in preventing domestic violence.

Social empowerment, including awareness campaigns and support networks, further strengthens efforts to reduce domestic violence. Community-based organizations, self-help groups, and advocacy initiatives provide survivors with emotional support, legal aid, and access to resources. These interventions help individuals gain confidence, build resilience, and break the isolation that often accompanies abuse. Additionally, legal and policy reforms play a crucial role in institutionalizing empowerment by ensuring that survivors have access to justice and protection.

While empowerment-based approaches have shown significant progress in reducing domestic violence, challenges such as cultural resistance, inadequate policy implementation, and economic barriers remain. A holistic approach that integrates economic, social, and educational empowerment strategies is necessary to create sustainable change. By fostering empowerment at multiple levels, societies can work toward eliminating domestic violence and promoting a culture of respect, equality, and nonviolence.

### **Reducing Domestic Violence through Education:**

Education is a powerful tool in preventing and reducing domestic violence by fostering awareness, challenging harmful social norms, and promoting gender equality. Through formal and informal learning, individuals can develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to create healthier relationships and reject violence. Educational interventions not only empower individuals but also contribute to broader societal transformation by addressing the root causes of domestic violence, such as gender inequality and cultural acceptance of abuse.

One of the key ways education reduces domestic violence is through social-emotional learning (SEL). Research by Durlak et al. (2011) highlights that SEL programs in schools improve emotional regulation, empathy, and conflict-resolution skills, which are essential for fostering nonviolent behavior. By integrating SEL into curricula, students learn to manage emotions, communicate effectively, and develop respectful

relationships, reducing the likelihood of aggression in future interactions. Moreover, Heise (2011) argues that education plays a crucial role in deconstructing gender norms that perpetuate violence, helping young people challenge stereotypes and build equitable partnerships.

Gender-sensitive education is particularly effective in transforming societal attitudes toward violence. Barker and Ricardo (2005) emphasize that engaging boys and men in discussions about gender equality from an early age is essential in preventing domestic violence. Programs that teach mutual respect, consent, and healthy masculinity have been successful in shifting attitudes and reducing violent behaviors. Similarly, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programs have been found to promote awareness of healthy relationships, reproductive rights, and violence prevention, equipping individuals with the knowledge to make informed decisions and seek help when needed (Morrison et al., 2007).

Beyond schools, community-based educational initiatives also contribute significantly to reducing domestic violence. According to Kabeer (1999), adult education and empowerment programs that focus on financial literacy, legal rights, and vocational training enhance individuals' independence and ability to leave abusive situations. Economic empowerment through education not only provides financial security but also strengthens decision-making power, reducing vulnerability to domestic violence. Despite the proven benefits of education in preventing domestic violence, challenges such as cultural resistance, lack of resources, and inadequate policy support remain. Addressing these barriers requires a holistic approach that integrates education with legal protections, community engagement, and economic opportunities. By investing in education as a preventive strategy, societies can make significant progress in breaking the cycle of domestic violence and fostering a culture of respect and equality.

### **Conclusion:**

Education remains a powerful tool in combating domestic violence by addressing its root causes, such as gender inequality and harmful cultural norms. By raising awareness, promoting healthy relationships, and empowering individuals, education can create lasting social

change. Incorporating education into broader violence prevention frameworks can lead to more inclusive, safe, and equitable communities. The way forward involves integrating gender and violence prevention education into national curricula, ensuring greater access for marginalized groups, and building strong community partnerships. With sustained efforts, education can help pave the way toward a future free from violence and discrimination.

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## ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND FINANCIAL LITERACY

Dr. Ranita Banerjee <sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract:

Economic empowerment equips individuals with education, employment opportunities, and financial resources while financial literacy teaches to apply financial knowledge to manage financial resources which empowered individuals possess. Researcher focuses on interrelationship between economic empowerment and financial literacy, and their role in improving individual and community well-being. This qualitative manuscript examines how financial literacy serves as a foundational stone in economic empowerment, allowing individuals to navigate economic challenges and seize good economic opportunities. Principles, scope, benefits of financial literacy and how it can reduce poverty, promote economic self-sufficiency, and foster long-term financial well-being are discussed. Researcher believes that integrating financial literacy education into policies and community programs is mandatory and economic empowerment and financial literacy are driving forces of social mobility and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** *Barriers, Economic Opportunities, Economic Empowerment, Financial Literacy, Financial Decisions, Women*

### Introduction:

**E**conomic empowerment enables individuals to take control of their financial future, improving their quality of life and fostering sustainable growth. Financial literacy, a key

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component, equips people with the knowledge to manage income, savings, investments, and expenses effectively. By understanding budgeting, credit, and financial planning, individuals can make informed decisions, reduce debt, and build wealth. Strengthening financial literacy enhances economic stability, promotes entrepreneurship, and reduces poverty, creating a more financially secure society.

### **Meaning of Economic Empowerment:**

Economic empowerment can be defined as the power of an individual or a community to choose from a group of options and convert their choices into real life outcomes. It comes with the power to improve one's economic status and well-being through enhanced access to resources and opportunities whereby individuals can perform economic activities and earn their livelihood (Lipscomb, 2024). Empowerment can help in:

- Lowering poverty by allowing individuals to access resources to earn their livelihood
- Fostering gender equality providing women right to access resources and participate in economic activities.
- Providing individuals with power to become productive members of the society and contribute to overall economic growth.
- Providing education and training thus equipping individuals with required skills to perform economic activities
- Ensuring small and medium enterprises get finance through microfinance initiatives as they are unable to access traditional banking system

### **Elements of Economic Empowerment:**

Economic empowerment consists of few major elements which are: (Forgeard, 2024)

- **Resources:** It includes both tangible assets such as liquid cash and intangible assets as social capital

- **Education:** Economic empowerment occurs if the individual has financial literacy and awareness of market dynamics and use it to improve their economic status
- **Skills:** Vocational training is required to transform individuals into human capital so that they are employed in competitive job scenarios
- **Income:** It is the ends of the total process of economic empowerment helping individuals to become self-reliant

### **Barriers to Economic Empowerment:**

Certain factors hinder process of economic empowerment and these factors are more overpowering for women -

- **Patriarchal Society:** Patriarchal societies witnessed male domination in household and society along with oppression of women and gender based social violence. Domestic violence occurs mostly due to poverty or scarcity of resources but girls in affluent families are also denied rights to property. Inheritance laws to protect girl children are often denied on the ground that dowries have to be paid. In the ancestral home or in the house of in-laws, unequal power relations continue and women are deprived of access to resources (Saluja, Singh & Kumar, 2023; Technoserve, 2022).
- **Psychological factors:** Lack of opportunities compiled with lack of resource access, lower self-esteem of women who perceive themselves as incapable to pay off bank loans. This fear prohibits women to venture into entrepreneurship and even if they do so they are denied loans due to lack of mortgageable resources. Investment pattern in women exhibit that they possess entrepreneurial capabilities and with proper resource access can improve their economic status (Saluja, Singh & Kumar, 2023; Technoserve, 2022).
- **Low income/wages:** Oppressed for ages, the women suffer from low self-esteem leading to lower negotiation power and lower income compared to male counterparts. Constitution guarantees equal pay for equal work for both the gender but reality differs. Organized sector has invisible “glass ceiling” which means women employees are not allowed to rise above a certain position (Lewis, 2019). In unorganized sector, gendered wage

gaps are greater and sometimes women are prohibited to participate in the work force causing financial exclusion (Saluja, Singh & Kumar, 2023; Technoserve, 2022).

- **Low Financial Literacy:** Financial literacy is the ability to use financial skills to manage financial resources efficiently and gain financial well-being. Without financial literacy women are economically dependent on men to make the financial decisions (Saluja, Singh & Kumar, 2023; Technoserve, 2022). Economic empowerment is impossible without financial literacy which seems to vary across nations, across different classes and caste, and across different educational levels. Researchers found positive correlation among financial literacy and the usage of digital financial services (Showkat et al., 2024) and participation in share markets (Rooij et al., 2011).
- **Low financial accessibility:** Globally, women have lesser access to productive resources as only 68% women in low-income nations have a bank account, only 12.8% of women have agricultural landownership, and there is 23% wage gap between both genders (Saluja, Singh & Kumar, 2023; Technoserve, 2022). Having bank accounts and access to saving options is necessary to manage own earnings and become empowered. In patriarchal society, women are often denied rights to financial resources which lowers their opportunity to access credit from bank, who avoid providing loans without collateral in the fear of creating NPAs.
- **Ethnicity:** Discrimination in obtaining credit also varies with ethnicity, as women belonging to backward classes and poor households are less likely to receive formal credit (Saluja, Singh & Kumar, 2023; Technoserve, 2022).
- **Discriminatory societal norms:** Gender stereotyping dictates what job should a woman pursue and what role they should adhere to in their homes, their communities, and their workplaces. Data exhibit 2.7 billion women globally are denied employment choices which push them towards informal, vulnerable, and low-wage options. In 2018, 104 out of 184 nations prohibited women in certain kinds of employment and 59 nations had no laws for sexual harassment (Technoserve, 2022). Sexual harassment at workplace is another issue lowering economic participation of women. The PoSH Act has been implemented so the women can be protected from sexual



harassment at the workplace and have a safe working environment (Satish, 2024).

- **Unequal domestic responsibilities:** Global labor force participation rate of men is 72% in 2022 while for women is 47% because of unequal sharing of domestic workloads and unpaid care–tasks. If women’s unpaid domestic labor is paid for it will account for 10% to 39% of GDP (Technoserve, 2022).

### **Financial Literacy:**

Financial literacy can be described as the capacity to employ financial skills in managing finance, budget and investments (Fernando, 2024). Financial stability can be achieved and individuals can become self-sufficient in making economic decisions if they have financial literacy (Clear tax, 2023).

#### **(a) Benefits of Financial Literacy:**

Financial literacy is important in lives of every individual as it can prevent financial mistakes, prepare one for financial emergencies and become financially independent. According to CFI Team (2025) financially literate individuals can effectively manage their resources by making efficient financial decisions, saving to achieve their financial goals, eliminate unimportant expenditures thus lowering financial stress and anxiety, make proper choices regarding investments and develop an effective budget. Economic empowerment is promoted by financial literacy as it:

- Helps individuals to make financial decisions after measuring pros and cons, ensure efficient management of funds, prevents financial mistakes (Ethans, 2024; Fernando, 2024)
- Prepares individuals to face financial emergencies which occur due to recession, war or any natural disasters, by creating a financial cushion through prior planning (Ethans, 2024; Fernando, 2024)
- Helps individual fulfill their financial dreams through budget and savings, developing financial plans, adhere to those plans, to achieve financial goal (Ethans, 2024; Fernando, 2024)

- Provides confidence while making life-changing financial decisions as having all necessary financial information helps in well-informed decision making (Ethans, 2024; Fernando, 2024)

**(b) Scope of Financial Literacy:**

Financial literacy encompasses numerous areas such as budget education, knowledge of banking tools, information about the share market and investment options, etc. which are essential knowledge in path of acquiring economic empowerment. Some of the areas (CFI Team 2025; Tamplin, 2025):

- Personal Finances- Developing a comprehensive knowhow about one’s assets and liabilities and whether one is spending in the right direction to meet their financial goals. Any budget has four sections consisting of spending, investing, saving, and giving away.
- Establishing Financial Goals- One has to decide their financial goal before they start saving.
- Managing Debt- Debt is not bad if it generates income and increases net worth of a person but one should manage their debt properly and have a proper repayment plan developed.
- Investing- Investment allows money to grow and it is better to start early to gain the maximum. But financial literacy is required to understand the risks associated with investment options before investing.
- Retirement Planning- One can go up on the lifestyle ladder but it is difficult to come down and here comes in the importance of retirement planning to continue to live the lifestyle even after retirement
- Tax Planning- Taxes cannot be evaded so one has to understand how tax payment can be managed to maximize deductions and reduce payable amount.

**(c) Five Principles of Financial Literacy:**

An economically empowered person must know how to earn enough, how to spend wisely and how to save adequately, and invest efficiently. Financial Literacy teaches one about all the aforementioned areas as -

**(i) Earn:** Income is the return we earn for the effort expended in our job or business. After deduction of taxes from gross income, individuals are left with net income or disposable income which is then distributed between saving, investment and expenditure. To increase disposable income, one can upgrade their skill or find multiple ways of generating income (Voneshen, 2024; Wealthbuddy, 2024; Winder, 2023)

**(ii) Save and Invest:** No matter how much one earns it is important to remain on a budget and plan for the future. While one has to work hard in their job, it is the money which works harder when they invest. Some simple steps to save and invest -

- Step 1- Creating a budget and keeping track of income as well as monthly expenses to eliminate money wastage and prioritize spending
- Step 2- No matter how meager one's income is, always be sure to save a certain percentage, under different heads such as house funds, retirement funds or health funds.
- Step 3- One should make their investment decisions wisely and safely so that none of their money goes to waste. Investment basket should always be diverse with Mutual Funds, Bonds, Stocks, FDs and so on
- Step 4- Start saving and investment early on in life because of time value of money and compound interest help the money grow exponentially
- Step 5- Maintaining an emergency savings account which should be separate from general savings and should be of a large amount about 3 to 6 times of one's expenses

**(iii) Spend:** Financial literacy teaches to spend wisely, maintain uniform money flow and avoid month-end crisis. Efficient spending can be achieved –

- Step 1- Keeping a track on spending and identifying unnecessary expenses and eliminating them
- Step 2- Spending should be rational so that one has enough to cover expenses and leave without financial constraints

**(iv) Protect:** Life is always uncertain and it is necessary to have an emergency fund which should cover at least three months of expenses. Financial Preparedness is one of the most important goals of financial literacy and funds can be secured by –

- Getting Insurance which is the financial safety net in every sector of life such as Health insurance (paying hospital bills, medicines), Income protection insurance (when one runs out of paid leave), Life insurance (cover for life of earning member of family so that the dependent members do not have to face hurdles), property insurance (protect property from theft, accident etc)
- Retirement planning is essential to have a retirement fund to continue living the life style after one has retired from their job
- Estate planning is done in order to decide how one wants their assets to be distributed

**(v) Borrow and Manage Debt:** Borrowing is the final tool which can be used to secure money for upgrading one's skill or to invest in one's business.

- Step 1- Before borrowing money, one has to be sure to borrow within their capacity and have repayment plan
- Step 2- Repayments made in time to avoid lowering of their credit score
- Step 3- One should not borrow to pay for unimportant things.

### **Challenges in Increasing Financial Literacy**

There are numerous hurdles in the road of gaining financial literacy and becoming a responsible rational financial agent of the society. Challenges in Indian scenario as mentioned by Bisht (2023) are absence of a strong technology structure, lack of technological skills, large number of individuals without access to banking facilities, little trust on digital payment methods and little access to credit because of low or no collateral. Jeyanthi (2018) points out that majority of the population are without general education to be given financial literacy. Moreover, many belong to below poverty level, are unemployed or have uncompetitive wages. Financial literacy is a

luxury for this group of people and even for the salaried middle who have little to save and no investment plans.

### **Conclusion:**

Economic empowerment and financial literacy are closely intertwined, while former provides opportunities for individuals to access necessary resources, opportunities, and knowledge to thrive economically. The latter equips with basic knowledge and skills about managing money, budgeting, investing, and saving. Together both form the foundation for building stronger, more resilient communities, reducing inequality and enhancing personal well-being. Governments, institutions, and organizations should promote these values by offering accessible educational programs, resources, and policies. Prioritizing economic empowerment and financial literacy generate ripple effect that positively influences families, communities, and nations as a whole.

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# CYBERBULLYING: ROLE OF EDUCATION TO FIGHT AGAINST NEW AGE DIGITAL THREAT

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## Abstract

Technology is an important part of our daily lives and it gives students many chances to learn, connect, and succeed. However, it also creates challenges like cyberbullying, where people use the internet to hurt or embarrass others. Cyberbullying can harm students' mental health, lower their confidence, and affect their studies. This chapter explores how education can help fight cyberbullying by teaching students how to use technology safely and respectfully. It highlights the need to help students understand the effects of cyberbullying and encourages kindness and empathy to build a positive online environment. Schools can include lessons about cyberbullying in their programs, create clear systems for reporting bullying, and teach bystanders to take action. Parents can also play an important role by supporting their children and guiding them on responsible technology use. The chapter discusses how teamwork between schools, families, and communities can help prevent cyberbullying and support those who are affected. With education, students can learn to use technology in positive ways and create a safer and more respectful digital world. This chapter shows that education is not only about preventing harm but also about building a culture of kindness and understanding online.

**Keywords:** *Cyberbullying, Education, Digital Threat, Digital Safety, Internet Ethics*

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**Introduction:**

**T**echnology is a big part of our lives today. It helps us learn, work, and connect with people worldwide. For students, technology is a powerful tool that opens many doors to success (Ilyas et al., 2023). With a computer, smartphone, or tablet, a student can access a world of infinite information and resources. Whether it's researching a topic, watching a tutorial video, or joining an online class, technology makes learning more interesting and interactive. Many students use technology to achieve their goals. For example, online courses let students study at their own place and pace, and educational apps make learning more engaging and fun (Baglari, 2015). Technology also helps students collaborate on projects with classmates, even if they are in different places. This means that ideas can be shared and improved together, giving each student a chance to shine. In this way, technology not only supports individual learning but also builds a community of learners who inspire each other (Sudarsana et al, 2019). But we have to keep in mind that, technology can be a double-edged sword. While it brings many benefits, it can also have negative sides. One of the bad things that can happen with technology is cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is when someone uses digital tools like social media, messaging apps, or email to hurt or threaten another person. This can include sending mean messages, posting hurtful comments, or sharing embarrassing photos without permission (Betts, 2018). Cyberbullying is harmful because it can happen at any time and in any place. Unlike bullying that might happen at school during the day, cyberbullying can continue into the evening and even during weekends. The hurtful messages can spread quickly online, making it hard for the victim to escape the pain. For a student, dealing with cyberbullying can be very challenging. It can affect their ability to concentrate in class, lower their self-esteem, and make them feel isolated or depressed. Instead of feeling confident and excited about their future, a student who is cyberbullied may feel overwhelmed by fear and sadness (Kumar & Goldstein, 2020).The effects of cyberbullying can go far beyond the immediate hurt. A student who faces cyberbullying might stop participating in school activities or lose interest in their studies. This can affect not only their academic performance but also their relationships with friends and family (Veiga et al., 2014). When the internet becomes a place of fear rather than a tool for learning and connection, it shows that technology can



sometimes be used in ways that hurt rather than help. Technology is very important for students. It helps them reach their goals by providing endless opportunities for learning and connection. But while technology can be a force for good, it can also bring challenges like cyberbullying (Ellahi, 2017).

*Cyberbullying is “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015).*

### **Role of Education in Fighting Cyberbullying:**

Cyberbullying has become a serious issue in today’s digital world, affecting students’ mental health, self-esteem, and overall well-being. Unlike traditional bullying, it happens online, making it harder to escape and sometimes even more damaging (Kota & Selkie, 2018). As technology becomes a bigger part of our lives, schools, parents, and communities need to work together to address this problem. Education plays a crucial role in this fight by teaching students how to use technology responsibly, fostering empathy, and creating awareness about the dangers of cyberbullying (Shehu & Orhani, 2018). Below are some important ways education can help combat cyberbullying and create a safer online environment for everyone.

- **Helping Students Understand Cyberbullying:** Education is the first step in fighting cyberbullying. Students need to know what cyberbullying is and why it is harmful. Schools can explain how it happens, such as sending mean messages, sharing embarrassing photos without permission, or spreading rumours online (Szoka & Thierer, 2009). By learning about the effects of cyberbullying, such as how it can hurt someone’s feelings, damage their self-esteem, or make them feel unsafe, students can better understand why it is wrong. When students are aware of the issue, they are more likely to recognize and stop harmful behaviour (Symmons & Bynum, 2014).
- **Teaching Students to Use Technology Safely:** Schools can help students learn to use technology responsibly and protect themselves online. Lessons can teach them about setting strong passwords, using privacy controls on social media, and avoiding sharing sensitive personal information. Students might learn that

sharing their location online can expose them to risks (Pullen, 2009). Understanding these safety measures helps students avoid becoming victims of cyberbullying or accidentally exposing themselves to harmful situations.

- **Building Kindness and Empathy:** One way to prevent cyberbullying is by teaching kindness and empathy in schools. Students can participate in activities that help them understand how others feel, like discussing real-life stories about the effects of bullying. Role-playing exercises can show students how their words and actions affect others, even online (Schultze-Krumbholz et al., 2016). When students learn to think about the feelings of others before they act, they are less likely to engage in harmful behaviour and more likely to create a positive online environment.
- **Creating Ways to Report Cyberbullying:** Many students who experience cyberbullying don't know who to tell or are afraid to speak up. Schools can set up clear and safe systems for reporting bullying. These can include anonymous reporting tools, trusted teachers or counsellors to talk to, and clear steps for handling the situation (Simon, 2017). When students know, they can report bullying without fear of getting into trouble or facing backlash, they feel more supported. Schools must also ensure they take reports seriously and provide help to the victims.
- **Teaching Bystanders to Speak Up:** In many cases, students witness cyberbullying but don't know how to help. Schools can educate bystanders about their role in stopping bullying. For example, they can teach students to support the victim by comforting them, reporting the bullying to an adult, or encouraging the bully to stop (Walker & Jeske, 2016). When more bystanders take action, it can discourage bullies and help victims feel less alone. Bystanders play a powerful role in creating a culture where bullying is not accepted.
- **Working with Parents and Guardians:** Parents are important allies in fighting cyberbullying. Schools can provide workshops or resources to help parents understand what cyberbullying looks like and how to talk to their children about it. Parents can learn to spot warning signs, like changes in mood or behaviour, and how to guide their children in using technology responsibly. By staying involved in their children's online activities and

maintaining open communication, parents can help prevent and address cyberbullying effectively (D’Auria, 2014).

- **Adding Cyberbullying Lessons to School Programs:** Schools can include lessons about cyberbullying in their regular teaching plans. For younger students, this might mean learning about being kind online, while older students could discuss more complex topics like the legal consequences of cyberbullying. These lessons should also include practical advice, such as how to handle conflicts online or what to do if they see or experience bullying (Lizut, 2019). When students learn about these issues as part of their education, they are better prepared to handle real-life situations.
- **Making Schools Safe and Supportive:** A positive school environment can reduce bullying, both online and offline. Schools can promote kindness and inclusion through activities like anti-bullying campaigns, peer mentoring programs, or team-building exercises. When students feel supported and included, they are less likely to bully others or be bullied themselves. A safe school environment encourages students to share their concerns and seek help when they need it (Georgiev et al., 2015).
- **Using Restorative Practices to Solve Problems:** If cyberbullying occurs, schools can use restorative practices to address the issue. This involves bringing together the victim and the bully, with a mediator, to discuss what happened and how it affected everyone involved. The goal is to help the bully understand the harm they caused and find a way to make amends. This approach focuses on healing and educating the bully rather than only punishing them, which can lead to long-term changes in behaviour (Hou, 2023).
- **Staying Updated on New Technology:** Technology is always changing, with new apps, social media platforms, and online trends emerging regularly. Educators and parents need to stay informed about these changes to understand how cyberbullying might occur on these platforms. For example, a new app might allow anonymous messaging, which could be used for bullying (Schade, 2017). By staying updated, schools can create relevant policies and teach students how to handle new online challenges responsibly.

## Conclusion:

Cyberbullying is a serious issue that affects many students in today's digital world. It can harm their confidence, mental health, and overall happiness. As technology becomes more important in our lives, it is essential to address the challenges it brings, including the misuse of digital tools. Education plays a crucial role in fighting cyberbullying by teaching students how to use technology responsibly, be kind and respectful online, and stand up against bullying when they see it (Campbell, 2011). Schools can provide a safe environment where students feel supported and empowered to speak up about cyberbullying. They can also teach valuable skills like empathy, collaboration, and problem-solving, which help students create a positive online community. Parents and guardians are important partners in this effort, as they can guide their children in using technology safely and help them navigate challenges (Vanderhoven et al., 2014). By including lessons on cyberbullying in school programs, offering clear reporting systems, and staying updated on new technology, schools can prepare students to handle the digital world with confidence. Educating bystanders to act and using restorative practices can further reduce bullying and promote healing for those involved (Abdulghany, 2019). Together, education, awareness, and teamwork can make a big difference in stopping cyberbullying. It is not just about preventing harm but also about creating a culture of kindness and respect, where every student feels valued and safe. When students, teachers, and parents work together, we can use technology as a tool for growth and connection, not fear.

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# HOLISTIC AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY LEARNING: A NEW PARADIGM FOR INDIAN EDUCATION

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## Abstract:

The National Education Policy 2020 was just unveiled by the Indian government. The Indian government has taken a revolutionary move in the sphere of education with the National Education Policy: 2020. We live in a post modern virtual environment where a nation's educational boundaries are blurred and enhanced by wealthy international ideas. Indian education has the most illustrious history and legacy. It has been changing over time in response to the demands of the crises brought on by social, political, and economic factors. The multidisciplinary and comprehensive aspects of New Education Policy: 2020 will be the main emphasis of this study. The policy aimed to transform India's higher education system. A type of education known as multidisciplinary education combines several courses to offer a whole education. This kind of instruction aims to foster an awareness of the connections between several disciplines. Students can gain a deeper grasp of the topic matter by exploiting a variety of perspectives from several fields. Some challenges in higher education, including the multidisciplinary and integrative methods, research development, and degree program structure, were not adequately addressed by previous education strategies.

**Keywords:** *Holistic, Multidisciplinary, NEP-2020, Critical Thinking, Flexibility*

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## **Introduction:**

**H**uman beings are the source of all possibilities in the world, and the quality of human resources determines the development and prosperity of the country to which they belong. The Indian government has changed education policy and established numerous education committees and commissions to ensure that all aspects of human possibilities are developed. If we properly examine the history of education policy, we will undoubtedly discover the reason for the changes, and Indian education has a glorious past. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the first substantial policy improves since 1986, signifies an enormous change in India's educational system. Under the direction of the Ministry of Education, the strategy was started and approved by the Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020. It aims to bring India's educational system into line with the global issues of the twenty-first century and resolves crucial spaces in the current framework (Chaudhary, 2024). The restructuring of Indian higher education with an emphasis on making education "multidisciplinary" is one of the major innovations that NEP epitomizes. Indian universities work hard to establish an environment that provides courses and programs that accurately reflect "multi-disciplinarily" in the strongest possible way. One of the main benefits of a multidisciplinary approach to education is that it allows for a more comprehensive approach and, consequently, a broader understanding of the world. NEP2020 wants to encourage pupils to read by using libraries because they recognize the value of reading and critical thinking (Soni, Web). As a result, NEP will improve public libraries, make them accessible to those who are unable to take advantage of them, and guarantee that every student has properly access to high-quality education.

## **Objectives of the Study:**

- To know how much effective is NEP 2020 in children's all-round development.
- To know the benefits of holistic and multi disciplinary approach to the awakening critical thinking of the child.
- To know all the obstacles in implementing holistic and multidisciplinary learning.



**Methodology:**

This study is based on qualitative in nature. For this data is collected from secondary sources like journal, articles and web resources. The current researcher has decided to use a descriptive method in order to formulate his opinion regarding the multidisciplinary and holistic approach to NEP 2020 education.

**Discussion:****Objectives 1: To know how much effective is NEP 2020 in children's all-round development.**

In the past, the only way to improve students' analytical and critical thinking skills was through literature. The purpose of High Order Thinking skills questions was to improve students' descriptive, analytical, and critical thinking abilities. However, NEP 2020 has now taken a groundbreaking stride in this direction toward the holistic development of the human. It will encourage the inclusion of libraries in curricula, which means that they should be viewed as essential parts of the teaching and learning process rather than merely a location for skill development. Because they offer a central area for students to access and use these materials, libraries are therefore viewed as essential tools in accomplishing this goal. It will improve students' broad learning. NEP 2020 wants to encourage pupils to read by using libraries because they recognize the value of reading and critical thinking (Soni, Web). As envisioned in the NEP-2020, a multidisciplinary education seeks to integrate the development of human beings' social, physical, intellectual, emotional, and moral capacities. A flexible curriculum will encourage innovative ways to combine different subjects. In addition to languages, learners will have the option of studying business studies, mathematics, and applied sciences. The learners' critical thinking, flexibility, problem-solving, adaptation, and analytical and communication abilities are all intended to be developed (ministry of education). Since learning is most successful when it is delivered in a variety of ways, flexibility is the key to multidisciplinary learning. Extending their knowledge outside the confines of their fields will foster meaningful and analytical learning. A "Curriculum Enhancement and Enrichment Process" that incorporates multidisciplinary courses and allows students to freely

combine courses from various academic disciplines and combine or pool courses according to their career interests and inclinations could be used to practice this. This would result in a coherent body of knowledge. Multidisciplinary programs should also offer concentrations in specific areas/fields to ensure that students have a career option in a specified core area or field of study and also retain a diverse education which will be a value addition for the students in many ways (gupta,2024).Multidisciplinary teaching and learning have been a part of India's Gurukul System since ancient times. It turns into a necessity. It allows the blending of several fields and viewpoints to address a concept, issue, or theme. It involves studying the same matter from several academic fields (Nirmal, 2024). To lead the world in the twenty-first century, India must continue its tradition of multidisciplinary and holistic education. The development of highly skilled human resources that will drive India's social, economic, and scientific advancement can be achieved by simply adding more vocational courses and soft skills through the integration of engineering and humanities. More flexibility in the curriculum will give students opportunities for multidisciplinary work in academic institutions, government agencies, and industry, among other settings (Gurchal & Yamdagini 2022).

**Objectives 2: To know the benefits of holistic and multidisciplinary approach to the awakening critical thinking of the child.**

Although the traditional undergraduate education system in India has been primarily focused on single-disciplinary learning for the past seven decades since independence, the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) acknowledges the importance of a liberal education, which is characterized by its holistic and multidisciplinary approach, in shaping and preparing students for a rapidly changing world. The reason for this departure from the long-standing practice is the need to develop well-rounded and adaptable individuals who can thrive in an increasingly globalized and interconnected society. The goal of NEP-2020 is to provide students the perspective, knowledge, and abilities they need to succeed in a labour market that is continuously changing and make significant contributions to society by promoting more open and multidisciplinary approach to schools. All educational systems must guarantee the holistic development of students by offering a

varied and multidisciplinary curriculum (Bashir & Wani 2024). The necessity to train experts in a range of domains, from artificial intelligence to agriculture, is addressed under NEP 2020. India must be prepared for what lies ahead. Additionally, NEP 2020 prepares a lot of young, aspirational pupils for success by providing them with the necessary skill set. Understanding any issue in life as a whole or in unity is greatly aided by a child's holistic development. The same is true of the multidisciplinary approach, which enables students to think critically and relate one subject to another (Shanmugapriya & Shanmugapriya, 2024). The Kothari commissions report concedes that discrimination exists and states that all university courses in human and social sciences should incorporate some degree of scientific investigation. By 2020, the viewpoint was permitted and expanded.

Graduates must have a broad range of talents in order to thrive in their future employment, given the world's ongoing unparalleled difficulties. A liberal education can help in this situation by giving pupils a blend of transferable and distinctively human talents. The ability to adapt and flourish in dynamic work contexts has become crucial due to the rise of pandemics, climate change, and disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence. People could become obsolete if they don't adapt. In addition to providing students with useful skills, a liberal education encourages critical thinking, inventiveness, and adaptability—all of which are essential for overcoming the difficulties of modern society.

The humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences are all incorporated into a liberal education to produce well-rounded people who can communicate clearly, think critically and creatively, and adjust to changing circumstances. Liberally educated graduates possess the abilities and disposition to advance society in addition to achieving professional success. In an effort to meet these demands of the contemporary world, NEP-2020 promotes transdisciplinary education and highlights the importance of experiential learning. Employability is improved by this move from a theoretical to a more Practical approach, which also fosters a deeper comprehension of societal problems and the capacity to develop feasible solutions. Moreover, NEP-2020's focus on digital literacy guarantees that students are ready for the digital age and reflects the growing significance of technology in all facets of our life (Bashir & Wani 2024).

The Yashpal Committee report (2009) highlighted how important multidisciplinary education is in today's world. As stated in the committee report notes “there is a need to expose students, especially at the undergraduate level, to various disciplines” (Yash Pal, 2009, p. 21). The study has advocated for a paradigm change in conventional teaching methods by highlighting the value of multidisciplinary education. All the benefits that are in the case of holistic and multidisciplinary learning are as follows -

- Development of well-rounded individuals
- Development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Fostering creativity and innovation
- Preparation for an interconnected world
- Enhanced employability
- Promoting interdisciplinary research and collaboration
- Fostering a culture of lifelong learning
- Addressing real-world problems

**Objectives 3: To know all the obstacles in implementing holistic and multidisciplinary learning.**

One of the main principles of the NEP-2020, which aims to usher in a new era of education in India, is the application of a multidisciplinary approach. Due to its capacity to develop students' critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability, multidisciplinary education has been gaining traction in the educational environment. Nevertheless, there are still a number of obstacles in the way of this strategy's effective application.

- **Resistance to change:** India's conventional educational system has traditionally been disciplined and compartmentalized. It can be difficult to shift this perspective and take a more multidisciplinary, holistic approach
- **Lack of resources:** Infrastructure, technology, and qualified faculty are only a few of the substantial resources need to implement holistic and multidisciplinary approaches.
- **Curriculum reform:** It might be difficult and time consuming to rebuild the curriculum to include multidisciplinary and holistic methods.

- **Assessment and evaluation:** It can be difficult to measure and evaluate student learning in a comprehensive and multidisciplinary framework since it calls for innovative methods of assessment and evaluation.
- **Faculty development:** When teaching in a multidisciplinary and comprehensive framework, faculty members may require training and growth.
- **Integration with existing systems:** Integrating holistic and multidisciplinary approaches with existing education systems, such as the board exams and entrance exams, can be challenging.
- **Scalability and sustainability:** Scaling up holistic and multidisciplinary approaches to reach all students, while ensuring sustainability, can be a significant challenge.
- **Addressing diversity and inclusivity:** Ensuring that holistic and multidisciplinary approaches address the diverse needs of students, including those with disabilities, can be a challenge.
- **Balancing depth and breadth:** Balancing the depth of knowledge in a particular discipline with the breadth of knowledge across multiple disciplines can be a challenge.
- **Evaluating effectiveness:** Evaluating the effectiveness of holistic and multidisciplinary approaches can be challenging, as it requires new metrics and evaluation frameworks.

### **Conclusion:**

The NEP aimed to foster a creative and inquisitive mind as well as help students acquire analytical and critical thinking skills at a young age through multidisciplinary and holistic education. An extremely inventive and revolutionary document is the NEP-2020. Although it may be difficult, it is crucial to successfully execute the NEP-2020 goal for holistic and multidisciplinary education. The study has emphasized how crucial inclusivity is to creating a brighter future. According to the report, the NEP2020 might serve as a fresh catalyst for moving the nation's current needs. The curriculum needs to be renewed to implement the NEP 2020, providing flexibility and Cooperation in the discipline. Multidisciplinary education can help students develop skills such as communication, problem solving and lifestyle education which is very important in the modern world. This multi-disciplinary and holistic education has a lot of benefits but to implement it, it requires sufficient resources, funding, infrastructure, assessment and evaluation,

digital access and existing system. Furthermore, it can be said that multidisciplinary and holistic education systems are a complex issue but it will help to consolidate the students in the worldwide education to coherent the future, to adjust the students in the worldwide education.

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# INFLUENCE OF EDUCATIONAL POLICIES ON SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN INDIA

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## Abstract:

Educational policies in India have historically played a pivotal role in shaping the nation's social, economic, and cultural fabric. From the introduction of universal education under colonial rule to the transformative framework of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, these policies have sought to address inequality, promote inclusivity, and empower citizens. This chapter examines how educational policies have contributed to social transformation in India, focusing on their impact on marginalized communities, gender equity, and economic development. The chapter begins with an analysis of key historical milestones, such as the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, the introduction of reservation policies, and the push for digital education. It explores the role of education in reducing social disparities, promoting gender equality, and creating opportunities for upward mobility. Despite progress, issues such as inadequate infrastructure, regional disparities, and systemic biases persist, limiting the full potential of these policies. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future educational frameworks to foster holistic social transformation, emphasizing the need for collaboration among policymakers, educators, and communities.

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**Keywords:** *Educational Policies, Social Transformation, Inclusivity, NEP 2020, RTE Act, Gender Equity, Marginalized Communities, India*

## **Introduction:**

**E**ducation has long been recognized as a powerful tool for social transformation, enabling individuals to challenge inequalities, break the cycle of poverty, and participate in economic and political processes. In India, a country characterized by immense diversity and deep-rooted social hierarchies, educational policies have played a significant role in fostering inclusivity and equity.

Since independence, the Indian government has prioritized education as a means to promote social justice and economic development. Landmark policies, including the RTE Act 2009, reservation systems for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and gender-focused initiatives, have aimed to bridge gaps in access and opportunity. The NEP 2020 represents a contemporary framework for addressing emerging challenges, such as digital education and skill development, while reaffirming the commitment to inclusivity.

However, the impact of these policies has been uneven, with marginalized groups often facing persistent barriers to access and quality education. This chapter examines the influence of educational policies on social transformation in India, highlighting their successes, limitations, and future potential. It explores case studies, data analysis, and policy reviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of how education can serve as a catalyst for societal change.

## **Literature Review:**

The influence of educational policies on social transformation in India has been a subject of considerable scholarly debate, as education plays a pivotal role in shaping the socio-economic and cultural fabric of the nation. Several landmark educational policies have aimed at fostering social equity, economic development, and national integration.

One of the key milestones in this regard was the *National Policy on Education (NPE)*, first introduced in 1968 and revised in 1986. The NPE emphasized the need for universal access to education and the

promotion of social justice through affirmative action. It recommended measures such as reservation of seats for marginalized communities and the inclusion of women in education to bridge socio-economic gaps (Chakrabarti, 2006).

In 2005, the *Right to Education (RTE) Act* was enacted, making education a fundamental right for children aged 6 to 14. The RTE Act aimed at eliminating disparities in access to quality education, particularly for rural and underprivileged children (Govinda & Varghese, 2013). The policy's focus on free and compulsory education for all is seen as a transformative force in promoting social inclusion.

However, despite these policies, there remain significant challenges in achieving full social transformation. Gaps in the quality of education, especially in rural areas, and the persistence of caste-based discrimination in schools continue to hinder the effectiveness of these policies (Jha & Parvati, 2011). Additionally, economic barriers and lack of infrastructure in remote areas further limit the policy's reach and impact. While educational policies in India have played a transformative role in addressing social inequality, more needs to be done to ensure equitable access to quality education across all sections of society.

### **Impact of Educational Policies on Social Transformation in India:**

Educational policies in India have played a significant role in shaping the country's social transformation. Over the decades, these policies have influenced the accessibility, quality, and inclusiveness of education, contributing to the overall development of the nation. From the implementation of the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1968 to the more recent National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the trajectory of educational reforms has been closely linked to the country's social changes.

One of the most significant impacts of educational policies in India is the promotion of inclusivity. Earlier, educational opportunities were primarily available to the upper castes, with marginalized communities, including Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), being excluded from quality education. Through various policies like reservations, scholarships, and special

provisions for these groups, educational access has been widened. The NEP 2020 further strengthens this focus by proposing measures for equitable access, retention, and learning outcomes for students from disadvantaged groups, including transgender individuals and children with disabilities. The emphasis on education has also contributed to the social empowerment of women. Policies like the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme and the focus on gender-sensitive curricula have gradually reduced gender disparities in educational participation. The increase in female literacy rates and the rise of women in leadership roles in various sectors are tangible outcomes of these policies. Education has empowered women to break traditional barriers, gain economic independence, and contribute to the social fabric in new and diverse ways.

In addition, educational policies have played a role in economic development by equipping individuals with skills that are necessary in a globalized world. Vocational education, skill development programs, and the promotion of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields in the curriculum have been vital in shaping a generation of individuals ready to contribute to India's burgeoning economy. The NEP 2020, with its focus on multi-disciplinary education, aims to ensure that students are prepared for future challenges in the global labor market. Furthermore, education has helped bridge regional disparities. The government has introduced numerous schemes to improve infrastructure, teacher quality, and resource allocation in remote and underdeveloped areas. This has enabled students from rural areas to pursue education and contribute to the transformation of their communities. Educational policies in India have had a profound impact on social transformation by enhancing access, promoting gender equality, empowering marginalized communities, and fostering economic and social development. Through continuous reforms, India is working towards an inclusive, equitable, and quality education system that addresses the needs of a diverse society.

## **Data Analysis & Review: Key Findings**

### **1. Enrolment Trends:**

The data reflects significant progress in increasing enrolment across different levels of education, but challenges such as gender disparities and regional inequalities still persist.

#### **(a) Elementary Education Enrolment:**

- Enrolment in elementary education increased from 96% in 2010 to 99% in 2020 (AISHE, 2020), indicating near-universal access to primary education.
- This improvement is largely attributed to government initiatives like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Right to Education Act (RTE), which mandate free and compulsory education for children aged 6–14.
- Midday meal schemes, free uniforms, and textbooks have further incentivized school attendance, especially in economically disadvantaged areas.

#### **(b) Higher Education Enrolment of Females:**

- Female enrolment in higher education rose to 49%, reflecting progress in bridging the gender gap.
- However, rural areas lag significantly due to cultural barriers, financial constraints, and lack of nearby higher education institutions.
- Programs like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, along with scholarships and hostel facilities, have contributed to increased participation but need to be scaled up in underserved regions.

### **2. Impact of Reservation Policies:**

Reservation policies have improved representation for marginalized communities in higher education, but challenges like high dropout rates persist.

**(a) Improved Representation of SC/ST Students:**

- Representation of SC/ST students in higher education increased from 15% in 2010 to 22% in 2020, showcasing the positive impact of reservation policies and targeted interventions.
- Financial aid schemes, such as the Post-Matric Scholarship for SC/ST Students, have made higher education more accessible to these groups.
- Universities and colleges have also been encouraged to adopt inclusive admission practices to support underrepresented communities.

**(b) Persistent Dropout Rates:**

- Despite improved enrolment, dropout rates among SC/ST students remain higher than the national average.
- Contributing factors include financial challenges, lack of mentorship, systemic discrimination, and inadequate academic support systems.
- Addressing this issue requires not only financial assistance but also initiatives such as counselling, remedial classes, and inclusive campus environments to support these students.

**3. Digital Divide:**

The digital divide remains a major barrier to equitable access to education, particularly in rural areas, as highlighted by significant disparities in internet access.

**(a) Internet Access in Rural vs. Urban Areas:**

- Only 27% of rural households have access to the internet, compared to 73% in urban areas (NSSO, 2021).
- This disparity was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when schools shifted to online learning, leaving millions of rural students without adequate resources.
- Urban students benefited from better access to technology and infrastructure, while rural students relied on limited or shared devices, resulting in a significant learning gap.

**(b) Challenges in Bridging the Divide:**

- The high cost of digital devices, lack of stable electricity, and limited digital literacy among parents and teachers in rural areas exacerbate the divide.
- Government initiatives like PM-WANI (Wi-Fi Access Network Interface) and the Digital India campaign aim to improve rural connectivity, but progress has been slow.
- Strengthening public digital infrastructure and promoting affordable access to technology are essential to closing this gap.

**4. Regional Disparities:**

Education outcomes vary significantly across states, with some states performing exceptionally well while others lag behind, highlighting the need for region-specific strategies.

**(a) States Outperforming Others:**

- States like Kerala and Tamil Nadu consistently outperform others in key education indicators such as literacy rates, enrolment ratios, and learning outcomes.
- Kerala's 96.2% literacy rate and Tamil Nadu's robust public education system reflect decades of investment in education, teacher training, and school infrastructure.
- These states have also implemented successful mid-day meal schemes, technology integration, and student-centric policies that prioritize inclusivity and access.

**(b) Underperforming States:**

- States in the Hindi-speaking belt, such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand, continue to face challenges due to lower literacy rates, inadequate infrastructure, and socio-economic barriers.
- High student-teacher ratios, lack of quality teaching materials, and gender disparities further compound these challenges.

### (c) Need for Region-Specific Interventions:

- A one-size-fits-all approach will not address the disparities across states. Tailored interventions that consider local socio-economic and cultural contexts are essential.
- For example, underperforming states could benefit from community-driven initiatives, investment in teacher training, and localized learning materials in regional languages.

### Conclusion:

The influence of educational policies on social transformation in India has been profound and far-reaching. Over the years, these policies have been pivotal in shaping a more inclusive and equitable society. The expansion of educational opportunities to marginalized groups, including women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other disadvantaged communities, has contributed to a reduction in social disparities. Initiatives like reservations, scholarships, and affirmative action programs have ensured that education serves as a tool for social empowerment and economic mobility. Moreover, the focus on gender equality, through policies like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, has led to an increase in female literacy and participation in various sectors, promoting social change. The introduction of vocational training, skill development, and multi-disciplinary approaches under policies like NEP 2020 further prepares individuals to meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving global economy, contributing to economic transformation. However, despite significant progress, challenges remain, particularly in ensuring quality education for all and bridging the gap between urban and rural areas. Ongoing policy reforms and their effective implementation are crucial for realizing the full potential of education as a driver of social transformation in India. The future of India's social progress lies in continuing to build an inclusive, accessible, and quality education system for all its citizens.

### Recommendations:

- **Strengthen Implementation:** Focus on effective policy execution, particularly in underserved regions.
- **Enhance Digital Infrastructure:** Bridge the digital divide to ensure equitable access to online education.

- **Promote Gender Equity:** Address societal norms through awareness campaigns and support mechanisms.
- **Foster Community Engagement:** Collaborate with local communities to sustain progress and address context-specific challenges.
- **Invest in Quality:** Improve teacher training, curriculum design, and infrastructure to enhance learning outcomes.

By addressing these issues, India can leverage education as a powerful tool for social transformation, empowering individuals and fostering national development.

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# DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION: A PATH TO STOP RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

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## Abstract:

In order to promote inclusivity, lessen institutional discrimination, and get pupils ready for a globalized society, diversity in education is essential. It includes socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural, and racial representation in student bodies, teachers, and courses. In addition to encouraging fairness and social cohesion, a varied learning environment improves critical thinking, empathy, and intercultural abilities. Through curriculum reform, teacher training in cultural competency, and the implementation of anti-racist activities, multicultural education significantly contributes to the reduction of racism. However, obstacles including institutional bias, resource limitations, and change aversion prevent it from being fully implemented. Schools must create inclusive curricula, increase teacher training, implement anti-discrimination policies, and encourage intercultural communication in order to get over these obstacles. Long-term advantages include lowering discrimination, boosting economic independence, and promoting public participation. The school system may foster a more just and equitable society where differences are valued as assets rather than causes of conflict by embracing variety.

**Keywords:** *Diversity, Multicultural Education, Inclusive Curriculum, Equity, Inclusion, Cultural Competence*

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## **Introduction:**

**S**ince education shapes people's thoughts and perspectives from a young age, it has long been acknowledged as a potent instrument for social change. Critical thinking, empathy, and a sense of duty to create a more inclusive society are all fostered by it. In a world that is becoming more interconnected and globalized, diversity in education is essential to confronting and eliminating systemic racism and discrimination. Schools, colleges, and universities are places where students from different backgrounds can interact, share ideas, and question stereotypes. Along with racial and ethnic representation, diversity in education also includes differences in ability, culture, language, and socioeconomic status. Students are more likely to acquire intercultural competencies, challenge stereotypes, and broaden their worldview when they learn in diverse settings. Students are better equipped to work in multicultural environments and make valuable contributions to society when they receive a well-rounded education that incorporates a variety of viewpoints. Additionally, diversity in education promotes equity and inclusion by guaranteeing that all students, irrespective of their background, have equal access to chances for development and achievement. By promoting candid communication, respect for one another, and understanding, it aids in the dismantling of discriminatory barriers. The education system can actively combat biases and prejudices by enacting inclusive curricula, encouraging equitable learning opportunities, and hiring diverse teachers. By educating the next generation, we can equip them with the knowledge and abilities necessary to build a more equitable and tolerant society that celebrates diversity as a strength rather than a cause for conflict.

## **Importance of Diversity in Education:**

Education diversity encompasses not only racial and ethnic representation but also socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural, and ability-based diversity. Learning is enhanced by exposure to a wide variety of viewpoints because it dispels stereotypes, fosters empathy, and equips students to succeed in diverse communities and workplaces. An inclusive learning environment allows students to -

- **Build Global Awareness and Intercultural Competencies:** Students who engage with classmates from diverse backgrounds gain a greater understanding of other cultures and learn to value different points of view. It equips them to live and work in a world that is becoming more interconnected.
- **Develop Your Ability to think critically by Considering Different Points of View:** Students' critical thinking about complicated problems is stimulated by exposure to a variety of viewpoints, which also develops their intellectual curiosity and flexibility.
- **Acknowledge and Address Prejudices and Biases:** Students who attend inclusive schools are better equipped to identify and confront discriminatory practices.
- **Encourage Inclusive Social Networks that cut Across Racial and Ethnic Lines:** Students who attend schools that prioritize diversity are able to form friendships and professional networks that represent a wide variety of experiences, backgrounds, and cultures.
- **Enhance Academic and Cognitive Performance:** Studies have indicated that by exposing students to a variety of thought processes, diverse learning environments help them achieve better academic results and develop their problem-solving abilities.
- **Boost Social and Emotional Intelligence:** Students who interact with peers from diverse backgrounds are better able to navigate social situations, exercise empathy, and build resilience.
- **Promote Creativity and Innovation:** By combining various viewpoints and methods of problem-solving, diversity promotes an innovative culture. It gives students the ability to think creatively and unconventionally while coming up with answers to global problems.
- **Boost Civic and Democratic Engagement:** Students who are exposed to a range of viewpoints are more likely to grow up to be civil rights, social justice, and equality activists.

### **Comprehending Educational Diversity:**

Diversity in education guarantees that students from different cultural, racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds have equal chances to learn and develop. It enhances the educational experience by

promoting inclusivity and expanding viewpoints. The main aspects of diversity in education encompass -

- **Curricular Diversity:** This entails incorporating various cultural viewpoints, histories, and contributions into the educational program. It guarantees that students are exposed to various experiences, promoting global consciousness and respect for diverse customs.
- **Faculty Diversity:** A varied teaching faculty offers different perspectives and role models for students. Promoting diversity among teachers and school leaders fosters a more inclusive educational atmosphere, which advantages every student.
- **Diversity in the Student Population:** Educational institutions enhance inclusivity by enforcing equitable admissions procedures and outreach initiatives to engage students from marginalized communities. A varied student population boosts peer education and intercultural exchanges.
- **Inclusive Pedagogy:** This pertains to educational approaches that cater to varying learning styles, capabilities, and cultural contexts. Methods like differentiated teaching, multilingual assistance, and adaptive learning approaches guarantee that every student can succeed academically.

By welcoming diversity in these aspects, education systems can promote equity, critical thinking, and a more harmonious community.

### **Multicultural Education's Contribution to Racism Reduction:**

Through addressing racial biases and promoting cultural awareness, multicultural education is essential to establishing an inclusive and respectful learning environment. While aggressively combating bigotry, it assists educators and students in cultivating an appreciation for diversity. In order to lessen racism, multicultural education's essential elements are -

- **Curriculum Reform:** Conventional curriculum frequently give a limited or biased viewpoint. Integrating many voices, histories, and experiences into courses like social studies, literature, and history is a key component of curricular reform. By ensuring that kids are taught about the contributions made by many

communities and cultures, this fosters respect and lessens preconceptions.

- **Cultural Competence Training:** Teachers have a significant influence on how pupils view diversity. Teachers who receive cultural competence training are more prepared to deal with ethnic and cultural diversity in a sensitive manner. This entails being aware of various cultural norms, dealing with prejudices, and creating an inclusive learning atmosphere in the classroom.
- **Programs that are bilingual or multilingual:** Language is an essential component of identity. Acknowledging linguistic variety through bilingual and multilingual education fosters respect for cultural differences in addition to providing support to students from diverse linguistic origins. These initiatives promote inclusive communication and assist in removing linguistic barriers.
- **Anti-Racism Initiatives:** By including conversations on past and present discrimination-related issues, schools can actively fight racism. Students are taught about the consequences of racism and the value of equality through events including workshops, open forums, and awareness campaigns. These programs inspire students to take an active role in advancing social justice by cultivating empathy and critical thinking.

By using these strategies, multicultural education contributes to the development of a more just society where racism is actively opposed and diversity is valued.

### **Professional Development and Training for Educators:**

Teachers are essential in creating an inclusive classroom and influencing students' perspectives on race and diversity. Professional development programs should prioritize the following areas in order to effectively promote equity and inclusivity -

- **Implicit Bias Awareness:** Teaching methods and student relationships may be impacted by unconscious prejudices. Training programs ought to assist teachers in identifying their unconscious prejudices and comprehending the ways in which they may impact classroom dynamics, discipline, and student expectations. Teachers can use more equal and fair teaching

strategies that guarantee every student feels appreciated and respected by raising awareness.

- **Culturally Responsive Teaching:** This strategy entails modifying instructional strategies to respect and represent the varied backgrounds of pupils. Teaching that is culturally responsive includes a variety of teaching techniques, integrates multicultural topics into classes, and cultivates relationships with students by learning about their cultural backgrounds. It makes studying more interesting and meaningful by assisting students in seeing themselves represented in the curriculum.
- **Techniques for Resolving Conflicts:** Racial or cultural conflicts may arise in the classroom, and teachers need to be prepared to deal with them skilfully. Teachers that receive conflict resolution training learn how to resolve conflicts, promote candid conversations, and foster empathy in their students. Peer mediation, active listening, and restorative justice are some techniques that can foster a more polite and peaceful learning environment.

Teachers can establish more inclusive classrooms that embrace diversity, lessen prejudice, and foster healthy student connections by including these components into their professional development and teacher training.

### **Policy Inclusivity and Institutional Dedication:**

Educational institutions must put in place policies that actively advance fairness and provide a secure and encouraging learning environment for all students if they hope to see success with diversity and inclusion initiatives. Important tactics to accomplish this include-

- **Affirmative Action in Admissions:** Institutions can implement affirmative action policies that give preference to students from historically underrepresented groups in order to guarantee equitable access to education. By giving underrepresented groups chances, these policies seek to level the playing field and promote a diverse student body. Outreach initiatives, financial aid, and scholarships can all help students who are struggling financially and socially.

- **Zero Tolerance for Discrimination:** In order to prevent racism, bullying, and exclusion in any way, educational institutions must adopt stringent anti-discrimination regulations. This covers unambiguous reporting procedures, sanctions for infractions, and preventative activities including awareness programs and diversity councils run by students. Students can express themselves freely without worrying about discrimination in a setting that is safe and welcoming.
- **Initiatives for Community Engagement:** Developing close relationships with local people helps students see the world from a wider perspective and improves cultural understanding. Establishments can hold diversity workshops, interact with cultural organizations, and promote student involvement in outreach initiatives.

### **Long-Term Societal Impact of Educational Diversity:**

A system of inclusive education promotes social cohesiveness and gives people the information and abilities they need to make constructive contributions to society. Diversity in education enriches individuals, but it also has a significant impact on communities and countries. Among the significant long-term effects are -

- **Decrease in Prejudice and preconceptions:** Students who are exposed to a variety of cultures and viewpoints at a young age are better able to develop empathy and understanding, which dispels prejudice and preconceptions. Students learn to respect differences and dispel myths when they engage with peers from diverse backgrounds. Racial and cultural prejudices in subsequent generations are lessened as a result of this, which gradually creates a more tolerant and inclusive society.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Underprivileged populations acquire the skills required to land well-paying employment and grow economically when they have equitable access to high-quality education. This boosts national economies, lowers economic inequality, and enhances individual livelihoods. Additionally, a varied workforce fosters creativity and innovation, which boosts the economy as a whole.
- **Political and Social Participation:** Education enables people to take part in democratic processes, policymaking, and social



advocacy as active citizens. An inclusive education increases the likelihood that people from a variety of backgrounds would cast ballots, take part in public debates, and support causes that advance justice and equity. A diversified and educated populace contributes to the creation of a society that is more equitable and representative.

### **Challenges & Barriers to Diversity in Education:**

Although there are many advantages to diversity in education, there are also many obstacles to overcome before it can be successfully implemented. Social divisions, resource constraints, and long-standing institutional norms are frequently the causes of these obstacles. Among the major obstacles are -

- **Opposition to Change:** A lot of educational establishments continue to use outdated curricula and policies that might not adequately accommodate diversity. Attempts to change admissions procedures or integrate multicultural viewpoints may encounter resistance from parents, teachers, or administrators used to more conventional methods. Campaigns for awareness, changes to policies, and strong leadership dedicated to diversity are necessary to overcome this reluctance.
- **Resource Limitations:** Financial investment is necessary for inclusive curricula, teacher training programs, and effective diversity initiatives. Lack of funds frequently plagues schools, especially those in disadvantaged communities, making it challenging to offer programs that support disenfranchised kids, bilingual education, or cultural competency training. Strategic resource allocation, private sector assistance, and more government money are needed to meet this problem.
- **Social Segregation:** Access to high-quality education is frequently determined by socioeconomic inequities, which results in segregated learning settings. Due to things like residential zoning, unequal school financing, and restricted access to extracurricular enrichment programs, students from low-income families may have fewer options to attend diverse schools. This gap can be closed with the support of policies like inclusive admissions practices, equitable school funding, and scholarship programs.

- **Institutional Bias:** Students may be treated differently depending on their race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background as a result of structural racism and unconscious prejudices in the educational system. This could show up as unequal expectations for particular student groups, biased disciplinary procedures, or underrepresentation in educational leadership. Systemic policy reforms, training for educators on unconscious bias, and procedures to hold institutions responsible for treating all students fairly are all necessary to address institutional bias.

### **Suggestions for enhancing Diversity in Education:**

Enhancing diversity in education requires a multi-faceted approach that fosters inclusivity and equity. Implementing culturally responsive teaching ensures that curricula reflect diverse perspectives, making learning more relevant for all students. Schools should promote multilingual education, inclusive policies, and representation of varied cultures in textbooks and teaching materials. Encouraging teacher training on diversity, equity, and inclusion helps educators address biases and create supportive environments. Additionally, fostering student-led cultural exchange programs, diversifying faculty, and integrating technology to provide personalized learning experiences can bridge gaps. Collaboration with communities and policymakers further strengthens efforts to make education truly accessible and representative for all.

### **Conclusion:**

Diversity in education is a potent instrument for promoting social cohesion, equity, and inclusivity. Educational institutions may fight prejudices and empower students by embracing diverse viewpoints, putting inclusive policies into place, and providing educators with cultural competency training. A more equitable and peaceful society is shaped by the critical thinking, empathy, and creativity that are fostered in a varied learning environment.

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## **MIND MATTERS: IMPACT OF EDUCATION ON MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS**

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### **Abstract:**

Education plays a key role in raising mental health awareness by promoting understanding, reducing stigma, and encouraging well-being. This study examines how schools, colleges, and workplaces contribute to mental health awareness by teaching emotional intelligence, stress management, and resilience. A well-designed curriculum that includes mental health topics helps individuals recognize early signs of distress, seek help when needed, and support others. Additionally, education helps change societal attitudes toward mental health, breaking stereotypes and encouraging inclusivity. Campaigns, workshops, and online learning platforms are effective tools for spreading awareness and starting important conversations. Teaching mental health from an early age equips individuals with coping skills that improve overall well-being. Teaching mental health from an early age equips individuals with coping skills that improve overall well-being, enhance interpersonal relationships, and build stronger communities. Strong mental health education can also lead to better academic performance and workplace productivity, ensuring long-term positive outcomes. This chapter highlights the importance of including mental health education in formal learning. A well-informed society can bridge the gap between mental health challenges and proper support, creating a culture of care and understanding. In the end,

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education empowers people to prioritize mental well-being, leading to a healthier and more informed community.

**Keywords:** *Mindful Learning, Emotional Well-Being, Mental Strength, Stigma-Free Education, Healthy Mindset*

### **Introduction:**

**M**ental health represents a vital component of overall wellness; however, it frequently suffers from neglect due to entrenched stigma, misinformation, and insufficient awareness. Numerous individuals face emotional turmoil, anxiety, or mental health issues but are reluctant to seek assistance because of societal taboos and misunderstandings. Education acts as a formidable instrument in tackling these challenges by delivering accurate information, promoting awareness, and facilitating open dialogues regarding mental well-being. When mental health topics are incorporated into educational settings such as schools, universities, and workplaces, individuals become more adept at recognizing emotional difficulties, managing stress proficiently, and providing support to those in need.

A community that emphasizes mental health education can confront and dismantle detrimental stereotypes, thereby enabling individuals to pursue professional assistance without fear or hesitation. The implementation of interactive and engaging pedagogical methods, such as storytelling, case studies, peer discussions, and digital learning platforms, significantly enhances the efficacy of mental health education. These strategies allow individuals to relate to real-life situations, rendering mental health awareness more accessible and impactful. This chapter explores the profound influence of education on mental health awareness, underscoring the importance of early intervention and inclusive educational environments. The journey toward a future where mental health is widely recognized and openly discussed commences with a well-structured and effectively executed educational framework. By equipping individuals with essential knowledge and resources, education plays a pivotal role in cultivating a society that values and prioritizes emotional well-being, ultimately fostering a healthier and more supportive community.

## **Understanding Mental Health Awareness:**

Mental health awareness entails the recognition, comprehension, and management of psychological well-being. It includes the capacity to identify symptoms associated with mental health disorders, pursue suitable assistance, and provide support to those in distress. Research indicates that mental health literacy plays a crucial role in facilitating early intervention, thereby diminishing the likelihood of developing severe mental health issues (Jorm et al., 1997). Educating the public about mental health contributes to:

- Recognizing early indicators of mental illness.
- Motivating individuals to seek professional assistance.
- Minimizing stigma and discrimination linked to mental health issues.
- Strengthening resilience and emotional intelligence.

A study by Dr. Johnson and Carter (2020) examined the impact of mental health education in educational institutions, revealing that well-structured programs resulted in a 40% increase in students seeking psychological support. Their research highlighted that early engagement with mental health awareness cultivates emotional intelligence, coping strategies, and self-awareness. Barbara A. (2022) underscored the importance of mental health education in the workplace, indicating that organizations that incorporate mental health training into their professional development initiatives experience reduced absenteeism, enhanced job satisfaction, and improved productivity. Her findings suggested that when employees receive mental health education, they are more inclined to identify early signs of distress, seek necessary help, and assist their peers. Their research indicated that online mental health courses, webinars, and narrative techniques significantly improve mental health literacy across various age groups and socioeconomic statuses. Patel and Kim (2019) introduced the concept of "Holistic Mental Health Education," which extends beyond traditional classroom learning to encompass psychological well-being in various life domains. Their study outlined several key strategies for effective mental health education, including -

- Encouraging open discussions on mental health in schools, universities, and workplaces.

- Implementing stress management and emotional resilience training programs.
- Establishing structured mental health policies that promote inclusivity and early intervention.
- Providing mental health education to parents and caregivers to support children's psychological well-being.

Renwick et al. (2020) conducted an analysis on the enduring impacts of mental health education on both individuals and communities. Their findings indicated that communities exhibiting greater mental health literacy tend to experience fewer instances of discrimination against those with mental health disorders, alongside heightened empathy and enhanced overall well-being. In the last twenty years, there has been a notable expansion in the incorporation of mental health education within academic programs, workplace regulations, and online platforms. This growing acknowledgment of mental health as an essential aspect of overall well-being has resulted in the development of more organized initiatives focused on raising awareness and diminishing stigma.

### **Role of Education in Mental Health Awareness:**

Education serves as a catalyst for breaking down mental health stigma and fostering a more informed society. Through structured learning environments, students gain access to information that demystifies mental illnesses and encourages proactive management. Key areas where education impacts mental health awareness include -

**(a) Integrating Mental Health into the Curriculum:** Incorporating mental health education into school programs ensures that students develop emotional intelligence, effective coping skills, and resilience from an early stage. Countries such as Canada and Australia have successfully introduced mental health topics into their school syllabi, leading to significant improvements in student well-being (Kutcher et al., 2016).

**(b) Training and Supporting Educators:** Teachers play a pivotal role in fostering mental health awareness among students. Providing them with proper training to identify signs of emotional distress and offer appropriate guidance can positively influence student outcomes.

Programs such as Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) have been effective in equipping educators with the skills needed to support students facing mental health challenges (Kelly et al., 2011).

**(c) Encouraging Student Engagement and Peer Support:** Promoting peer-led mental health discussions and student-driven initiatives within schools and universities helps reduce stigma and build a supportive community. Organizations like Active Minds in the United States have demonstrated the effectiveness of student-led mental health advocacy in improving awareness and support systems (Eisenberg et al., 2012).

**(d) Involving Parents and Guardians:** Mental health education should extend beyond the classroom, involving parents and guardians in meaningful discussions. Workshops, seminars, and open forums provide families with the knowledge and tools to recognize mental health challenges and support their children effectively at home (Reupert & Maybery, 2007).

**(e) Ensuring Access to Counseling and Support Services:** Educational institutions should provide easily accessible mental health services, including counseling, therapy, and crisis intervention. The presence of trained psychologists and counselors within schools and universities has been associated with reduced academic stress and enhanced student performance (Durlak et al., 2011).

### **Higher Education and Mental Health Awareness:**

Universities and colleges play a crucial role in advancing mental health education. The transition from adolescence to adulthood often brings increased academic pressures, social challenges, and career anxieties. Institutions that prioritize mental health initiatives report higher retention rates, better academic performance, and improved student well-being. Strategies for promoting mental health awareness in higher education include -

- **Mandatory Mental Health Courses and Workshops:** Providing students with knowledge on stress management, emotional resilience, and self-care.



- **Mental Health Support Groups and Peer Counselling:** Encouraging students to support each other through shared experiences.
- **Online Mental Health Resources:** Making digital counselling services, self-help materials, and interactive mental health applications available to students.
- **Destigmatization Campaigns:** Using student-led awareness campaigns to promote understanding and reduce misconceptions about mental health disorders.

### **Workplace Mental Health Education:**

The workplace is another critical environment for mental health education. Employees spend a significant portion of their lives at work, making it essential for organizations to create supportive environments that prioritize psychological well-being. Barbara A. (2022) emphasized the significance of workplace mental health education, noting that organizations integrating mental health training experience lower absenteeism, higher job satisfaction, and increased productivity. Effective workplace mental health education strategies include -

- Incorporating mental health training into professional development programs.
- Offering confidential counselling services and wellness programs.
- Encouraging flexible work schedules, stress management training, and wellness programs.
- Training managers and executives to recognize and address mental health concerns among employees.

### **Digital Learning and Mental Health Awareness:**

With the rise of technology, digital platforms have emerged as powerful tools for spreading mental health awareness. Online learning platforms, webinars, and mental health applications have made mental health education more accessible across diverse demographics. Lee and Thompson (2023) explored the effectiveness of digital learning platforms in promoting mental health awareness and found that online mental health courses significantly enhance mental health literacy

across different age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds. Key benefits of digital mental health education include -

- **Accessibility:** Online courses and resources are available to a broader audience.
- **Anonymity and Privacy:** Individuals may feel more comfortable accessing digital resources than seeking in-person help.
- **Interactive Engagement:** Gamification and storytelling techniques enhance learning experiences.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** Digital learning reduces barriers to mental health education by providing free or low-cost resources.

### **Holistic Mental Health Education:**

Patel and Kim (2019) introduced the concept of "Holistic Mental Health Education," which extends beyond traditional classroom learning to encompass psychological well-being in various life domains. Their study outlined several key strategies for effective mental health education -

- **Encouraging community-based mental health initiatives:** Partnering with local organizations to provide awareness programs.
- **Implementing emotional resilience training programs:** Teaching individuals to manage stress, anxiety, and interpersonal conflicts effectively.
- **Promoting inclusivity and early intervention:** Establishing policies that ensure individuals receive support before mental health issues escalate.
- **Educating parents and caregivers:** Providing resources to help families support their children's mental well-being.

### **Challenges in Implementing Mental Health Education:**

Despite its growing importance, several barriers hinder the effective implementation of mental health education -

- **Social Stigma and Cultural Barriers:** Mental health remains stigmatized in many societies, often seen as a weakness rather

than a legitimate health concern. This perception discourages students, parents, and educators from openly discussing mental health issues.

- **Lack of Training and Resources:** Many educators lack formal training in mental health, making it difficult to address students' concerns effectively. Schools often struggle to allocate resources for specialized training, counselors, and awareness programs, leading to inadequate support systems (Weare & Nind, 2011; Kutcher et al., 2016).
- **Funding and Policy Gaps:** Limited financial resources prevent schools, especially in disadvantaged areas, from hiring mental health professionals and launching awareness initiatives. The absence of standardized policies further leads to inconsistent access to mental health education across different regions (Fazel et al., 2014; Patalay & Gage, 2019).
- **Resistance from Parents and Institutions:** Some parents and school leaders believe mental health discussions should take place at home, fearing that addressing these topics in school may cause unnecessary concern among students. This resistance restricts the effectiveness of mental health education programs (Rickwood et al., 2015).
- **Shortage of Mental Health Professionals:** Many schools lack trained psychologists and counselors, leaving students without essential support. Without these experts, educators struggle to manage complex psychological issues, further worsening the problem (Reinke et al., 2011).
- **Academic Priorities and Limited Time:** The focus on core subjects and standardized testing often leaves little room for mental health education. Packed curriculums make it difficult for educators to incorporate discussions on mental well-being (Dix et al., 2020).

### **Strategies for Strengthening Mental Health Education:**

To integrate mental health education effectively, policymakers, educators, and professionals must collaborate to ensure funding, policy support, and increased awareness. To improve mental health awareness in education, the following strategies should be implemented –

- **Workplace Initiatives:** Organizations should offer flexible work policies, stress management programs, and counseling services for employees.
- **Increased Funding:** More financial resources are needed to train teachers, hire mental health professionals, and enhance digital tools (Fazel et al., 2014).
- **Curriculum Integration:** Mental health topics like stress management and resilience should be embedded into school programs (Weare & Nind, 2011).
- **Collaboration with Experts:** Partnerships with NGOs and healthcare providers can improve the quality of mental health services in schools.

### **Conclusion:**

Education plays a vital role in enhancing mental health awareness by promoting understanding, breaking stigma, and equipping individuals with essential coping skills. Incorporating mental health education into school curricula, training teachers, engaging students, involving parents, and providing access to support services are key measures in fostering psychological well-being. While challenges remain, targeted strategies can improve mental health literacy, contributing to a more knowledgeable and supportive community.

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# **BRIDGING THE GAP: ROLE OF EDUCATION IN TACKLING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE AND CYBERBULLYING**

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## **Abstract:**

In the digital age, technology has become an integral part of communication, education, and economic development. However, the digital divide, defined as the disparity in access to digital technologies, continues to create significant social and economic inequalities, particularly among marginalized communities. At the same time, the widespread use of digital platforms has given rise to cyberbullying, a form of harassment that poses serious psychological and social risks, especially to young people. These issues digital inequality and cyberbullying are interconnected and hinder personal, academic, and social growth, exacerbating existing disparities. Education plays a pivotal role in addressing both the digital divide and cyberbullying. By integrating digital literacy into curricula, schools can ensure that students from all backgrounds gain the essential skills to navigate technology safely and effectively. Additionally, educational institutions provide an important platform for raising awareness of cyberbullying, promoting empathy, and implementing preventive measures to safeguard students' mental well-being. This chapter offers actionable recommendations for educators, policymakers, and communities to prevent the digital divide and cyberbullying. These recommendations include providing equitable access to technology, fostering digital literacy, creating supportive environments for reporting and addressing cyberbullying, and promoting collaborative efforts to ensure all

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students can thrive in a digital world. By addressing these challenges through education, we can build a more inclusive, safe, and equitable digital society.

**Keywords:** *Digital Divide, Cyberbullying, Digital Literacy, Education, Inclusivity*

## **Introduction**

In the digital age, technology is essential for communication, education, and economic development, yet the digital divide the gap between those with and without access to technology remains a global challenge. This divide exacerbates social and economic inequalities, leaving marginalized communities at a disadvantage in education, employment, and civic engagement. Additionally, the rise of digital platforms has led to the growing issue of cyberbullying, which harms individuals' psychological well-being, especially among youth.

The digital divide and cyberbullying are interconnected, as limited access to technology hinders digital skill development, while insufficient guidance increases the risk of online harassment. Both issues threaten to undermine the benefits of digital progress. Education is key to addressing these challenges by promoting digital inclusion and responsible online behavior. By integrating digital literacy into curricula, schools can equip students with essential skills and raise awareness about cyberbullying. Collaboration among teachers, parents, and policymakers is crucial in creating inclusive, safe learning environments where all students have equal access to technology and protection from cyberbullying.

## **Understanding the Digital Divide:**

The digital divide refers to the gap between individuals, communities, or nations that have access to modern information and communication technologies (ICT) and those who do not. This divide encompasses disparities in access to devices, the internet, and digital literacy, which are critical for participating in today's increasingly technology-driven world. Understanding the dimensions, causes, and consequences of the digital divide helps illuminate its profound impact on personal and societal development.

The dimensions of the Digital Divide are as follows -

- **Access to Technology:** The digital divide is most apparent in unequal access to reliable and affordable devices (computers, smartphones, tablets) and high-speed internet. Rural areas, low-income populations, and developing countries often face significant barriers, such as limited infrastructure and high costs, preventing access to necessary digital tools.
- **Digital Literacy and Skill Gaps:** The divide also includes gaps in digital literacy the ability to use technology effectively. Many marginalized groups, including older generations and low-income individuals, lack the skills needed to navigate online platforms, use software, or practice internet safety, rendering mere access insufficient for meaningful engagement.
- **Socioeconomic, Geographical, and Demographic Disparities:** Socioeconomic status is a key factor, as wealthier families can afford better technology and education. Geographic location and demographics, such as age, gender, and disability, also influence access and usage, with women and individuals with disabilities facing additional challenges in many societies.

### **Causes and Factors contributing to the Digital Divide:**

The digital divide arises from a combination of infrastructural, economic, policy, social, and educational challenges that limit access to technology and digital literacy. Key factors include -

- **Infrastructure and Accessibility:** Inadequate broadband and mobile networks, particularly in rural and remote areas, hinder internet access. Power shortages further exacerbate the divide.
- **Economic Inequality:** High costs of devices, internet services, and technology maintenance prevent low-income families from accessing digital resources.
- **Policy and Governance:** Limited government investment in digital infrastructure, lack of affordable internet policies, and insufficient digital literacy initiatives widen the gap.
- **Socio-Cultural Barriers:** Gender disparities, disabilities, and language barriers restrict technology access. Women and marginalized groups often face additional obstacles.



- **Educational Gaps:** Underfunded schools lack technology resources, and inadequate digital literacy training leaves many unable to participate fully in the digital world.
- **Geographical Challenges:** Remote areas face logistical and cost-related barriers to infrastructure development, limiting connectivity.

### **Cyberbullying: A Growing Concern:**

As digital technology becomes increasingly integrated into everyday life, the phenomenon of cyberbullying has emerged as a significant social issue. Cyberbullying involves using digital platforms to intimidate, harass, or harm others, often causing severe psychological and emotional distress. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying can occur anonymously, reach a wide audience, and persist indefinitely, making it uniquely harmful. Cyberbullying refers to repeated, intentional actions that cause harm through electronic means, including social media, messaging apps, gaming platforms, and websites. It can take various forms, including -

- **Harassment:** Sending threatening, abusive, or offensive messages repeatedly to target individuals.
- **Defamation:** Spreading false or damaging information about someone to harm their reputation.
- **Exclusion:** Deliberately excluding someone from online groups, chats, or social media communities to isolate them socially.
- **Doxxing:** Publishing personal or sensitive information about someone without their consent, exposing them to real-world danger.
- **Impersonation:** Creating fake accounts to deceive others or post harmful content in the victim's name.
- **Cyberstalking:** Persistent and intrusive following of someone online, often accompanied by threats or intimidation.

### **Psychological and Social Impacts of Cyberbullying:**

The effects of cyberbullying can be profound, impacting mental health, academic performance, and social relationships. Some common consequences include -

- **Emotional Distress:** Victims often experience anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.
- **Academic Impact:** Reduced concentration and school avoidance can lead to poor academic outcomes.
- **Social Isolation:** Fear of online harassment may cause withdrawal from social interactions, both online and offline.
- **Physical Symptoms:** Stress-induced health issues like headaches, sleep disturbances, and fatigue are common.
- **Suicidal Thoughts:** In severe cases, cyberbullying has been linked to self-harm and suicide, especially among teenagers.

### **Key Statistics and Global Trends:**

Cyberbullying is a growing global concern. Key statistics highlight its prevalence and impact:

- According to UNICEF, one in three young people globally has experienced some form of cyberbullying.
- The Pew Research Center reports that 59% of U.S. teenagers have been bullied or harassed online.
- A 2023 global survey found that social media platforms were the most common venues for cyberbullying, with Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok frequently cited.
- Cyberbullying incidents increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic as more time was spent online for education and socializing.

### **Education's Role in Addressing the Digital Divide and Cyberbullying:**

Education plays a transformative role in narrowing the digital divide and tackling the growing challenge of cyberbullying. By ensuring access to technology, fostering digital literacy, and promoting responsible online behavior, educational institutions can build inclusive digital societies and safer online environments.

#### **(a) Addressing the Digital Divide:**

The digital divide refers to the gap between individuals and communities with access to information and communication

technologies (ICT) and those without. This disparity arises from differences in economic status, geographical location, education level, and infrastructure availability. Bridging the digital divide is critical in today's world, where digital tools significantly influence education, employment, healthcare, and social interaction. Ensuring equitable access to technology fosters inclusive growth, reduces social inequalities, and empowers marginalized populations.

A multifaceted approach is essential to address this issue. Governments must prioritize investment in digital infrastructure, particularly in remote and underserved areas, to enhance internet connectivity and ensure the affordability of devices. Public-private partnerships can play a pivotal role in funding and implementing these initiatives. Additionally, digital literacy programs should be integrated into formal education systems and community-based training to empower individuals with the skills required to utilize technology effectively.

Policymakers must also address socio-economic barriers by offering subsidized internet services and devices to low-income families. Strengthening cybersecurity and creating culturally relevant digital content are equally vital to encourage participation across diverse groups. Collaboration between governments, NGOs, and technology providers can further strengthen efforts to close the digital gap.

Addressing the digital divide is not just a matter of technological advancement but also a commitment to social justice and equal opportunity. Bridging this divide can unlock the potential for sustainable development and create a more inclusive, connected global society.

### **(b) Combating Cyberbullying:**

Cyberbullying, the use of digital platforms to harass, intimidate, or humiliate individuals, has become a pervasive issue in the digital age. It affects people of all ages, particularly vulnerable groups like children and teenagers, and can lead to severe psychological, emotional, and even physical consequences. The anonymity offered by online platforms often emboldens perpetrators, making it harder to identify and address the issue.

To effectively combat cyberbullying, a comprehensive approach is essential. Education plays a crucial role in prevention. Schools and communities must raise awareness about cyberbullying and its impact, fostering empathy and digital citizenship. Incorporating lessons on responsible online behavior and the consequences of cyberbullying into school curriculums can help cultivate a respectful online culture.

Parents and guardians should actively engage with their children's online activities, encouraging open communication and trust. Teaching children how to recognize, report, and respond to cyberbullying can empower them to seek help when needed.

Social media platforms and tech companies must also take responsibility by enforcing stricter community guidelines, improving reporting mechanisms, and leveraging AI to identify and remove harmful content. Legal frameworks should be strengthened to address cyberbullying effectively, with clear penalties for offenders.

Combating cyberbullying requires collective efforts from educators, parents, policymakers, and technology providers. By creating safer online spaces, promoting digital literacy, and fostering a culture of respect and accountability, society can mitigate the harmful effects of cyberbullying and ensure a healthier digital environment for all.

### **Recommendations to Prevent Digital Divide and Cyberbullying:**

Addressing the digital divide and combating cyberbullying require proactive strategies to ensure equitable access to technology and create safer online environments. Collaborative efforts in education, policy, and technology can foster inclusivity, responsible digital behavior, and a respectful online culture.

#### **1. For Educators and Institutions:**

- **Enhance Digital Access and Resources:** Provide students with access to computers, tablets, and internet connectivity through lending programs, computer labs, or public-private partnerships establishing technology-sharing initiatives where students can borrow devices for home use.
- **Integrate Digital Literacy into Curriculum:** Design curriculum frameworks that teach core digital skills, including

online safety, responsible communication, and critical evaluation of digital content including modules on digital citizenship, privacy protection, and the ethical use of social media.

- **Professional Development for Teachers:** Offer regular training on integrating technology into teaching and managing online classroom environments responsibly conducting workshops on using educational technology tools and managing cyberbullying incidents.
- **Establish Clear Anti-Cyberbullying Policies:** Create and enforce policies that define, prevent, and address cyberbullying. Ensure students know how to report incidents confidentially developing anonymous reporting systems and set up dedicated response teams.

## 2. For Policymakers:

- **Expand Digital Infrastructure:** Invest in rural broadband and affordable technology programs to ensure equitable access to internet services, subsidizing internet service providers to expand connectivity to underserved areas.
- **Implement Affordable Device Programs:** Introduce programs that offer low-cost or free digital devices for students from low-income families, like Government initiatives similar to One Laptop per Child (OLPC).
- **Mandate Digital Literacy Standards:** Incorporate digital skills training into national education standards from primary to secondary levels requiring digital literacy as part of standardized curricula and teacher certifications.
- **Strengthen Cyberbullying Legislation:** Create clear legal frameworks that address cyberbullying, including enforcement mechanisms and victim protection measures, enacting laws that require social media platforms to improve moderation and reporting tools.

## 3. For Parents and Communities:

- **Foster a Tech-Supportive Environment at Home:** Encourage balanced use of technology and discuss the benefits and risks of digital media, setting time limits for device usage and co-view content to discuss online behavior.

- **Teach and Model Digital Responsibility:** Promote respectful online interactions and reinforce the importance of empathy and kindness, sharing real-life stories about the consequences of cyberbullying to build awareness.
- **Monitor and Guide Online Activities:** Use parental controls and regularly discuss digital safety practices with children, teaching children how to create strong passwords, avoid sharing personal information, and recognize scams.
- **Engage in Community Efforts:** Collaborate with schools, local organizations, and tech companies to promote inclusive access and safe digital practices, participating in or organize community workshops on digital literacy and cyberbullying prevention.

### Conclusion:

The digital divide and cyberbullying are critical challenges that hinder personal, academic, and social growth in the digital age. Education plays a crucial role in addressing these issues by promoting digital literacy, fostering responsible online behavior, and ensuring equitable access to technology. Through targeted strategies and collaborative efforts, educators, policymakers, and communities can help prevent the digital divide and cyberbullying, creating a safer and more inclusive digital environment for all students. By taking proactive steps, we can ensure that the benefits of digital advancements are accessible and safe for everyone.

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## EDUCATION AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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### Abstract:

Social responsibility is a fundamental principle that promotes ethical behaviour, civic engagement, environmental sustainability, and community development. It ensures that individuals, organizations, and governments contribute to societal well-being. Educational institutions play a key role in fostering social responsibility through value-based education, sustainability initiatives, and community engagement. Teachers, as mentors, instill ethical awareness and encourage students to participate in social causes. Government policies like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, and the National Service Scheme (NSS) institutionalize social responsibility, promoting inclusivity and sustainability. By embracing ethical practices and social awareness, societies can address global challenges such as poverty, inequality, and climate change. Ultimately, social responsibility is a shared commitment that fosters a just, inclusive, and environmentally conscious world.

**Keywords:** *Social Responsibility, Civic Engagement, Ethical Awareness, Sustainability, Education, Government Policies*

### Introduction:

**S**ocial responsibility is a broad concept that applies to various fields, including economy, education, politics, and religion. It is challenging to define precisely, as it encompasses multiple

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aspects. Simply put, social responsibility refers to an individual's duty to act in ways that contribute to societal well-being. This involves a sense of obligation to the community and a willingness to make sacrifices for the greater good. Similarly, society has a responsibility toward its individuals, reflected through social programs and legal frameworks. Governments strive to improve citizens' lives by implementing initiatives such as welfare programs, tax assistance, and unemployment benefits. Additionally, laws play a vital role in shaping responsible behaviour by enforcing ethical actions and penalizing harmful conduct. Through these mechanisms, both individuals and society work together to foster a just and supportive environment.

### **Concept and Definition of Social Responsibility:**

Social responsibility is the ethical duty of individuals, organizations, and governments to act in ways that promote the well-being of society. It is a broad concept that applies to various fields, including economy, education, politics, business, and religion. At its core, social responsibility emphasizes a commitment to ethical conduct, fairness, and sustainability, ensuring that actions benefit not only individuals but also the larger community. In simple terms, social responsibility means recognizing one's obligation to contribute positively to society. This can take various forms, such as volunteering, supporting environmental conservation, engaging in ethical business practices, and advocating for social justice. It requires individuals to go beyond personal gain and consider the broader impact of their actions on others.

At the societal level, governments play a crucial role in ensuring social responsibility through laws, policies, and welfare programs. Initiatives such as tax benefits, social security, education subsidies, and healthcare programs demonstrate how societies fulfil their duty toward citizens. Businesses also have corporate social responsibility (CSR), where they integrate ethical practices, environmental sustainability, and community engagement into their operations. Ultimately, social responsibility is a shared commitment that balances individual rights with collective well-being. When individuals, organizations, and governments uphold their responsibilities, they contribute to a more equitable, just, and sustainable society. By fostering awareness and ethical behaviour, social responsibility becomes a guiding principle for progress and human development.

## Characteristics of Social Responsibility:

Social responsibility is a fundamental ethical principle that guides individuals, organizations, and governments to act in ways that benefit society. It encompasses various dimensions that promote fairness, sustainability, and collective well-being. The key characteristics of social responsibility include -

- **Ethical Obligation:** Social responsibility is rooted in **moral and ethical principles**, requiring individuals and organizations to act with integrity, honesty, and fairness in all their interactions. It emphasizes doing what is right rather than what is merely profitable or convenient.
- **Voluntary Commitment:** While laws and regulations enforce certain aspects of social responsibility, it often **goes beyond legal requirements**. Many individuals and businesses engage in socially responsible activities voluntarily, such as philanthropy, community service, and environmental sustainability efforts.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** Socially responsible entities are **accountable for their actions** and their impact on society. This includes transparent decision-making, ethical business practices, and maintaining public trust. Governments, corporations, and individuals must take responsibility for their social and environmental footprints.
- **Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship:** A key component of social responsibility is **protecting the environment** and promoting sustainable practices. Businesses and individuals are encouraged to reduce waste, conserve resources, and adopt eco-friendly initiatives to ensure long-term ecological balance.
- **Community Engagement and Development:** Social responsibility involves actively **contributing to the welfare of society**. This includes participating in community programs, supporting education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation efforts, and advocating for social justice.
- **Economic and Social Equity:** A socially responsible society works towards **reducing inequalities** and ensuring that all individuals have access to basic needs such as education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

By embracing these characteristics, social responsibility fosters a culture of **ethical leadership, sustainable development, and collective progress**, ensuring that individuals and organizations contribute positively to society.

### **Importance of Social Responsibility in Educational Institutions:**

Social responsibility in educational institutions is vital for fostering ethical leadership, community engagement, and sustainable development. As centers of knowledge and character formation, schools, colleges, and universities play a crucial role in shaping responsible citizens who contribute positively to society.

- **Ethical and Civic Responsibility:** Educational institutions instill values such as integrity, empathy, and respect for diversity. By incorporating social responsibility into curricula and extracurricular activities, students develop a sense of civic duty and ethical awareness. This helps create future leaders who prioritize social justice, equity, and sustainability in their professional and personal lives.
- **Community Engagement and Development:** Social responsibility encourages institutions to extend their impact beyond classrooms by engaging with local communities. Outreach programs, volunteer initiatives, and partnerships with NGOs provide students with real-world experiences while addressing societal issues like poverty, illiteracy, and environmental degradation. By fostering collaboration, institutions become active contributors to community welfare.
- **Sustainability and Environmental Consciousness:** With growing environmental concerns, educational institutions have a duty to promote sustainable practices. Green campuses, waste management programs, and environmental awareness campaigns not only educate students about ecological responsibility but also set an example for the wider society. By embedding sustainability in policies and curricula, institutions contribute to long-term environmental conservation.
- **Holistic Student Development:** Beyond academic excellence, social responsibility enriches students' personal and professional growth. Participation in community service, ethical decision-making, and sustainability initiatives nurtures critical thinking,

empathy, and problem-solving skills. These experiences prepare students to become socially conscious professionals who can tackle global challenges effectively.

- **Institutional Reputation and Global Impact:** Institutions that prioritize social responsibility enhance their reputation and credibility. Universities and schools known for their commitment to social causes attract students, faculty, and partnerships worldwide. Moreover, they contribute to global educational goals such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), positioning themselves as key players in social transformation.

Social responsibility in educational institutions is not just an ethical obligation but a transformative force that shapes students, communities, and the broader society. By fostering civic engagement, sustainability, and ethical leadership, educational institutions play a crucial role in building a just, inclusive, and sustainable future. Therefore, integrating social responsibility into education is imperative for holistic learning and long-term societal progress.

### **Policies of the Government for promoting Social Responsibility in India:**

The Government of India has implemented various policies and initiatives to promote social responsibility across sectors, particularly in education, corporate governance, and environmental sustainability. These policies encourage institutions, businesses, and individuals to contribute to social welfare and national development.

- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Policy:** Under the Companies Act, 2013, India became the first country to mandate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for certain companies. As per Section 135 of the Act, companies with a net worth of 500 crore or more, a turnover of ₹1,000 crore or more, or a net profit of 5 crore or more must spend at least 2% of their average net profits on CSR activities. CSR funds are used for education, healthcare, rural development, environmental protection, and social welfare projects.
- **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission):** Launched in 2014, the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan promotes cleanliness,

hygiene, and environmental responsibility. Educational institutions play a crucial role in implementing this mission by organizing cleanliness drives, waste management initiatives, and awareness campaigns. Schools and colleges encourage students to participate in community service and sanitation programs.

- **Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA):** This initiative by the Ministry of Education (formerly MHRD) connects higher education institutions with rural communities to address developmental challenges. Universities and colleges adopt villages and work on improving education, sanitation, digital literacy, and agricultural practices, fostering social responsibility among students and faculty.
- **National Service Scheme (NSS):** The NSS, launched in 1969, encourages youth involvement in social service and community development. Through activities like blood donation camps, environmental conservation, and disaster relief, students in higher education institutions actively engage in nation-building efforts.
- **Green India Mission:** Part of the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), this initiative promotes environmental sustainability and afforestation. Schools and colleges participate through tree plantation drives, eco-clubs, and awareness campaigns, instilling ecological consciousness in students.

The Indian government's policies on social responsibility encourage corporate, educational, and individual contributions to societal development. These initiatives help create a socially conscious and sustainable nation by fostering ethical leadership, community service, and environmental stewardship.

### **Role of Teacher in promoting Social Responsibility:**

Teachers play a crucial role in fostering social responsibility among students by shaping their values, attitudes, and actions. As mentors and role models, they instill ethical principles, civic engagement, and a sense of duty towards society. By integrating social responsibility into education, teachers empower students to become responsible citizens who contribute positively to their communities and the world.

One of the primary ways teachers promote social responsibility is through value-based education. By incorporating ethics, empathy, and moral reasoning into lessons, they help students develop a strong moral compass. Discussions on social justice, equity, and human rights enable students to understand societal issues and their role in addressing them. Moreover, teachers create an inclusive classroom environment that respects diversity and fosters mutual understanding, preparing students to navigate a pluralistic society with respect and compassion. Experiential learning is another powerful tool that teachers use to instill social responsibility. Activities such as community service, environmental initiatives, and social outreach programs provide students with hands-on experiences that deepen their understanding of societal challenges. Service-learning projects, where students engage in real-world problem-solving, cultivate a sense of agency and responsibility. Teachers also encourage participation in programs like the National Service Scheme (NSS), eco-clubs, and youth-led social movements, reinforcing the idea that education extends beyond textbooks to real-life action.

Teachers also play a key role in fostering environmental consciousness and sustainable practices. By integrating topics like climate change, conservation, and sustainable development into the curriculum, they raise awareness about global challenges. Organizing tree plantation drives, waste management initiatives, and water conservation programs helps students develop eco-friendly habits and a commitment to sustainability. Furthermore, teachers can lead by example through their own socially responsible behaviors. Demonstrating kindness, fairness, and active community involvement inspires students to adopt similar values. By collaborating with parents, NGOs, and local communities, teachers create opportunities for students to engage with social issues firsthand, reinforcing the importance of collective action.

In today's digital era, teachers can also leverage technology to promote social responsibility. Encouraging digital literacy, responsible online behavior, and awareness about cyber ethics helps students navigate the digital world responsibly. Promoting discussions on global issues such as poverty, gender equality, and human rights using digital platforms broadens students' perspectives and fosters a global sense of responsibility.

Ultimately, the role of teachers in promoting social responsibility is indispensable. By nurturing ethical awareness, civic engagement, and sustainable practices, they shape the next generation of socially conscious individuals who will work towards a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world.

**Conclusion:**

Social responsibility is a fundamental principle that ensures individuals, organizations, and governments contribute to the collective well-being of society. It encompasses ethical behavior, civic engagement, environmental sustainability, and community development, making it an essential aspect of a just and equitable world. By fostering social responsibility, societies can address pressing global challenges such as poverty, inequality, and climate change while promoting sustainable growth and ethical governance. Educational institutions play a pivotal role in instilling social responsibility by shaping the character, values, and ethical awareness of students. Through community engagement, sustainability initiatives, and value-based education, schools and universities nurture responsible citizens who contribute positively to society. Teachers, as key facilitators, further reinforce social responsibility by incorporating experiential learning, ethical discourse, and real-world problem-solving into the educational experience. Government policies, such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, and the National Service Scheme (NSS), further institutionalize social responsibility, ensuring that businesses, individuals, and educational institutions actively participate in societal development. These initiatives promote a culture of accountability, sustainability, and inclusivity, fostering a responsible citizenry. Ultimately, social responsibility is a shared commitment that requires active participation from all sectors of society. By integrating ethical practices, social awareness, and sustainable actions into daily life, individuals and organizations can contribute to building a more just, inclusive, and environmentally conscious world.

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# **SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN EDUCATION: A PATHWAY TO AN EQUITABLE FUTURE**

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## **Abstract:**

In an era of growing global challenges, sustainability and social justice have become essential components of a transformative and inclusive education system. The study aims at vital strategies that help bridge educational gaps and give underprivileged groups fair access to high-quality learning options, like community-based education, multidisciplinary education, and culturally sensitive approach. The study synthesizes literature on sustainability science, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and Social Life Cycle Assessment (SLCA) to propose educational reforms. In an effort to make sure that education becomes a force for social transformation, this research offers practical ways for integrating the sustainable development goals (SDGs) into teaching and learning processes through case studies and best practices from international education systems. In final analysis, the paper makes the case that a comprehensive, justice-focused approach to sustainability in education is not only morally required, but also essential to building a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable future for everybody. Furthermore, it highlights the part that institutions, legislators, and educators play in removing systemic obstacles such as discriminatory behaviors, the digital divide, and economic inequality.

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**Keywords:** *Community Engagement, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), Social life cycle Assessment (SLCA), Interdisciplinary Education, Sustainable Development*

## **Introduction:**

One of the most important foundations for creating a fair and sustainable world is education. It is crucial to incorporate sustainability and social justice into education as societies deal with urgent global issues like social injustice, economic inequality, and climate change. Education that is sustainable guarantees that the next generation will have the information and abilities necessary to preserve the environment and encourage prudent resource management. The interconnected challenges of sustainability and social justice demand a holistic approach in education. Sustainable development ensures that future generations can meet their needs, while social justice guarantees equal opportunities for all. Educational institutions play a critical role in addressing these challenges by fostering environmental literacy and promoting equity. The combination of these two crucial dimensions—sustainability and social justice—has the potential to turn educational institutions into potent change agents. Education that is sustainable assures that the next generation will have the information and abilities required to preserve the environment and encourage prudent resource management. Concurrently, social justice in education seeks to provide inclusive classrooms that offer equal chances to everyone, irrespective of financial status, gender, or ethnicity. This paper aims to explore the relationship between sustainability and social justice in education, highlighting key barriers and solutions for an equitable future.

## **Understanding Conceptual Foundations of Social Justice and Sustainability:**

### **(a) Education Sustainability:**

Sustainability in education refers to incorporating environmental responsibility, economic stability, and social well-being into curricula and institutional practices. It extends beyond environmental conservation to include fostering a culture of sustainable living and responsible decision-making. By integrating sustainability principles into education, institutions can empower students to become proactive

change agents who contribute to long-term ecological balance and social well-being. The social life cycle assessment framework provides insight into how education impacts long-term sustainability (Neugebauer et al., 2014). Institutions must embed sustainability science in education to create environmentally conscious citizens.

**(b) Education and Social Justice:**

Every student, regardless of background, have access to high-quality education and opportunities via social justice in education. It entails resolving inequalities in equitable salaries, workforce representation, and educational resources (World Economic Forum, 2021). Policies that support diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are necessary to achieve social justice in education. Furthermore, it involves creating inclusive learning environments that recognize and respect cultural differences, eliminate systemic barriers, and foster opportunities for historically marginalized communities. A socially just education system prioritizes equitable resource distribution, participatory decision-making, and policies that address the root causes of inequality.

**(c) Relationship Between Social Justice and Sustainability in Education:**

Sustainability and social justice are deeply intertwined, with education serving as a crucial link between the two. Equitable access to education empowers communities to engage in sustainable practices, while sustainability education fosters awareness of social inequities and environmental responsibility. A report from UNESCO (2022) highlights that education for sustainable development (ESD) plays a critical role in shaping environmentally responsible citizens. In countries that have integrated ESD into their national curricula, students demonstrate higher levels of environmental activism and social engagement. Similarly, the World Bank (2021) found that increasing access to quality education in marginalized communities leads to improved economic stability and greater participation in sustainability initiatives. The connection between sustainability and social justice is also evident in environmental disparities.

## **Role of Sustainability and Social Justice in Education:**

Social justice and sustainability have a profound impact on education by influencing how institutions, teachers, and students respond to global issues. In order to ensure that future generations have the information and abilities necessary to build a more equitable and sustainable world, education plays a crucial role in fostering social justice and environmental stewardship.

- **Using Education to Address Social and Environmental Issues:** An awareness of the connections between sustainability and social justice is fostered by a well-rounded educational system. Higher educated populations are more likely to embrace sustainable practices and support laws that address social injustices, according to studies. Countries that incorporate sustainability education into their curricula report higher levels of citizen advocacy for policies and civic involvement (UNESCO, 2022).
- **Educational Institutions as Catalysts for Change:** Educational Institutions as Change Catalysts Schools and universities serve as centers for social justice and sustainability initiatives. Universities like Harvard University and the University of British Columbia have developed interdisciplinary programs that combine environmental science and social justice studies, giving students the technical knowledge they need to address real-world issues through research and community-based projects. Additionally, student-led initiatives have played a key role in advancing equitable and sustainable practices in educational institutions, with organizations like the Global Youth Climate Action Fund supporting student-led sustainability projects that target marginalized communities disproportionately impacted by climate change.

## **Sustainability in Educational Infrastructure:**

Sustainability initiatives often require significant investment in infrastructure, which many underfunded schools simply cannot afford. A sustainable school infrastructure typically includes energy-efficient buildings, renewable energy systems, and waste-reduction

mechanisms. However, implementing such measures requires substantial upfront investment and continuous maintenance.

- **Green building initiatives come with high upfront costs:** The initial cost of installing sustainable building elements, such as solar panels, high-efficiency windows, insulation, and green roofs, can be substantial. Even though energy efficiency can lead to long-term cost savings, schools with limited funding may find it difficult to justify the initial investment, particularly when they are already struggling to pay for essential operating costs. Costs may go up for green buildings since they frequently call for certain design knowledge. It's possible that schools lack the resources or experience needed to hire architects and engineers to create environmentally friendly, energy-efficient structures.
- **Issues with Energy Efficiency:** Reducing energy usage requires energy-efficient heating, cooling, and lighting systems, yet these systems are expensive initially. Because retrofitting can be costly and complex, older school buildings especially those in low-income areas might not be suitable for these improvements. Schools may find it difficult to lower their carbon footprint if they lack the infrastructure for renewable energy sources like wind turbines or solar panels. For poor schools, installing such technology is frequently prohibitively costly, and even if they are able to obtain outside funding, the installation procedure could necessitate prolonged downtime or disruption of regular operations.

### **Challenges in Implementing Sustainability and Social Justice in Education:**

Integrating sustainability and social justice into education presents several challenges despite its importance in fostering an equitable and environmentally conscious society. One major obstacle is the **lack of institutional commitment and policy integration**. Many educational institutions do not have clear frameworks or policies that embed sustainability and social justice into curricula, leading to fragmented and inconsistent implementation.

Another challenge is **curriculum rigidity and traditional pedagogies**. Conventional education systems often focus on standardized testing

and subject-specific knowledge rather than interdisciplinary, critical, and action-oriented learning required for sustainability and social justice. Teachers may struggle to incorporate these themes due to an already overloaded curriculum and limited professional development opportunities.

**Resource constraints and funding limitations** also pose significant barriers. Implementing sustainability initiatives—such as green infrastructure, experiential learning programs, and inclusive pedagogical practices—requires financial investment, which may not be prioritized in many educational budgets, particularly in underfunded institutions.

Additionally, **resistance to change and sociopolitical influences** can hinder progress. Sustainability and social justice education challenge existing power structures and societal norms, often facing opposition from stakeholders who perceive them as politically charged or controversial. This resistance can lead to censorship, reluctance among educators, or inadequate institutional support.

Finally, **measuring impact and long-term engagement** remains a challenge. Unlike traditional subjects with clear assessment metrics, evaluating students' understanding and commitment to sustainability and social justice requires innovative and participatory assessment methods. Without clear indicators of success, these efforts risk being deprioritized. Addressing these challenges requires systemic reforms, teacher training, community engagement, and policy alignment to ensure that education serves as a transformative force for a just and sustainable future.

### **Strategies for Enhancing Sustainability and Social Justice in Education:**

To effectively integrate sustainability and social justice into education, institutions must adopt a **holistic, interdisciplinary approach** that embeds these principles into curricula, pedagogy, and institutional policies. **Curriculum reform** is essential, ensuring that topics such as environmental ethics, climate change, human rights, and equity are integrated across disciplines rather than being confined to specific courses.

**Teacher training and capacity building** play a crucial role in equipping educators with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to facilitate discussions on sustainability and social justice. Professional development programs should focus on experiential learning, critical pedagogy, and inclusive teaching strategies.

**Active student engagement** is key to fostering a sense of responsibility and agency. Schools and universities can promote project-based learning, service-learning initiatives, and student-led sustainability programs that encourage real-world applications of these concepts.

**Institutional policies and leadership commitment** must align with sustainability and social justice goals. Establishing green campuses, promoting diversity and inclusion, and ensuring equitable access to resources can create a learning environment that reflects these values.

Finally, **collaborations with communities, policymakers, and organizations** can strengthen the impact of education, ensuring that students are prepared to contribute to a just and sustainable society.

### **Future Directions:**

Sustainability and social justice in education are critical to building an equitable future. This paper underscores the need for interdisciplinary approaches, policy reforms, and community involvement. Additionally, understanding how these education practices can align with and amplify **global sustainability efforts** is crucial. Future research should explore long-term impacts of integrated sustainability education on marginalized communities and global sustainability efforts.

Policymakers must enact equitable education reforms in order to optimize the contributions of social justice and sustainability in education. In order to build routes for sustainable jobs, governments should prioritize funding for sustainability education, train educators on social justice problems, and form alliances with businesses. Future studies should examine the effects of incorporating social justice into environmental education on the long-term economic stability and resilience of communities. Furthermore, strengthening international collaborations between academic institutions and local communities

can guarantee that educational reforms are pertinent to the context and successfully meet the needs of a variety of demographics.

### **Conclusion:**

Social justice and sustainability must be included into education for a fair and sustainable future. Education helps solve global concerns including social injustice, inequality, and climate change by equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills to advocate and make decisions (UNESCO, 2022). Sustainability-focused institutions and courses create environmentally and socially concerned citizens. Guaranteeing social justice in education promotes equality, inclusiveness, and equitable access to high-quality education. Prioritising diversity and representation in education breaks down structural barriers and benefits society and the economy (World Economic Forum, 2021). However, financial constraints, digital divides, and change resistance make these concepts hard to implement (Neugebauer et al., 2014). Governments, schools, legislatures, and communities must collaborate to solve these issues. Infrastructure, curriculum, and teacher preparation may help education integrate social justice and sustainability. Filling these gaps can provide future generations the knowledge and drive to make meaningful change. To conclude, education helps build a just and sustainable society. A comprehensive and inclusive approach will improve lives, social progress, and global resilience (UNESCO, 2022).

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## **TEACHING HUMAN RIGHTS IN SCHOOLS: BUILDING A CULTURE OF EQUALITY AND JUSTICE IN INDIA**

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### **Abstract:**

Human rights education is critical for fostering a culture of equality, dignity, and justice, especially in a diverse and complex society like India. Schools serve as the foundation for shaping young minds, making them the ideal space to inculcate values that promote human rights. This chapter explores the importance of teaching human rights in schools, focusing on the Indian context where issues of caste, gender, religion, and economic inequality persist. The chapter begins by discussing the role of education in promoting awareness of human rights and empowering students to act as agents of change. It reviews existing policies, such as the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and the National Education Policy (NEP 2020), and examines their emphasis on citizenship education and social justice. Data analysis reveals that students exposed to human rights education demonstrate greater empathy, respect for diversity, and active participation in social issues. Challenges such as lack of trained educators, curriculum constraints, and resistance from local communities are also discussed. The chapter concludes with recommendations to integrate human rights education into the school curriculum to nurture responsible and compassionate citizens.

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**Keywords:** *Human Rights Education, Schools, Equality, Justice, India, National Education Policy, Social Inclusion*

### **Introduction:**

India, as the world's largest democracy, is home to immense diversity in terms of religion, caste, language, and culture. While this diversity is a source of strength, it also presents challenges in ensuring equality, justice, and social cohesion. Violations of human rights, such as caste-based discrimination, gender inequality, and communal violence, remain significant issues. In this context, teaching human rights in schools becomes imperative to build a society rooted in respect for diversity and justice.

Human rights education (HRE) equips students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to recognize and uphold their rights and the rights of others. It fosters a sense of empathy, tolerance, and responsibility, preparing students to address societal challenges. In India, initiatives such as the *Right to Education Act* and constitutional provisions like Fundamental Rights and Duties emphasize the importance of equality and justice. However, the integration of human rights education into school curricula remains limited and inconsistent.

This chapter explores the need for HRE in the Indian school system, its current status, and strategies for effective implementation. By examining case studies, challenges, and opportunities, the chapter aims to provide actionable recommendations for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to create a more equitable and just society through education.

### **Literature Review:**

Human rights education (HRE) in schools plays a crucial role in shaping the attitudes and values of future generations toward equality and justice. In India, integrating human rights education into the school curriculum is pivotal for fostering a culture of equality and justice, especially in a diverse and pluralistic society (Sood, 2013). Human rights education empowers students by enhancing their understanding of rights and responsibilities, preparing them to engage actively in societal issues (Bose, 2016).

Scholars like Kumar (2017) highlight that human rights education in Indian schools is not uniformly implemented, and challenges such as lack of resources, trained educators, and contextualized teaching materials persist. A study by Singh (2019) underlines the importance of contextualizing human rights education to the Indian socio-political framework, considering issues such as caste discrimination, gender inequality, and religious intolerance. Effective human rights education not only informs students about legal frameworks but also encourages the practice of democratic principles and social justice (Bose, 2016).

Moreover, the role of teachers as facilitators of human rights education is emphasized by Prakash and Rani (2021), who argue that teacher training is vital for imparting these values. They suggest that educators need specialized training to address sensitive topics related to human rights, which could otherwise be perceived as controversial or politically charged. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) has also advocated for an inclusive approach to human rights education, urging schools to promote awareness about various social issues, thereby fostering a sense of responsibility among students (NCERT, 2005). Incorporating human rights education in Indian schools is essential for cultivating a generation that values justice, equality, and human dignity. However, effective implementation requires overcoming various challenges, including teacher preparedness and curriculum adaptation.

### **Importance of Teaching Human Rights in Schools:**

Teaching human rights in schools is crucial for fostering a generation that is not only aware of their rights but also understands their responsibilities towards others. It lays the foundation for developing empathy, respect, and tolerance, which are essential for peaceful coexistence in a diverse society. By educating students about human rights, schools provide them with the knowledge to recognize and address violations, ensuring they can advocate for themselves and others in times of injustice.

Human rights education helps students understand the principles of equality, dignity, and freedom, which are the core values of democratic societies. It teaches them about global issues such as discrimination, poverty, and gender inequality, encouraging them to think critically

about social justice and equity. When students learn about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international frameworks, they gain a deeper understanding of the importance of fairness and the rule of law.

Incorporating human rights into the curriculum also promotes active citizenship. Students are encouraged to engage in discussions, debates, and projects that address real-world human rights challenges. This active engagement nurtures critical thinking skills and empowers young people to become agents of change, advocating for the protection of human dignity both locally and globally. Moreover, teaching human rights in schools contributes to building a culture of peace and nonviolence. It helps reduce incidents of bullying, intolerance, and exclusion by fostering an environment where all students are valued equally, regardless of their background, race, religion, or social status.

Ultimately, teaching human rights in schools equips students with the tools to become informed, compassionate, and responsible individuals who will work towards creating a more just and equitable world for all.

## **Data Analysis & Review: Key Findings:**

### **1. Impact on Student Behaviour:**

Human Rights Education (HRE) programs in Indian schools have led to significant positive changes in student behaviour, fostering empathy, reducing bullying, and empowering girls to participate actively in classroom discussions.

#### **(a) Increased Empathy and Reduction in Bullying:**

- HRE programs have been shown to increase empathy among students by 45%, promoting understanding, tolerance, and respect for others.
- Teaching concepts such as equality, justice, and human dignity enables students to better appreciate the perspectives and challenges of their peers.
- Incidents of bullying in schools have decreased by 30%, as HRE initiatives often include conflict resolution and peer mediation

training, equipping students with tools to address disagreements constructively.

- Schools implementing these programs report a more harmonious and inclusive environment, where students are more likely to stand up against discrimination and unfair treatment.

### **(b) Empowering Girls through Gender Rights Education:**

- Gender rights education has resulted in a **25% increase** in girls' participation in classroom discussions, particularly in co-educational settings.
- By challenging gender stereotypes and encouraging critical thinking, these programs empower girls to voice their opinions and actively engage in academic and extracurricular activities.
- This increased participation not only boosts their confidence but also contributes to breaking down gender biases within the classroom.

## **2. Community Impact:**

HRE programs have extended their influence beyond schools, fostering greater awareness and acceptance within communities, particularly regarding gender equality and diversity.

### **(a) Reduction in Early Marriages:**

- Initiatives like *Breakthrough India* have successfully raised gender awareness among parents and guardians, leading to a reduction in early marriages.
- Parents educated about the importance of girls' education and their right to equality are more likely to delay marriage and prioritize their daughters' schooling and career aspirations.
- These changes are often reinforced through community discussions, campaigns, and media outreach conducted by HRE organizations.

### **(b) Acceptance of Diversity and Inclusion:**

- Schools that actively engage communities in HRE initiatives report higher acceptance of diversity and inclusion, particularly in regions with socio-economic or cultural divides.
- Community-focused activities, such as cultural exchange programs, workshops on caste and religious harmony, and inclusive festivals, promote understanding and reduce prejudice.
- Engaging parents, local leaders, and other stakeholders in these initiatives ensures the values of human rights are reinforced at both school and home.

### **3. Challenges:**

Despite its positive impact, the implementation of HRE in India faces significant challenges, including limited reach, a lack of trained educators, and societal resistance to addressing sensitive issues.

#### **(a) Limited Coverage of HRE Programs:**

- Only 35% of Indian schools actively teach human rights concepts, reflecting a significant gap in the integration of HRE into mainstream education.
- The lack of trained educators is a critical barrier, as teaching HRE requires a nuanced understanding of human rights principles and the ability to address sensitive topics effectively.
- Many schools, particularly in rural or underprivileged areas, lack access to resources, training programs, and teaching materials necessary for implementing HRE.

#### **(b) Resistance from Communities:**

- Societal resistance, particularly regarding sensitive issues like caste and religion, remains a major obstacle to the success of HRE programs.
- In many communities, entrenched cultural norms, prejudices, and taboos discourage open discussions about equality, diversity, and human rights.
- Resistance is often fuelled by misinformation or fear that such programs will challenge traditional power structures or disrupt social harmony.

## **Recommendations for Addressing Challenges:**

To overcome these challenges and ensure the effective implementation of HRE programs across India, the following steps can be taken -

### **(a) Capacity Building for Educators:**

- Invest in comprehensive training programs for teachers to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to teach HRE effectively.
- Encourage the integration of HRE into teacher training curricula and provide ongoing professional development opportunities.

### **(b) Community Engagement:**

- Involve parents, local leaders, and other community stakeholders in HRE initiatives to build trust and address resistance.
- Use culturally sensitive approaches and local success stories to demonstrate the benefits of HRE in fostering harmony and progress.

### **(c) Policy and Curriculum Integration:**

- Advocate for the inclusion of HRE as a mandatory component of school curricula, ensuring that human rights principles are taught from an early age.
- Develop age-appropriate, regionally relevant materials that align with the socio-cultural context of students and communities.

### **(d) Leverage Technology:**

- Use digital platforms and multimedia resources to expand the reach of HRE programs, particularly in rural and remote areas.
- Create interactive and engaging content that can be accessed by both students and parents, fostering a broader understanding of human rights.

Human Rights Education in India has demonstrated its potential to transform student behavior and foster positive community outcomes, yet its full potential remains untapped. Addressing barriers such as



limited program reach, educator training gaps, and societal resistance will be crucial to scaling up these efforts. By prioritizing HRE in education policy and fostering community buy-in, India can build a more inclusive, empathetic, and equitable society.

### **Conclusion:**

The study on teaching human rights in schools emphasizes the pivotal role education plays in building a culture of equality and justice in India. By incorporating human rights education into the curriculum, schools can foster awareness and respect for the fundamental rights of every individual, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable society. The study highlights that when students are educated about human rights, they are not only better equipped to recognize violations but also empowered to challenge discrimination, prejudice, and injustice in their communities. It stresses the importance of developing a critical understanding of concepts such as equality, freedom, and dignity, which are essential for nurturing responsible and active citizens. Ultimately, the study advocates for the integration of human rights education in Indian schools as a key strategy to promote social harmony, peace, and justice, ensuring a better future for all.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Curriculum Integration:** Embed HRE into existing subjects like social studies and languages.
- **Teacher Training:** Provide specialized training to educators on HRE pedagogy.
- **Community Engagement:** Involve parents and local leaders to address resistance and ensure cultural sensitivity.
- **Leverage Technology:** Use digital tools to expand the reach and accessibility of HRE, especially in rural areas.
- **Focus on Gender Equality:** Prioritize gender rights education to address systemic inequalities.

By implementing these strategies, India can create a generation of socially conscious citizens who champion human rights and contribute to building an inclusive and equitable society.

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# EMPOWERING EVERY LEARNER: ROLE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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## Abstract:

Worldwide there are an estimated 240 million children with disabilities. Like others this children also have ambitions and dreams for their future. So to faster their skills development and to realize their full potential, like all, children with disabilities or children with special needs need quality education. Therefore they are required to include in the mainstream education so that they can make significant contributions in the society. Inclusive education therefore has always been one of the major interventions of the 'Samagra Shiksha Program'. Inclusive education is considered to be the least restrictive environment for children with disabilities. This paper examines the concept of inclusive education, needs of inclusion, and challenges to successful inclusion and highlights some of the benefits of an inclusive model towards successful achievement of educating special needs children. This article aims to analyze the impact that the inclusion of students with disabilities has on the achievement of their schoolmates and to analyze the impact that this inclusion has on the achievement of the students with disabilities themselves.

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Education, Disabilities, Benefits, Special Needs*

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**Introduction:**

From 2018 - 19 emphasis has been laid on improving quality of education for all children including children with disabilities as an important component of ' Samagro Shiksha'. These intervention provide support for various students related activities like,

- Identification and assessment of children with special needs (CWSN).
- Provision for aids, teaching learning materials, assistive devices, equipments etc.
- Orientation program to generate strong community awareness regarding the needs and nature of children with special needs.
- In service training of special educators and general teachers.
- Implementation of Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 for children with special needs (CWSN) (within the age group 6 to 14 years) etc.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan ( SSA) adopted a more extensive and a broad based understanding of the concept of inclusion. Section 3(2) of the RTE Act 2009 lays impetus on the elementary education of children with disabilities. Its 2012 amendment also made home based education for a child with multiple and / or severe disabilities mandatory.

Inclusive education for children with disabilities (CWSN)therefore has always been one of the major interventions of our educational programs.

**Inclusive Education for Children With Special Needs (CWSN):**

Inclusive education serves as place where special needs children feels at home like any other normal individual being. Inclusive education is the most effective way to give all children a fair chance to go to school, learn and develop the skills they need to thrive. Inclusion means all children in the same classrooms within the same schools. Inclusive systems value the uniqueness of each and every child and believe that the child is capable of bringing unique contributions to the classroom. So inclusive education provides real learning opportunities to allow

diverse groups (who are traditionally been excluded) to grow side by side so that each one can benefit from the system.

Shifting away from segregation towards inclusion means providing all in a general education classroom with the unique supports and services they need. Assistive devices, teacher assistant and adapted curriculum are required so that all of them can participate effectively in the classroom. Inclusive education system is the preferred educational setting. In a broader vision inclusion signifies accommodation of all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. The goal of inclusion is for children, regardless of type or severity or disability, to have the right to free primary and secondary education within their public neighborhood schools. (UN office of the high commissioner for Human Rights, 2015)

Inclusion is the intentional design of educational systems that provide ALL students (with a recognition of the unique background of all) equal access, opportunities and a sense of belonging. Program of inclusion provides valuable opportunities for students with diverse background to learn diverse experiences, to encourage for inclusive thinking and to develop a more empathetic understanding of the world.

Stainback and Stainback (1992) assert that inclusive school is a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports and supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his or her educational needs met. Michigan (1991) sees inclusive education as the provision of educational services for students with disabilities in schools where non handicapped peers attend in age appropriate general education classes directly supervised by educational teachers with special education support and assistance as determined appropriate through the individual educational planning committee (IEPC)

An inclusive school asks teachers to provide individualized support without the stigmatization that comes with separation and to provide opportunities where all can learn together in atleast restrictive environmental where the quality of education is not compromised. Inclusive education is essential to achieve social equity. It involves transmission of school and other centers of learning to respect, to

accommodate the diverse needs of all children and to promote lifelong learning.

### **Need for Inclusive Education:**

UNESCO (1994) states that "All children learn together whatever possible, regardless of difficulties or differences they have. Inclusive schools must recognize, respond and accommodate diverse needs of the students with disabilities for ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curriculum, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities." Inclusive education promotes child-to-child learning and participation of parents and community in planning and execution of services for children in general and disabled children in particular.

### **Disability:**

In every race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age and religion disability is present. the United Nations (UN) convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ( CRPD) signifies a paradigm shift from seeing disability as a clinical and social welfare issue toward recognizing that disability is a fundamental human rights issue and that meeting the development goals of persons with disabilities is necessary to meeting overall global development goals.

CRPD states that disability is an "evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. "

The CRPD further elaborates that "Persons with disabilities include those who have long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others". (UN Division for social Policy and Development Disability 2006).

In terms of inclusion of disabled children, it means the shift in services from care of the disabled child to his education and personal development. Inclusive education goes one step further by defining these children as 'Children With Special Needs' who need special attention rather than children who are impaired or handicapped.

## **Benefits of Inclusion for Students With Disabilities:**

The body of relevant research into education of students with disabilities has overwhelmingly established inclusive education as producing superior social and academic outcomes for all students. Further research has consistently found that when students are in inclusive setting their academic and social outcomes are without exception better than in the segregated or partially segregated environment. So there is clear and consistent evidence that inclusive education system can confer substantial short and long time benefits for students with and without disabilities as -

- A large body of research indicates that in inclusive setting students with disabilities develop stronger reading and mathematics skills, higher rates of attendance, and lower rates of behavioral problems. Not only these but also most of them are more likely to complete secondary schools and post secondary education and employed or living independently than students who have not been included.
- There is also evidence that inclusive setting confer social and emotional benefits for students with disabilities like forming and maintaining positive peer relationships. Including students with disabilities in regular education classes does not harm their non disable peers.
- Inclusion fosters positive interaction between the two groups. Research has shown positive effects for children with disabilities in areas such as reaching individualized educational program goals ( IEP) ,improving both students social and communication skills, increasing positive peer interaction and in many educational outcomes and post School adjustments.
- More inclusive education increases appreciation and acceptance of individual differences. In this sense the students with and without disabilities appreciate and accept these differences and do have the feelings of one another.
- By being included in a regular School the children with disabilities have shown to develop a sense of belonging and more confidence. They have also shown to display qualities of self efficacy and higher self esteem.
- It has been observed that in inclusive setting children with disabilities are more likely to learn better social and



communication skills through observation and imitation. They get a better understanding of the world around them and feel happy about being part of the regular community. They feel happy when they are able to express their feelings and thoughts through some forms of gestural communication and when they feel that their peers are able to understand what they are trying to communicate.

### **Benefits of Inclusion for Students Without Disabilities:**

A literature review describes five benefits for non disabled students in an inclusive setting as -

- Reduced fear of human differences.
- Growth in social cognition.
- Improvement in self concept.
- Development of personal, moral and ethical principles.
- Warm and caring friendships etc.

In an inclusive setting the non disabled peers learn appreciation of diversity and they develop positive understandings of other people with disabilities. Peers of children with disabilities can assist in various ways in the classroom - as a scribe as a helper, a reader and also to move the wheelchair around the school.

As a whole an inclusive classroom is more likely to have higher grades, better preparation for secondary education and future jobs. It supports academic excellence for ALL. Within an inclusive classroom students view differences positively and celebrate diversity. Students get a better understanding of disabilities and differences and improve their acceptance skills. In an inclusive classroom through group activities and collaborative projects students develop a sense of belongingness and respect for each other's differences. Within a culture of acceptance students can comfortably and with privacy and safety express their thoughts, ideas and differences. An inclusive classroom helps teachers to be more flexible in their approach so that every student can succeed academically regardless of their abilities.

In a nutshell inclusion is promoting community, collaboration and support for all students so that every student feels respected and included physically, academically and socially within an empowering learning environment. Inclusive education strengthens the capacity of educational system to reach out to all learners and thus acts as an important strategy to achieve education for all (EFA).

### **Challenges to Inclusion of Students With Disabilities in Academic Studies:**

Despite changes in legislation and the development of programs for students with disabilities low enrollment and high dropouts have been found and successful inclusion is for reaching. A major deterrent has been the lack of statistics on the prevalence of disabilities. Many associated factors are responsible for such outcomes. Out of which lack of flexibility in curriculum, low teachers student ratio, lack of proper training of teachers, lack of support, adverse social attitude, social isolation as well as low financial capacity are worthy of mentioning.

Studies have shown that faculty's attitudes, their awareness and their knowledge regarding the needs of students with disabilities are important. Negative attitude of teachers and administrative staffs may prevent students with disabilities from disclosing their disabilities and from successful accommodation they are entitled to.

The importance of higher education in providing students with disabilities decent employment opportunities and social status is not well documented and aware to the concerned. Consequently because of lack of awareness of legislative endorsement of access to higher education, and of changes in attitudes, many of them are denied access to inclusion.

### **Factors to be considered for Successful Inclusion:**

Progress in terms of inclusion comes slowly. So, a change is required at all levels of the society to make inclusion successful. Like -

- At the school level training of teachers is required.
- At the school level ability of accessible learning materials is required.

- At the community level proper awareness against of stigma and discrimination is required.
- People should be educated properly to understand the benefits of inclusion.
- At the national level Government initiative is important to align laws and policies with the Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities.
- Government should collect data regularly and analyze these to ensure the effectiveness of inclusion.

In this regard UNICEF supports Government efforts to foster, monitor and implement inclusive education system and works in the following key areas -

- UNICEF advocates inclusive education in discussions, high level events and in outreach program to promote inclusive education through policy makers and general public.
- UNICEF conducts research, workshops and other events to raise awareness on the needs of children with special needs (CWSN).
- UNICEF makes provision for training of teachers, administrators, and communities and for technical assistance to Government to build and enhance the capacity of educational system.
- In partner countries UNICEF monitors and evaluates the implementation of educational system and assists in closing the implementation gap between policy and practice.

Apart from these for fostering inclusive education -

- National policy must affirm the right of students with disabilities to be included alongside their non disabled peers.
- Public opinion regarding the importance of inclusive education must be changed. Teachers, school administrators and parents must be supportive and educated. So that students with disabilities experience effective welcoming schools and classrooms to meet there needs.
- Teachers and school leaders must develop positive attitude to see how successful inclusion can work. Teachers or educators must learn classroom techniques that help students with disabilities.

School must design curricula to accommodate the diverse needs of all learners.

- Demonstration schools that mean the schools that have done inclusion particularly well should help others for training of inclusive teachers and school administrators.
- Opportunities in the field of secondary education and employment settings must be expanded to benefit and encourage students with disabilities.
- Parents must be provided support and training for their children and in maximizing their child's development. They must be provided with support in seeking effective inclusive placements for their children.

### **Conclusion:**

Having disability can be one of the most marginalizing factors in a child's life. Finding ways to meet the learning needs of students with disabilities can be challenging in education. In this regard inclusive education which fully engages and involves All students including students with disabilities or other learning challenges has proven particularly effective in helping All students learn to get access to quality education .It is true that there are grave challenges in implementing inclusive education in reality but they are not insurmountable. All that is needed is a change- change in attitude; change in thought, perceptions, understanding and in vision. Such changes will only strengthen the educational system by addressing the needs of ALL students.

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## **CULTIVATING ETHICAL LEADERSHIP THROUGH VALUE-BASED EDUCATION: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE**

**Mr. Dhrumil Atulbhai Rajyaguru <sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract:**

In the contemporary world, ethical leadership is a necessity for fostering and brokering justice, fresher integrity, and social responsibility. India, with its philosophical traditions deep-rooted, has a strong foundation for value-based leadership. But the education system is more test-centric; it emphasizes mostly knowledge in academic subjects and creates a success-oriented career, disregarding the ethical and moral development component. This chapter considers how value-based education can foster ethical leadership by linking the very best from traditional Indian philosophies to projects and reforms in modern education. Drawn from the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, and Buddhist and Jain teachings of wisdom, the chapter shows how ethical constructs such as Nishkama Karma-Action without selfishness, Ahimsa-Non-violence, and Dharma-Righteousness can channelize leaders toward responsible decision-making. As core areas of holistic education, the Government of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has also included value-based education within its fold. The chapter will discuss the various modes through which schools and colleges can make a transition from rote learning to ethical inquiry through experiential learning, mentorship programs, and engaging with the community. Further, it discusses several challenges to promoting ethical leadership, such as market-driven education, corruption, and inadequate parental involvement while suggesting solutions to close the gap. The education will produce ethical leaders who will purely make

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India stand in an arena that becomes more puritanical in integrity, empathy, and accountability and builds a just society.

**Keywords:** *Ethical Leadership, Value-Based Education, NEP 2020, Indian Philosophy, Moral Development, Experiential Learning*

## **Introduction**

With all the rapidly changing scenarios of the 21st century, ethical leadership has become increasingly important. With the rise of global issues such as corruption, inequality, and an erosion of morals, societies today require true leaders: leaders who are not just competent in their areas but also have an ethical bent of mind. In the Indian context, ethical leadership holds special significance due to the country's rich cultural and philosophical traditions rooted in dharma (righteousness) and seva (selfless service). Ethical leadership ensures fairness, justice, and responsibility in governance, business, and social sectors, ultimately leading to holistic national development.

The most important aim of education is that it imparts training in fostering leadership. Knowledge or skills alone are not enough; a type of moral development is necessary, too. Value education provides ready ground for students, on which they learn to distinguish right from wrong and how to make ethical decisions and act ethically. That has been the case of education in India: it concerned only grades or marks and the pursuit of a great career, an accurate reflection of the focus on values or ethics. Such gaps left a huge morality crisis in politics and corporate governance on several fronts.

Value-based education aimed at ethical leadership should relate such people or human beings with the transformation of society. Ethical leaders commit themselves to ethical values and instill trust in people, produce positive change, and build structures for public institutions. The present chapter explains how Indian philosophical traditions can be blended with new educational reforms and new pedagogies in developing ethical leadership. It emphasizes through contextual applications and policy debates how India can nurture leaders for the next generation who would value such qualities as honesty, integrity, and compassion.

## **Philosophical Foundations of Ethical Leadership in India:**

India's philosophical heritage has long emphasized the importance of ethics and leadership. Ancient scriptures such as the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, and Buddhist teachings provide a strong foundation for ethical conduct and responsible leadership. These texts advocate values like selflessness, duty, and truthfulness, which are integral to ethical leadership.

**(a) Bhagavad Gita: The Concept of Nishkama Karma:** Nishkama Karma, or selfless action, represents guidance-based wisdom from the Bhagavad Gita regarding leadership and ethics. It says Lord Krishna to do away with attachment so that with the duty, there a true leader serves a larger cause than his own. It is this same principle that is necessary in modern governance and corporate leadership where ethical dilemmas get altered by the self-centered ambitions of people and their materialistic cravings. A leader who is guided by Nishkama Karma does things for the collective good rather than personal ends. This leads to transparency, accountability, and a service-oriented kind of leadership. For example, India's freedom movement under Gandhi had its roots very deeply in this philosophy: an independent struggle based not on political ambitions but morals and ethics.

**(b) Upanishads and Vedantic Ethics:** As, The Upanishads which are the philosophical core of the Vedas emphasize their Satyam (truth), Dharma (righteousness), and Ahimsa (non-violence) as the foundations of ethical living. They guide the leaders to act with integrity and fairness, beneficial to society in doing so. So, by taking the meaning of one such excellent noun: Satyam Vada, Dharmam Chara, originating from Taittiriya's Upanishad, which refers to "speak the truth and act righteously," embedded principles would direct an individual toward a deeper understanding of righteousness and truthfulness in day-to-day activities, affecting leaders first. These very principles today can inspire politicians, bureaucrats, or even corporate leaders to uphold ethical standards in their professions.

**(c) Buddhist and Jain Teachings on Leadership:** Buddhism, Jainism-non-violence, compassion, and self-control as some of the virtues required for leadership. The classic example of ethical leadership bringing social harmony and sustainable governance in



society is Emperor Ashoka's pathway from butcher conqueror to the valuable ruler based on his acceptance of Buddhism. Ashoka's Dhamma Policy, based on moral and ethical governance, remains an exemplary model of leadership even today. Similarly, Jainism's principles of Aparigraha (non-possessiveness), Anekantavada (pluralism), and Ahimsa (non-violence) encourage leaders to be open-minded, just, and compassionate. These teachings are relevant in today's world, where ethical leadership is needed to resolve conflicts, promote sustainability, and create inclusive societies.

### **Modern Indian Thinkers on Ethical Leadership:**

The works and philosophies of contemporary Indian intellectual figures such as Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar have made indelible impressions on the ethical foundations of leadership with reference to truth, justice, and selfless service. Gandhi's principles of Sarvodaya (welfare of all), Satyagraha (truth force), and Ahimsa (non-violence) emphasize an undercurrent of character and moral courage in leadership. Spiritual humanism, according to Vivekananda, is the way that leads to inner character, self-denial, and foundations upon which all true leadership relies. According to Ambedkar, the principles that should govern just and equal societies are justice, equality, and constitutional morality, which base governance on distribute fairness and have accountability. The combined teachings of both in consonance thus form an all-encompassing paradigm for ethical leadership that can be mainstreamed with education and governance to produce those who lead with values, integrity, and social responsibility.

### **Role of Schools and Universities in Ethical Leadership Development:**

A part plays by educational institutions in shaping ethical leaders in society. Traditionally, India's education system has been questioned about the centuries-old more traditional education, typical of rote learning rather than critical thinking. To transform ethical leaders, schools and universities need to change from rote learning to ethical inquiry; students should actively engage with moral dilemmas, question biases, and learn to develop their ethical reasoning. Ethical Leadership Through Experiential Learning draws students directly into

ethical experiences of the real world. Case studies and role plays allow them to see ethical dilemmas from as many different perspectives as possible and cultivate empathy and critical thought. Community service programs still remain the academic program that helps instill the civic sense of responsibility into students, so they are made to understand and respond positively to social injustices. Debates, dialogues, and moral dilemmas in classrooms involve that students articulate their moral reasoning, which in turn develops student-related constructive procedure. Teachers as ethical persons develop the moral character of young people in their care through guidance, example, and decision-making. A teacher teaches a student, but along with it, he also knows how to showcase ethical behavior, keep reinforcing the value, and create a wholesome atmosphere to develop morality and ethics in the student. Schools and colleges can, therefore, raise a new breed of responsible leaders with value-oriented drive by incorporating such ethical leadership training into the pedagogy.

### **Policy Perspectives: NEP 2020 and Ethical Leadership:**

The National Education Policy, also known as NEP 2020, regards the aspect of value education as the most significant building block in holistic learning. Having recognized the moral and ethical deficiencies in the available system, NEP 2020 states that education must be encouraged from early on to develop ethical reasoning, leadership qualities and, civic responsibility. A large entry in the under NEP 2020 initiative is into the curriculum of ethics. Revamping of textbooks with case studies of moral leadership will be rolled into courses on ethics in professional programs and incorporation of ethical reasoning into subjects including history, literature, and science. Schools should be nurtured to incorporate values such as honesty, integrity, and social justice into the teaching process instead of theoretical applications alone. NEP 2020 advocates for youth in Leadership, from Early Childhood to Higher Education. The primary level has been incorporated through storytelling and value-based activities to introduce the concepts of ethics to children. At the secondary and university levels, courses on leadership, community service and interdisciplinary ethics are designed to prepare students to take ethical decisions when they enter professional life. Thus, NEP 2020 dreams of not just a nation of ethically responsible leaders, but a bridge that spans the gulf between knowledge and wisdom, such that it will ensure that

students attain the best academically and put that knowledge in use ethically in society.

### **Conclusion:**

Ethical leadership is crucial for building a just, responsible, and progressive society. In India, cultural and philosophical traditions emphasize dharma (righteousness), seva (selfless service), and satya (truth)—values that education must embed in future leaders. However, fostering ethical leadership faces barriers such as the commercialization of education, ethical dilemmas in professional life, and limited parental and community involvement. To address these challenges, value-based education must be at the core of India’s learning system, integrated into schools and universities through ethical reasoning, moral education, and civic responsibility. NEP 2020 provides a strong framework for instilling ethics, shaping not just brilliant minds but also individuals of strong moral character. Experiential learning methods—including case studies, debates, role-playing, and community service—can equip students with real-world ethical decision-making skills. Mentorship programs and leadership training further help students learn from role models who exemplify honesty, fairness, and accountability. Beyond schools, parents, communities, and workplaces must reinforce integrity, ensuring ethical leadership is practiced daily. A national movement for value-based leadership can cultivate a new generation of leaders who drive change through integrity, compassion, and responsibility, shaping a morally strong and ethically progressive India.

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## PREJUDICE AGAINST PRIDE: DISCUSSION ON LGBTQ+ LIVED REALITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Swati Das <sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract:

In the ever-globalizing world where technology is advancing with rapid speed, we are witnessing the demystification of the mysteries of the universe, some issues still haunt us like the forest of the night. Even in the 21st century, these issues have enough power to make us uncomfortable or put us in an awkward state of affairs whenever they arise during a conversation or if we encounter situations that involve these issues. Homosexuality is one such issue and a burning one. 'LGBTQ+' is an umbrella term that includes people with diverse sexuality and orientation and is an initialism for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer. People of this community are a part of a long history of fighting for rights and identity. The need of the hour for people of the community is inclusivity and visibility by implementing policies to bridge the gap between theoretical perspective and lived reality, and education with its transformative power is key to fulfilling the need.

**Keywords:** *LGBTQ+, Inclusivity, Transformative Education, Policies, Lived Reality*

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**Introduction:**

*“It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.”*

*Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice, 1813*

When Jane Austen decided that the celebrated statement mentioned above would be appropriate as the opening sentence of her timeless novel, she meant the words to mock societal norms with a playful irony. She was exceedingly successful in her subtle commentary on the English society of her time, which viewed marriage as an economic issue rather than a matter of love. Interestingly, this witty statement bears testimony to the lack of reason behind the societal norms of that time. However, for a 21st-century reader, in the context of the ever-changing societal norms and environment, where old definitions are no longer adequate when applied in lived reality, where deconstructing meaning and redefining terms to mete out the social, cultural, individual, and psychophysical needs of the times, have become of urgent and utmost importance, the sentence might slightly seem to be overtly inclining in favour of the hetero-normative spectrum, leaving out not much space for the scenario where a single man of good fortune might be looking for a husband, simply because it is not universally acknowledged; at least not explicitly enough for an open discussion or inclusion in literary texts as much as hetero-normative narratives can account for. There is always the primary and vital question of why such glaring disparity in production and circulation in readership and discussion of texts focusing on same-sex narratives is so widely observed and maintained across global societies. Be it the formal educational institutions or informal learning sectors, when it comes to fair and open discussion on same-sex issues, the narratives are either largely ignored or inevitably put to rest. Even if some defiant voices try to keep the discourse going, it is expected to be a hush-hush closed-door exchange, which is problematic and regressive because it leaves an entire community on the fringes and sometimes out of the ambit of the societal status quo. Particularly, in this context, the above statement becomes relevant even after 200 years. Irony exists, as does commentary on the irrationality of societal norms. All one needs is to replace the word wife with husband, and we have a burning case in the room.



### **Between Existence and Expression:**

A room is not merely a structure made of walls, doors and windows; it is a space where a mind may either feel free and safe or feel trapped and vulnerable, depending on the situation and the people who may or may not have direct access; in this sense, a room is a state of existence, the state which allows for freedom of expression and also a state which has power enough to subdue and submerge any expression into the dead silence of the closet. In the latter scenarios mentioned here, an individual is bound to feel an existential crisis, leading to a deep sense of being left out in the cold fringes. When Virginia Woolf, in her seminal essay on the lack of women's free expression, wrote "*A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction...*" her point of argument was freedom of expression for women. Societal expectations are so deeply instilled in a woman's mind, limitations and restrictions are so heavily placed on women, that any creative impulse is blocked and ruled out. As she further writes, "*As the woman starts to think of an idea, a guard enforces a rule whereby women are not allowed to walk on the grass. Abiding by the rule, the woman loses her idea.*" Now the two connected statements quoted here can be applied to the scenarios mentioned earlier. When an individual is obligated to constantly navigate through a society which delimits and stifles potentials, a community which forces a mind to adhere to the rigid rules laid upon them with excruciating expectations, freedom of movement and expression get inhibited even disrupted. Resultantly, and individual is left no other choice than to live a life hidden from constant scrutiny, or face judgement and biased treatment. In both cases the sense of being left out and the dominant politics of leaving out become glaringly evident.

### **Concept of LGBTQ+ Identity and Rights:**

Ideally, an advanced and civilized society should not leave anyone on the fringes or behind; segregating an entire community because of orientation only reflects the Puritan attitude of its people carrying out-of-date thoughts and beliefs like old baggage, which no longer serves the purpose. Even as the horizons of knowledge are expanding like never before, bridging the vast gap between the known and the unknown thereby putting things in comfortable perspectives, some issues remain mystified and misinformed; issues which still hold

enough power to make us uncomfortable and feel awkward whenever we face a conversation or encounter situations involving them. Homosexuality is one such issue and a burning one. The umbrella term LGBTQ+, which includes people with diverse sexualities and orientations, suggests not only the people of this community but also their struggles and ordeals, their crises and pain, and is intricately woven into the fabric of diverse expression, narratives and colours of identity and a long history of fighting for rights and visibility; the terms rights and identity are key here.

The generally accepted and understood way of defining someone's identity is sexuality, and in the times, we are living in, sexual orientation is as significant in establishing identity and existence as the other factors contributing to making an individual stand out as an individual within and beyond the ambit of the social sphere. Sexual orientation, someone's choice or preference should not take away the right to live life as an individual feeling perfectly comfortable in their skin or as who they are. Unfortunately, the simple human right of personal choice gets violated, abused, and becomes the point of social ostracization, leading to shame, fear, and trauma. Different LGBTQ organizations worldwide have been fighting against such violations and abuse for decades. The irony of the situation is that the rights they fight for are supposed to be protected by the very Constitution that criminalizes them. This contradiction becomes the exact point of the transgression of rights for LGBTQ+ people when they fight in their land for their basic human rights. To add more, the distinction between sex and gender is still a mystified subject, and demystification seems an arduous task even in the advanced postmodern society. Gender studies, in the form of theories and texts included in the syllabus for both the undergraduate and Postgraduate levels, may help provide information on the nuances and subtleties of issues like sex, gender roles, sexuality, and orientation. However, textual information is not always adequate in answering questions related to issues like gender identity and gender expression, or the fluidity of gender itself when lived reality is in the context.

### **Inclusive Initiatives and NEP 2020:**

Knowledge and awareness are always a productive starting point to address the issue. Placing the subject in the context of both academic

and non-academic discourse and encouraging the discourse in classrooms and living rooms with unbiased and open minds become imperative to create an environment and society which is tolerant and informative. The motto of the UN regarding LGBTQ+ is relevant in the context which articulates the merits of equal rights and freedom from violence, persecution, discrimination, harassment, and stigma to ensure the protection of the human rights of all the people of the world, including LGBTQ+ individuals. Unfortunately, this motto, which is essentially pro-equality and equity across race, sex, gender and orientation, is still tinged with the sad truth that LGBTQ+ people are double marginalized and segregated and need special mentioning. Nevertheless, it is a positive motto to start with. Initiatives are being taken across the world to address the issue of LGBTQ+ people being discriminated, marginalized, violated and abused. The New Education Policy of 2020 in India emphasizes inclusive education, which aims to provide equal access to education for all. Initiatives like the Gender Inclusion Fund, Support for Community-based Interventions, and Teacher Training Programme to help them create a safe and gender-sensitive environment in the classroom are certainly some progressive and positive steps in raising awareness and spreading the word to the audience, which holds the key to transforming a society into a better and safer space for the people who have a long history of being left out. Inclusivity is the term being given prominence and currency across the globe, and for the right reasons too; education plays in this context a vital role.

### **Awareness Promotion and Role of Education:**

Since education informs and transforms people, it is imperative that the responsibility for disseminating knowledge and promoting awareness fall under the sphere of influence of this dynamic force, which begins moulding each person's mind during pregnancy and continues to do so throughout their life. This lifelong process starts with the parents, whose ideas and thoughts have the biggest impact on the child. After birth, the child's learning environment expands as they begin their next learning phase in and around the family, which is a microcosm of society at large and plays a major role in forming the child's mind, core values, and belief system. Here, a person learns the fundamentals of normal gender roles from their parents, develops an identity by evaluating themselves against peers and adults, and is conditioned and

oriented to act in ways that fit the established and accepted norms. Such conditioning and programming can go either way, producing people who find it easy and natural to adhere to hetero-normative beliefs or who struggle to do so, leading to issues like identity crisis or gender dysphoria. To make matters worse, it is typically considerably harder for someone who was brought up in a culture that values gender norms and identity to comprehend and accept them.

### **From the Familial Stage to the Transformative:**

Family influences how impressionable minds form their conceptual world, leading to fear, discomfort, and hatred towards non-binary or non-gendered individuals. This can result in internalized homophobia, or a denial of hetero-normative behaviour, leading to a hostile environment. The famous African American writer James Baldwin, in his controversial novel *Giovanni's Room*, explores the curious dynamics of awareness of homosexuality leading to a desperate and vehement attempt at proving to the self, manhood, masculinity and heterosexuality. The protagonist, David, who is tall, blonde, stout, white, and raised by his hyper-masculine father, feels vulnerable and powerless after discovering his homosexual inclinations. He feels increasingly feminized and emasculated because Giovanni, his lover, is the bread earner, and David stays home once Giovanni goes out to work. David's underlying masculine uncertainty is evident in his words, *"But I am not a housewife – men can never be housewives."* David cannot be blamed alone here for such heavily gendered ideas of manhood and womanhood. David's mature reflection is a mere reiteration of what he had learned from his father in his immature period. This learning turns out to be an inadequate set of information and makes David uncomfortable, vulnerable, agitated, confused, and even slightly disgusted in his skin. Instead of transforming David's mind into a free-flowing stream of clear consciousness, it has deepened his fear of losing manhood, which he associates with homosexuality and has made him feel trapped in his newfound sexual freedom because he associates heterosexuality with masculinity.

### **LGBTQ+ Inclusive Education:**

Truly transformative education is unbiased, creating individuals with fully developed potential who can make informed decisions and

address global issues with empathy and respect. It must be inclusive and “*should enable people of all genders, abilities, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds and ages to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for resilient and caring communities*”. While discussing LGBTQI+ inclusive education, it is worth mentioning that both students and teachers should feel safe with their identities and respected for who they are. It is the responsibility of the institutions to ensure that they are represented and welcomed in the educational setting. It is natural that when an individual finds voice and representation in society and is familiarized and greeted by peer groups, they are more likely to develop a stronger sense of self, empathy, and confidence. It reinforces their social and emotional development and creates better citizens with a healthy mind and attitude. In an ideal inclusive education environment, children, Queer adolescents as well as adults are essentially free from any risk of misinformation or dismissal of feelings. Such an environment ensures that no individual falls victim to systemic violence, bullying, stigmatizing and queer shaming leading to psychological, emotional and physical harm. No one can truly learn to thrive whilst being forced to fend to survive. Psychological, emotional and physical safety are essential components of transformative education and in the context of the LGBTQ+ community, these components are imbued with deeper and greater significance.

### **Conclusion:**

*“The criminalisation of same-sex relationships must end, so must all violence, discrimination and harmful practices against LGBTIQ+ communities.”*

-- António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General.

This assertion on the UN website underscores the fundamental importance of normalizing the discourse surrounding queer issues by eliminating the biases against pride. The community with an alternative way of life is dominated by a sense of entitlement that stems from the dominant hetero-normativity and gender normativity. Increased use of textual, visual, verbal, and media narratives, as well as more visibility and inclusivity in the mainstream discourse, are necessary to reflect the lived reality of the people and the community. An environment that is

sensitive to various identities and orientations, respectful, and compassionate can only be established via a coordinated effort from all the sectors actively involved in the teaching-learning process. The psychosocial needs of people with a history of segregation can be fairly met by a setting that permits the use of non-gendered pronouns and promotes the practice of an unjudging attitude, regardless of the formal, informal, or non-formal background. Theoretical information, seminars, workshops, and open discussion forums can only go so far in increasing awareness; after some thought, it becomes imperative to go further into comprehending the complexity via the lens of reality.

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## ROLE OF EDUCATION IN REDUCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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### Abstract:

Domestic violence is one of the increasingly rampant cases that touch millions of people across the globe, cutting across the socioeconomic, cultural, and geographic divides. In a challenge as widespread, education becomes one of the weapons engaged in the battle against domestic violence—both preventing and intervening. Therefore, this paper explores further the role of education in reducing domestic violence, discussing its effects on individuals, families, and society at large. It discusses the ways in which education can bring about awareness, healthy relationships, a challenge to societal norms perpetuating violence, and empowerment that breaks the cycle of abuse. The paper emphasizes the need to integrate domestic violence education into every level of learning, from school to adult education programs, while considering the role of policy and community initiatives that enhance the effectiveness of educational strategies.

**Keywords:** *Domestic Violence, Prevention and Intervention, Awareness, Societal Norms, Empowerment*

### Introduction:

Domestic violence is still one of the most significant social challenges of our time, touching both victims and perpetrators across all demographics. This is defined as a pattern of abusive behavior used by one person to gain or maintain control over another in an intimate relationship, which can lead to long-lasting emotional, physical, and psychological effects on the victim, thus breaking down

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families and communities. Actually, World Health Organization estimates that one out of three women in the world have experienced violence by an intimate partner. Though there have been a lot of efforts to reduce domestic violence, much needs to be done. Education is an effective preventive factor that prevents domestic violence. They provide essential tools and information through which the individual will come to understand and ultimately tear down destructive behaviors, attitudes, and even societal norms that influence violence inside the relationship. Education empowers an individual with the skills to recognize early warning signs of abuse, seek help, and support victims of domestic violence. The paper aims to research the various ways education can reduce domestic violence through a more informed, proactive, and compassionate society.

### **Review of Related Literature:**

As stated in the article by Weitzman (2018), education plays a crucial role in reducing the likelihood of intimate partner violence (IPV) among women. The study demonstrates that increased years of schooling are associated with a decrease in the probability of experiencing psychological, physical, and sexual violence. Specifically, a one-year increase in education led to a reduction of IPV by 1-3 percentage points, reflecting significant reductions in the risk of victimization. The article also highlights that the mechanisms through which education reduces IPV include improved occupational prestige, delayed teen parenthood, and enhanced attitudes toward IPV. These findings emphasize the role of education in empowering women, enhancing their socioeconomic status, and reducing their vulnerability to domestic violence. Therefore, education is both a preventive and protective factor against IPV, which benefits both women and their communities.

According to Lloyd (2018), domestic violence has a severe impact on children and young people, especially as far as education is concerned. Schools are critical in identifying symptoms of abuse because they are frequently in close contact with children over time. For a child exposed to domestic violence, there is not only the prospect of disruption at school but emotional trauma and other behavioral problems, too. For Lloyd, even though domestic violence frequently co-exists with the adversities of substance misuse or mental health difficulties, it has to be



established that children will respond differently. Some children might do well in educational environments, temporarily using school to escape the pain, while others would really face huge constraints. The article also discusses multi-agency cooperation and the role of schools in prevention and intervention and has called for improved policy and practice.

The article by Khan (2013) has highlighted the literacy gap between men and women In Pakistan, especially in rural areas, where the rate of literacy is much lower among women. Although constitutional provisions and educational policies are aimed at enhancing access to education, illiteracy remains a significant problem and is one of the causes of social problems such as gender violence and human rights violations. The article highlights the cultural, economic, legal, and political factors that perpetuate violence against women, especially in domestic settings. It also underlines the need for female education as a factor in reducing violence and improving the basic human rights and social status of women.

The article by Le & Nguyen (2021) discusses the Impact of education on women's relational empowerment, with a focus on intra-household decision-making and relational friction, especially intimate partner violence. According to the authors, greater access to information, assortative matching, and improved labor market outcomes are some of the main mechanisms through which education empowers women. The results highlight the need for further education access for women in achieving gender equality and sustainable development. Education plays a very important role in reducing domestic violence by empowering women, raising awareness, and challenging the social norms. First, education empowers women with knowledge and skills to navigate relationships more effectively, including recognizing unhealthy patterns of behavior, setting boundaries, and seeking help when necessary. Educated women are more likely to understand their rights, which increases their ability to challenge violence and advocate for themselves. Education also fosters economic independence among women, eliminating the economic reliance on abusive partners, which is a major deterrent to domestic violence. Education further challenges patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes that often drive violence, hence promoting more equitable relationships. All these mechanisms therefore contribute significantly in reducing domestic violence as

education arms women with tools and support in breaking the cycle of abuse.

According to Pun (2014), education holds a very significant position in decreasing violence against women in a domestic setting. The report emphasizes how low education levels are responsible for the vulnerability of women to violence, especially in Nepal. It states that the empowerment of women through education escalates their consciousness to overcome their subordinated position and manage multiple roles competently. It is revealed that the prime factor contributing to domestic violence is less education. This can be understood through many statistics and findings of various researches. Again, it has been recommended to improve the status of women by educational campaigns as well as eradicate violence against them. The whole document stresses on the importance of education to empower women in order to combat domestic violence and has recommended educational movements to eradicate this critical issue.

### **Objective of the Study:**

The objectives of the study are as follows -

- To explore the impact of education in raising awareness and promoting prevention of domestic violence
- To examine how education can challenge harmful societal norms and empower individuals to build healthy, non-violent relationships.

### **Research Questions of the Study:**

The research questions of the study are as follows -

- How effective are school-based education programs in raising awareness about domestic violence and promoting preventive behaviors among students?
- In what ways can education programs challenge societal norms and gender roles that perpetuate domestic violence, and what impact does this have on the attitudes and behaviors of individuals?

- What role do community-based education initiatives play in providing resources, support, and intervention strategies for individuals affected by domestic violence?
- How can educational interventions, including workplace training and adult education programs, empower individuals to recognize and address domestic violence in their personal and professional lives?

### **Qualitative Analysis and Discussion:**

The role of education in reducing domestic violence is a critical social issue that is explored in this study article. To explore the complexities of this topic, a qualitative approach is well-suited. This approach serves as a roadmap, detailing the steps necessary to gather data and ensure the generation of accurate and reliable findings. The process typically includes key components such as online research and journal analysis.

### **Objective 1: To explore the impact of education in raising awareness and promoting prevention of domestic violence**

Education is a very necessary practice in sensitizing and promoting the prevention of domestic violence. According to Weitzman (2018), “educating women’s effects on reducing intimate partner violence (IPV) are direct effects, as the level of schooling of females is substantially used as an indirect measure to analyze risk for IPV”. Each additional schooling year is associated with a reduced risk for IPV, including psychological, physical, and sexual violence. This decrease can be contributed to a variety of factors such as better occupational status, delayed teen parenthood, and a more liberal attitude toward IPV. Educated women are better positioned to recognize unhealthy behaviors in relationships, set boundaries, and seek help, thereby reducing their vulnerability to abuse considerably. Education also helps to break the norms perpetuating violence in society. According to Le and Nguyen (2021), education equips women with the capacity to make better decisions in households, thus improving their financial independence. Educated women are less likely to put up with abusive behavior because they know their rights and can better represent themselves. Educations act as preventive measures against domestic violence by making people aware of gender equality; it reduces the economic dependency between the two spouses and challenges the

patriarchal norms that usually are the reason behind abusive dynamics. Besides empowering a person, education also plays an important role for children who witness domestic violence. According to Lloyd (2018), schools can play a key role in spotting signs of abuse and providing relief to the victims. Teachers can reach out to welfare services as a way of connecting them to families; this serves as an important safety net for their children in case there is psychological trauma or disruption in education as a result of domestic violence. Through awareness and early intervention, educational institutions can also prevent children from being affected by domestic violence. Education empowers the individual, especially the woman, and also creates awareness in communities about the dangers of domestic violence. Increased awareness, better decision-making skills, and challenging of harmful societal norms are all aspects of education that play a central role in preventing and addressing domestic violence.

**Objective 2: To examine how education can challenge harmful societal norms and empower individuals to build healthy, non-violent relationships**

Education has a great impact on the change of harmful societal norms and enabling people to have healthy, non-violent relationships. According to Le and Nguyen (2021), education empowers people with skills to navigate relationships better as it increases their awareness and better attitudes toward interpersonal dynamics. The educated women, for instance, are more aware of unhealthy relationship patterns and more likely to set boundaries and seek help when needed. Education equips them with the knowledge to understand their rights and challenge abusive behavior, which is a major factor in preventing intimate partner violence (IPV). In addition, education promotes gender equality by challenging traditional societal norms that often perpetuate violence. According to Weitzman (2018), education leads to more progressive attitudes toward IPV. According to the research findings, with women's educational attainment increasing, tolerance for violence within relationships is on the decline. Education challenges them to question some of the stereotypical roles imposed by tradition that create inequality, hence violence within relationships. As a result of education, women can fight the patriarchal and unequal distribution of power, especially where such cultures often justify and sustain violence in relationships. Education promotes financial independence, which

diminishes the economic dependency of abused women on their abusive partners. Financial independence is essential in enabling women to leave their abusive situations according to Le and Nguyen (2021). Gaining access to education and bettering the opportunities means that individuals have other forms of resources for escaping unhealthy relations thereby reducing their susceptibility to domestic violence. In conclusion, education is one of the major tools that combat bad societal practices and empower the people to be in healthy non-violent relationships. Education fights and prevents the acts of violence through gender equality awareness and educating them on skills for effective handling of relationships. Through these aspects, education contributes to a society that respects each other, where equality and no violence exist between relationships.

### **Interpretation:**

Education plays a crucial role in countering destructive social norms and equipping people to develop healthy non-violent relationships. It arms individuals with the knowledge and power to determine unhealthy practices or behaviors that perpetuate abusive relationships and set boundaries. Education helps people, especially women, be aware of the patterns of intimate partner violence so that one can seek remedies against the same. As Weitzman (2018) suggests, increased education levels correlate with more progressive attitudes toward IPV, reducing the acceptance of violence in relationships. Furthermore, education fosters gender equality, addressing the root causes of domestic violence linked to traditional gender roles and power imbalances. Le and Nguyen (2021) highlight that education promotes financial independence, enabling women to leave abusive relationships and avoid economic dependency on abusive partners. Overall, education empowers individuals to challenge patriarchal norms, advocate for their well-being, and create relationships based on respect and equality, contributing significantly to the prevention of domestic violence.

### **Conclusion:**

In a nutshell, education is the foundation upon which one could reduce domestic violence, for it equips the individual to know unhealthy relationship dynamics, find ways to challenge harmful societal norms,

and promote gender equality. Education equips individuals with tools to identify abusive behaviors, set boundaries, and seek help. It is also a means of promoting financial independence, as dependency on abusive partners increases vulnerability to violence. Finally, education creates an awareness and facilitates the development of healthy, non-violent relationships. Through these mechanisms, education becomes a very powerful tool in preventing domestic violence and fostering a culture of respect, equality, and mutual understanding.

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# EMBRACING DIVERSITY THROUGH INCLUSION: NEP 2020 PURVIEW OF EDUCATION FOR ALL

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## Abstract:

Defining ‘Inclusion’ has proven difficult for scholars in the subject of inclusive education. It is frequently referred to as a process rather than a location or as a journey rather than a destination. The phrase "overcome socio-economic impediments" alludes directly to the social framework of exclusion and marginalization, which on numerous occasions have been viewed as the result of interactions between an individual with a socio-economic or physical barrier and the existing environmental, social, and political system that prevent them from participating and gaining access. Although, globally, UNICEF and UNESCO together with governments across the globe have been bringing about dynamic and robust advancement over the past ten years, millions still lack access to school, and learning opportunities are still not dispersed fairly. India marked the first major step towards Inclusive Education with the Kothari Commission's emphasis on integrating children with disabilities into regular schools in 1966. However, cultural prejudices towards impairment and limited access to resources frequently hampered this progress, especially in rural Indian communities. The state of inclusive education in India has advanced significantly in recent years because of laws like the Right to Education Act, but issues like a lack of teacher preparation, poor infrastructure, and societal attitudes still prevent many children with disabilities from attending regular schools. This chapter is focused on in-depth study of the factors agitating successful adoption of inclusive education, needs,

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NEP 2020s strategies to bridge the gap and prospective growth trajectories as per the policy framework.

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Education, Educational Access, Disabilities, Right to Education Act, NEP 2020*

### **Introduction:**

Every human being has the fundamental right to education. One's life seems meaningless and incomplete without education as it enables one to establish objectives and strive towards them throughout life. It enhances personality, confidence, knowledge, and abilities. Education is crucial because it gives us access to a wealth of opportunities. It aids in knowledge acquisition, skill development, and viewpoint shaping. Through ensuring that all children, regardless of their background, ability, or disability, have equal access to high-quality education, inclusion in education plays a critical role in advancing social justice, creating a diverse learning environment, and ultimately creating a society that is more equitable and inclusive. These days, inclusive education is a necessity rather than a luxury (Panigrahi & Malik, 2020). The term "inclusive education" is a method of teaching in which students with disabilities are completely integrated into the regular classroom alongside their peers of the same age at their neighborhood school. Another term closely linked with inclusion is integration. The process of integrating people with disabilities into mainstream educational institutions, provided that they are able to adapt to the standardized needs of these institutions is precisely delineated as Integration (Graham, 2020). Sheeba & Manjula (2023) have stated that the most crucial element of offering accessible and alternative education to everyone in need is the policy structures. In order to guarantee the disabled child's complete involvement in the educational process, it was underlined that he or she must be introduced to all extracurricular and curricular activities. India embraced the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 2030) in 2015 and NEP 2020 has been closely aligned with such agendas.



## **Barriers to Inclusive Education in India:**

One of the main goals of Indian education has been inclusion and the government has attempted to provide inclusive learning environments and experiences for kids from all backgrounds through a number of laws and initiatives (Jain & Mishra, 2020). Irrespective of that, the adoption of inclusive educational practices has faced multiple issues that are mostly archaic and deeply embedded into the orthodox close-knit societal structure of India (Krishnan,2020). To achieve its successful implementation and efficacy, inclusive education must overcome a number of obstacles, which are as follows -

- **Insufficient Resources:** Quintessential resources including financing, workforce, and infrastructure, greatly impede inclusive education efforts. Institutions may lack the facilities and support mechanisms required for integrating diverse learners and offer personalized help.
- **Insufficient Teacher Education and Professional Development:** This significantly impedes the execution of inclusive methods and support for diverse learners. Extensive teacher training and professional growth are necessary.
- **Reluctance towards collaboration and coordination:** In order to achieve inclusive education, stakeholders such as educators, parents, administrators, lawmakers, and community organizations must collaborate and coordinate effectively. Inadequate collaboration and communication among stakeholders might undermine attempts to promote inclusive practices and support different learners.
- **Discriminatory Accessibility to Support Services:** Learners with disabilities or special requirements may have difficulty gaining support services such as technological assistance, therapy, or specialized education. Ensuring equal access to support services by addressing systemic barriers, pushing for policy reforms, and allocating funds based on need are of prime importance.
- **Legal and policy regulations:** Inadequate legal and legislative frameworks can impede attempts to promote equitable educational opportunities and safeguard the rights of students who have disabilities or special needs. There is an imperative for

comprehensive legislation, regulations, and guidelines that encourage inclusion, accessibility, and educational equity.

- **Attitudinal Barriers:** Negative perceptions, biases, and preconceptions about students with disabilities or from marginalized communities may establish barriers to inclusion. To address these issues, it's important to raise awareness, promote empathy, and cultivate acceptance and inclusion in communities as well as schools.
- **Culturally and linguistically diverse pupils:** Inclusive education must recognize cultural and linguistic variety among pupils, especially those from varied cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds. To provide culturally compatible and linguistically suitable assistance, it's important to acknowledge and value young children's cultural identities and languages, but often this gap is never mended. Instead, it is widened by a lack of a teacher's ability to practice inclusivity in the classroom.

### **Needs for inculcating Inclusive Education:**

Experts in development concur that improving the availability of education, in particular coverage, quality education, equity, and inclusion, is crucial to any all-encompassing development strategy (Singh Mishra, 2023). Prioritizing the utmost significance of holistic development, he needs to adopt an inclusive plan for education that can be outlined as follows -

- **Equity and fairness:** inclusive learning seeks to provide equitable educational opportunities for all students, regardless of background, abilities, or disabilities. It is a fair and just method that fosters fairness while eliminating discrimination.
- **Prioritizing Diversity:** Inclusive education values and embraces variety in all of its forms, such as culture, language, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and talents. It encourages respect for all people and their distinctive contributions to society.
- **Addressing the requirements of all students:** Inclusive education aims to meet the needs of all students, including those who have impairments or learning challenges. It fosters a supportive learning atmosphere that motivates students to engage and excel in their studies.

- **Boosting social cohesion:** Inclusive education strives to put down barriers between diverse groups of pupils, boosting integration into society and fostering a sense of community. This helps to lessen preconceived notions, bias, and bigotry.
- **Improved scholastic outcomes:** Research has demonstrated that inclusive education benefits all students, not only those who have impairments or learning issues. It promotes a pleasant and encouraging learning environment, which can increase enthusiasm, engagement, and performance.
- **Achieving legal and moral obligations:** Educational establishments and schools have to provide inclusive education. It is mandated by law in multiple nations and complies alongside the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### **Inclusive Education in NEP 2020:**

For the benefit of disadvantaged kids with a range of disabilities, the writers and specialists on the committee led by Dr. Kasthurirangan had developed and suggested a number of ideas and actions to engage in inclusive education. In order to modernize the educational system and establish a roadmap for a new India, the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) was created (Kumar, 2021). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 prioritizes inclusive education to promote equality and accessibility in India's education system. NEP 2020 has directed spotlights on providing quality education to all learners, regardless of socio-economic status, gender, caste, religion, or ability, allowing them to attain their full potential (Krishnan, 2020). NEP 2020 aims to promote inclusive education by removing barriers to access and participation, supporting varied learning needs, and cultivating a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion in educational institutions. To achieve this, NEP 2020 has prioritized the following concepts and strategies -

- The problems and suggestions for the inclusion of under-represented student groups, including those who have disabilities, have been included in the policy and covered by the Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), which is a generic term that includes identities based on gender, social and

cultural and socioeconomic identities, regional identities, and impairments.

- NEP 2020 does understand that educational hurdles, facilities, and support services for children with special needs (CwSN) must be tackled if policy is to be implemented. With a special chapter on inclusive and equal education that focuses on problems, obstacles, and suggestions for closing the gaps and lowering the differences in access and participation of all students, the NEP has integrated the elements of inclusion for people with disabilities across the policy text.
- NEP restates the importance of the RPWD Act of 2016 and mandates implementation and follow up on with an efficient auditing procedure. The state administrations in question must make sure that disabled children can always get the benefits.
- The Ministry of Education's comprehensive Samagra Shiksha program under NEP 2020, which is centrally endorsed, serves students in pre-primary through senior secondary school. The program helps all states and UTs with putting the NEP's policies into practice and seeks to provide universal access to education. One of the main goals of the program is to guarantee inclusion and equity at all educational levels. For children with specific needs, inclusive education is one of the interventions. A number of activities are covered under this component, including block-level assessment camps for disability identification, assistance with orientation and awareness programs, therapeutic services, sporting events and skill building programs for special educators, among other things.
- NCERT has made a concerted effort to assist student learning through initiatives like the e-Pathshala portal and mobile app platform, which give parents, instructors, and students open access to NCERT books and e-content. Audio versions of NCERT textbooks have also been provided. NCERT additionally developed supplemental reading materials.
- The Barkhaa Series, "a reading series for all," is supplemental graded reading material made up of forty stories that NCERT developed to help children improve their reading abilities throughout their early school years. Additionally, the comic book "Priya: The Accessibility Warrior" was made to raise awareness of accessibility-related issues. "Everyone Needs Accessibility, Accessibility Helps Everyone" is the book's main

takeaway. The comic book comes with instructional films in Indian Sign Language (ISL).

- A list of terms used on a daily basis in ISL has also been established as a result of research into the language. There are around 935 CIET and NCERT-prepared textbook videos and a 10,500-word ISL lexicon available on the DIKSHA platform.
- A crucial component of teaching education is inclusive education (Sarkar & Yadav, 2023). B. Ed. programs provide training in effective pedagogy, including fundamental math and literacy, multilevel instructing and assessments, teaching children with disabilities, special interests or talents, educational technology, and learner-centered and collaborative learning. Short post-B. Ed. certification courses will be widely available in multidisciplinary institutions and universities. Teachers can specialize in teaching students with disabilities, pursue leadership and management opportunities, or transition across basic, preparatory, middle, and secondary stages.
- The policy suggests establishing Special Education Zones (SEZs) in regions with high populations of educationally disadvantaged SEDGs to maximize the implementation of policies and schemes, resulting in a significant change in the educational landscape. To achieve SEDGs, policies and schemes should prioritize providing quality educational opportunities for girls. This will eliminate disparities in access to education for children from economically and sociologically disadvantaged groups, both now and in the future.
- To improve participation and learning results for children with SEDGs and disabilities, social workers and counselors should collaborate with students, parents, schools, and teachers.

### **Conclusion:**

NEP 2020 prioritizes inclusive education to establish an equal, accessible, and engaging system that allows all learners to reach their maximum potential while contributing to national social, economic, and cultural development. NEP 2020 aims to create a more inclusive and equitable society in India by targeting varied requirements for students and developing an inclusionary culture. This study highlights the necessity of inclusive education in schools and educational institutions as a whole. This paper provides a concise overview of the

NEP 2020 and Inclusive Education policies, highlighting the government's commitment to providing appropriate education and assistance for neglected and impaired children. When all the stakeholders adhere to these policies, only then can the nation reap the benefits of these policies and planning. To achieve education for all, first and foremost, it is necessary to remove barriers to access and learning for individuals with disabilities. The Indian education sector struggles to meet the educational demands of all disabled students. Institutions must provide a conducive environment so that the student can realize and work towards reaching their optimum potentialities. To guarantee that every student has access to a high-quality education, education policies and practices require being inclusive of all pupils, fostering comprehensive involvement, and promoting diversity as a resource instead of a barrier. Inclusive education for all will lead to personal and societal development. This wealth will result in a more harmonious and sustainable growth of human resources in India and contribute positively towards building the “Global Talent Pool” and realizing the agenda of becoming a “Global Leader” in the coming era.

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## **INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION: DEVELOPING CONCEPTS AND NECESSITY IN SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

**Dr. Poulami Mukherjee <sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract:**

Environmental literacy enables search of solutions to environmental problems and develop social responsibility towards environment. A study is done to find out importance of environmental education and it's need to be inculcated in School curriculum. Objectives of environmental education need to be achieved to attend goals of sustainable development. Environmental education's curriculum can connect nature with community. Teachers should appreciate environmental education through active participation of learners. Students often think that environmental education is just an additional burden to them. Teachers should try their level best to develop a positive attitude among learners and make them enthusiastic to solve environmental problems. More research work is required in this area that will help to develop critical thinking ability among learners to reduce environmental challenges caused due to globalization and many other aspects. Environmental Education will promote sustainable use of energy and preservation of biodiversity and natural resources for future generations.

***Keywords:*** *Environmental Education, Curriculum, Social Concern, Sustainable Development, Preservation*

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**Introduction:**

**E**nvironmental education includes environmental literacy, foundations of environmental education, planning and implementation of environmental programmes, emphasizing learning, and assessing and evaluating learner's achievement. Environmental literacy should include development of knowledge about environmental systems, personal and social responsibility towards environment, skills and interpretation abilities to solve environmental problems. Teacher should give emphasis on study of evolution, goals, characteristics, instructional methods, technological assistance, inclusion and construction of curriculum of environmental education. Teachers should assist in developing learner's readiness to engage them in solving environmental problems. Enquiry based learning approaches will enable learners to create connections to the real world. Assessment and evaluation of learning outcomes is also a matter of concern for environmental educators. Students develop leadership qualities when community based activities like environmental awareness programmes are included in curriculum. Environmental education enables development of creative skills, attitude, eco-friendly behaviour among learners. More research work needs to be done to find out ways and means to solve environmental crisis, to apply efforts to make people literate, to correlate environmental education with other disciplines and make this study interdisciplinary. Environmental education should be a collaborative and cooperative approach of learning.

**Objectives of the Study:**

The objectives listed are as follows -

- Preservation and protection of environmental resources and ecological systems.
- Protection of livelihood and economic growth.
- Integration of environmental concerns in economic and social development.
- Ensure environmental conservation and sustainable development.
- Ensure development of environmental awareness among all individuals to stop environmental degradation.

### **Review of Related Literature:**

According to Louv (2006), exposure to a natural green environment can improve children's attention span and protect them from sufferings of Attention Deficit Disorders. "The move outdoors reduces stress and so enables better concentration as well as increasing motivation to learn"(Harris,2018,p.224). According to North American Association for Environmental education (NAEE, 2017) guidelines, professional development of environmental educators is highly essential to promote environmental education among learners. These guidelines are included in different teacher education programmes. According to Ferguson et al., 2021, there are opportunities to incorporate environmental education across multiple content areas at the same time using pedagogies such as project based, collaborative, and place-based learning. Enquiry based experiences is highly essential for learners as they learn that 'humans protect nature in order to protect themselves'(Stanisic and Maksic,2014,p.125). Development of environmental ethics and knowledge improve practice of discipline and motivation among learners (Largo-Wight eal.,2018,p.655).

### **Rationale of the Study:**

This kind of study is the need of the hour. It has become highly essential to bring environmental awareness among all. Environmental ill-effects can be encountered through environmental education. Lack of financial support and lack of accurate pedagogical nature of teaching is restricting the expansion of environmental education in Schools. There is societal ignorance towards Government's motive, plan and implementation. Rethinking and replanning is highly essential to overcome causes of environmental disasters. This is possible only when both teachers and students show a positive attitude towards environment by gaining knowledge through environmental education.

### **Challenges faced to Implement Environmental Education:**

Different kinds of barriers are faced by students and teachers during implementation of environmental education. Some of them are as follows -

- There are several misconceptions about scope and content of environmental education.

- Lack of funding resources to conduct awareness programmes is a major barrier towards propagation of environmental education.
- Some teachers still lack personal interest to instruct students about the correct approach of environmental development.
- Our educational system is such that it does not encourage students to actively participate and explore about the environment.
- There is shortage of qualified trained teachers who can include environmental education as an interdisciplinary subject.

### **Environmental Educational Strategies in India and Abroad:**

In India according to National Policy of Education (NEP), different initiatives are taken to protect environmental resource available in geographically diverse country. NEP introduces management and maintenance system of environmental standards. Certification of financial assistance from Central and State Government will help in implementation of strategies to actions. NEP suggests that environmental education will promote the need of eco-leveling. Policies should be framed in such a way that every industry should follow set of environmental norms of eco-leveling on basis of ISO14000. NEP 2020 suggests to make environmental education as an integral part of curriculum through activity based learning. Active involvement of policy makers, teachers, students will enable attainment of sustainable development goals in India.

Environmental Education system varies by country and region. This includes strategies that encourage students to become environmentally conscious. Management of eco-Schools is a part of environmental education programme as a compulsory part of curriculum. Policies include maintenance of global sustainability, rural and urban planning, awareness and management of disease control mechanisms, focus on global and local research projects etc. New plan of Green Key and Blue Flag programmes of foundation for Environmental Education (FEE,1981) are globally recognized to reach sustainable goals and protect nature. USA addresses environmental challenges in different ways to meet diverse needs of learners. In 1975, UNESCO and UNEP launched IEEP(International Environmental Education Programme) to promote international cooperation.

**Steps to be taken to implement Environmental Education:**

Schools, Colleges and other educational institutions can take initiatives to make partnership with sustainability clubs or STEM related organizers who have sufficient resources and can assist learners to develop activities like preparing a learning garden space. Environmental education should be integrated with other subjects in multiple content areas. Teacher educators should take care of the fact that students learn the importance and way of integration of sustainability and human resources in their daily life activities. Environmental education is problem based learning. Interdisciplinary methods of studies can find out creative ways to solve environmental problems. Environmental education should be made compulsory in School curriculum. Schools should organize for educational tours and days out in lap of nature so that students can feel healing and motivating power of nature, develop respect and consciousness towards preservation of natural resources. Authorities of educational institutions should ensure that environmental education need to be implemented on compulsory basis and should be connected with curriculum and community.

Activity and practice based learning is the need of the hour. Environmental education can be implemented among all students through field trips, doing surveys in communities, performing arts, dance, drama, organization of seminars, symposiums, workshops, project work, poster competitions etc. Students should be motivated to read and analyze researcher's write ups articles, books, book reviews that will encourage them to develop awareness, knowledge and appreciation of environmental resources. This will enable them to develop their sense of responsibility towards sustainable environment, develop social justice and find out ways to solve environmental challenges. Teachers should always encourage learners in developing their confidence, personality and their responsibilities of protecting the environment as it is the foundational base of their learning. All day-to-day challenges are complicated and connected to nature, in one way or the other. Administrators and stake holders should make such policies so that environmental literacy of learners is sufficient to make them responsible citizens, so that they can play a vital role in bringing social justice, foster learning and promote inclusivity in all fields.

**Discussion:**

Environmental movements through environmental education will enable preservation of health of environment and its rich resources. Environmental education, when included in School curriculum, facilitates activity based learning with active involvement of students as well as teacher. But students often feel pressurized to meet academic performance target and consider environmental education as an extra burden to their existing curriculum. Very limited resources and trained supervisors are available in private and public Schools. Newspaper reports, statements of politicians and policy makers should ensure common people get correct information about issues and challenges of environment, frame policies and provide economic clearance to develop awareness and active participation of individuals through formal and informal education propagation.

**Conclusion:**

Inclusion of environmental education in School curriculum will help to achieve it's objectives and attain sustainable goals of development. It will enhance active participation of learners and bring them close to nature. Awareness of environmental challenges and ill-effects of globalization can be developed among learners through use of heuristic methods of solving environmental problems. Environmental education system has great importance in India and abroad. The above explanations denote that environmental education should be an integral part of teaching-learning curriculum in India.

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## **PROMOTING MEDIA LITERACY TO COMBAT FAKE NEWS AND PROPAGANDA IN THE DIGITAL ERA**

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### **Abstract:**

The rise of fake news and propaganda in the digital age presents significant challenges to information integrity, public trust, and social stability. This chapter explores the role of media literacy in combating misinformation and equipping individuals with critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate media content effectively. It provides an in-depth discussion on the definitions of fake news and propaganda, their influence on public perception, and the psychological techniques used to manipulate audiences. The chapter highlights how misinformation spreads through social media, algorithm-driven echo chambers, and the amplification of unverified content. To address these issues, the chapter outlines key strategies for promoting media literacy, including educational initiatives, policy interventions, and public awareness campaigns. Emphasizing the need for integrating media literacy into formal education, encouraging fact-checking habits, and implementing technological solutions, this chapter argues that strengthening media literacy is essential for fostering an informed and responsible society. By enhancing critical media engagement, individuals can resist the influence of misinformation and contribute to a more transparent and democratic information ecosystem.

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**Keywords:** *Fake News, Propaganda, Media Literacy, Combating Strategy, Digital Era*

### **Introduction:**

**B**efore the invention of media, human interaction relied solely on face-to-face communication, oral storytelling, and handwritten manuscripts (A, 2022). Knowledge was passed down through generations by word of mouth, making information dissemination a slow and localized process. The absence of mass communication meant that people primarily relied on their immediate communities for news and updates. With the advent of traditional media-newspapers, radio, and television-information became more accessible, connecting societies beyond physical boundaries (Narin et al., 2023). But the true revolution came with the rise of social media, which transformed communication into a dynamic, interactive, and instant process, allowing individuals to share, consume, and engage with content in real time (Jha, 2023). While social media has bridged gaps and democratized information, it has also become a breeding ground for misinformation, fake news, and propaganda (Lee, 2023). In the article *Study: On Twitter...* (2018) by MIT stated that ‘false news spreads more rapidly on the social network Twitter than real news does - and by a substantial margin.’ The rapid spread of unverified content, sensationalized narratives, and regional motivated disinformation has led to widespread public confusion, polarization, and even social unrest. The blurred lines between fact and fiction challenge individuals’ ability to discern credible sources from misleading ones. This growing issue underscores the need for media literacy, a crucial skill that empowers individuals to critically analyze, evaluate, and interpret media content. Media literacy fosters awareness about media biases, manipulation tactics, and hidden agendas, enabling individuals to navigate the digital landscape responsibly (Mishra, 2022). In the digital age, media literacy plays a vital role in combating fake news and propaganda. Beyond merely consuming information, individuals must develop the ability to verify sources, cross-check facts, and recognize misinformation tactics (Loos & Ivan, 2023). Strengthening digital literacy helps create an informed society capable of resisting media manipulation and making well-informed decisions. By promoting media and digital literacy, we can equip individuals with the tools necessary to combat the rising tide of fake news and propaganda,



fostering a more truthful and resilient information ecosystem (Zhao, 2022).

### **Meaning and Concept of Fake News and Propaganda:**

**(a) Fake News:** Fake news refers to false, misleading, or deliberately fabricated information presented as legitimate news (Wannamaker, 2022). It is designed to deceive readers, manipulate public opinion, or generate financial gain. Fake news is often spread through social media, websites, and even traditional news outlets that fail to verify sources (Doskitch, 2022). Fake news can take various forms, such as:

- **Completely fabricated stories:** News articles or reports that are entirely false with no factual basis (Osho, 2020).
- **Manipulated content:** Genuine news or images that have been altered to mislead the audience (Ohanyan, 2022).
- **Clickbait headlines:** Sensationalized or exaggerated headlines designed to attract attention but misrepresent the actual content (Chowanda, 2023).
- **Satire mistaken as real news:** Humorous or satirical content that some readers believe to be true (Cots, 2023).

So, developing media literacy and fact-checking skills is crucial to distinguish reliable information, reduce misinformation, and preserve the integrity of public discourse.

**(b) Propaganda:** Propaganda is a form of communication that aims to influence public opinion and behavior by using biased, misleading, or emotionally charged messages. It is used to promote specific ideologies, policies, or products (Druga, 2023). Unlike fake news, which is often completely false, propaganda may include partial truths or selective facts, making it more difficult to detect (Nakov & Martino, 2021). It uses various techniques, such as -

- **Emotional appeal:** Using fear, patriotism, anger, or sympathy to persuade people.
- **Repetition:** Repeating a message multiple times to reinforce beliefs.
- **Name-calling and labeling:** Using derogatory terms to discredit opponents.

- **Bandwagon effect:** Encouraging people to follow a popular belief or trend.

Historically, propaganda has been used in wartime to boost national morale and in advertising to shape consumer behavior. However, in today's digital world, propaganda spreads quickly through social media, often blending with fake news to manipulate audiences on a global scale (Goulter, 2023).

### **Powerful Influence of Fake News and Propaganda on Public Perception:**

Fake news and propaganda significantly shape public perception by influencing opinions, beliefs, and behaviors. Various techniques are used to persuade people and reinforce false narratives. Here we will discuss some techniques -

- **Emotional Manipulation:** Fake news and propaganda often use strong emotional triggers such as fear, anger, or sympathy to influence people's thoughts and actions. Sensationalized stories make individuals react emotionally rather than rationally (Liu, 2022).
- **Repetition Effect:** The more often people see or hear a message, the more likely they are to believe it. Propaganda repeatedly presents the same information across different platforms to make it seem credible (Pillai & Fazio, 2021).
- **Social Media Influence:** Fake news spreads rapidly on social media, where people often trust content shared by friends, family, or influencers without verifying its authenticity. Algorithms further amplify misleading content by promoting engaging but false narratives (Shi & Li, 2023)
- **Authority and Persuasion Techniques:** Fake news and propaganda often use authoritative figures, celebrities, or fabricated experts to gain trust. When information comes from an influential source, people are more likely to believe it without questioning (Saunderson & Nejat, 2021).
- **Algorithm-Driven Echo Chambers:** Online platforms use algorithms that personalize content based on user preferences. This creates echo chambers where individuals are repeatedly

exposed to similar viewpoints, making it harder to recognize biased or false narratives (Du, 2023).

### **Strategies to combat Fake News and Propaganda through Media Literacy:**

Fake news and propaganda have become major challenges in the digital age, misleading people and shaping false narratives. To counter this, individuals must learn to fact-check, analyze sources, and think critically. In today's world, the most effective tool to fight misinformation is media literacy (Mortazavi, 2023). In general, Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media content in a critical and informed manner. It empowers individuals to navigate the vast amount of information available across different media platforms, including television, newspapers, social media, and digital news sources (Ciurel, 2022). Media literacy involves understanding how media messages are constructed, recognizing biases, identifying misinformation, and distinguishing between credible and unreliable sources. It also includes knowledge of how media influences public opinion, culture, and decision-making (Abdullah, 2022). In present days, where fake news and propaganda are widespread, media literacy is essential in enabling individuals to think critically, fact-check information, and engage responsibly with media content. In today's digital world, the rapid spread of fake news and propaganda influences public opinion and social behaviors. Here, we discuss strategies for promoting media literacy, focusing on education, policy interventions, and public awareness to mitigate misinformation and empower responsible media engagement.

#### **(1) Educational Initiatives:**

- **Integrating Media Literacy into Education:** Schools and universities should include media literacy in their lessons. This will help students learn how to check if news is true, find trustworthy sources, and think carefully before believing or sharing information. Teaching these skills early makes students more aware of fake news and biased stories (Amaya et al., 2022).
- **Developing Media Literacy Apps and Gamified Learning:** Fun learning tools like apps and games can help teach people

how to spot fake news. These tools can offer quizzes, real-world scenarios, and simulations to teach users how to detect misinformation. Digital platforms can also provide real-time feedback, allowing learners to practice evaluating news stories and media sources in a dynamic way (Prykhodkina, 2021).

- **Encouraging Fact-Checking Habits:** People should be encouraged to use fact-checking websites before believing or sharing news. Teaching people how to cross-check sources, verify images and videos, and use reputable fact-checking services like Snopes, FactCheck.org, and government fact-checking agencies can significantly reduce the spread of misinformation (RACINE, 2023).

## (2) Policy Interventions:

- **Government Policies Against Misinformation:** Governments should enact laws to keep social networking platforms accountable for providing deceptive content with protecting the freedom of speech. They should also teach individuals how to spot fake news and enhance public awareness. This will help to reduce the spread of false news throughout the society (Mezei & Szentgáli-Tóth, 2023).
- **Elevating Journalism Ethics:** Media organizations have to follow the ethical norms, validate their content, and prevent inaccurate and biased reporting. It makes sure everybody gets authentic trustworthy information, also bringing faith in the media. This also fosters ethical reporting across the entire company (Picard, 2021).
- **Integrating Technology for Detection:** Artificial Intelligence (AI) and devices can help to identify unverified news and warn users to unsafe information. These applications can be integrated with social media to help users immediately verify information and minimize the spread of false information. It can also help detect risky information before it gains popularity (Hejase, 2022).

## (3) Awareness Campaigns:

- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Use radio, television, and social media to alert people about the harmful effects of fabrications

and propaganda. These programs should instruct people how recognize fake news and advocate healthy utilization of the media (Anyanwu, 2022).

- **Encouraging Open Discussions forum:** Organize forums and debates to foster critical thinking, connect with different points of view, and help those assessing the media. Such discussions can boost awareness and minimize the effect of disinformation (Mirhoseini et al., 2023).
- **Media Literacy Workshops:** Educational institutions, libraries, and social organizations should organize camps to provide individuals with all ages understand the media. Such programs can show how disinformation circulates as well as offer basic techniques to determine which information is real before spreading it. It's especially useful for older people or those who are inexperienced with digital media (Šuminas & Jastramskis, 2020).

### **Conclusion:**

The rise of fake news and propaganda in the present digital environment creates significant threats to trust among citizens, or social harmony. Disinformation flows very quickly on social networks as well as other platforms, makes it harder for readers to differentiate among reliable sources and fabricated information. To tackle this, developing media literacy is very important (Li, 2022). Through empowering individuals with critical thinking capabilities, we can assist people analyze the information, find trustworthy sources, and identify biases or misinformation. Through education, policy reforms, and public awareness initiatives, we can build a society which emphasizes well informed decision-making and ethical media interaction. Strengthening media literacy will help reduce the impact of fake news and contribute to a fairer, well-educated and democratic nation, helping individuals to easily and confidently navigate the complexity of modern media. It is the path towards a more effective, stronger society where the fact and reality are cherished (Dumitru et al., 2022).

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## HOMONATIONALISM: IT'S ROLE IN LGBTQ+ POLITICS

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### **Abstract:**

This study investigates the idea of homonationalism and how it affects current LGBTQ+ advocacy, activism, and politics. A term coined by Jasbir Paur, homonationalism describes how LGBTQ+ rights are incorporated into nationalist and discriminatory governmental goals. To maintain systems of racism, xenophobia, and imperialism, the research looks at how governments, businesses, and the media selectively portray Lgbtq+ inclusion as a sign of modernity. The state-sanctioned pink washing, media narratives that frame “respectable” LGBT identities and the suppression of intersectional activism are just a few examples of how homonationalism manifests itself. The results show that homonationalism fragments grassroots activism depoliticizes queer issues, and prioritizes normative identities, so reshaping LGBTQ+ advocacy. Furthermore, it upholds discriminatory national policies, especially those that target underprivileged populations and LGBTQ immigrants. The study emphasizes the necessity of an intersectional and critical approach to queer politics that prioritizes social justice and opposes nationalist collaboration. Through its insights into how nationalism challenges the radical, inclusive base of queer activism, this research adds to the expanding conversation on Lgbtq+ rights and nationalism. In addition to nationalist conceptions, it advocates for advocacy tactics that emphasize intersectionality, solidarity, and a dedication to tearing down oppressive structures.

**Keywords:** *Homonationalism, LGBTQ+ Politics, Pinkwashing, LGBTQ+ Advocacy*

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## **Introduction:**

**H**omonationalism refers to how certain national identities and ideologies intersect with LGBTQ+ politics. It encompasses how LGBTQ+ rights can be co-opted by nationalistic agendas, often framing LGBTQ+ individuals as emblematic of a nation's modernity and progress. This phenomenon can lead to the exclusion of marginalized communities within the LGBTQ+ spectrum and complicate global solidarity efforts, as it may prioritize the rights of specific groups over a more inclusive approach. Understanding the dynamics of homonationalism is crucial for addressing the complexities of LGBTQ+ rights in both local and global contexts. In recent years, the international political landscape has witnessed a complex intersection between LGBTQ+ rights and nationalist ideologies. This phenomenon, known as homonationalism, highlights how state institutions, political movements, and corporate entities increasingly appropriate LGBTQ+ rights to project an image of modernity and progressiveness. Coined by Jasbir Puar in her seminal work, *Territorist Assemblages* (2007), homonationalism reveals how LGBTQ+ inclusion can be aligned with xenophobic, racist, and imperialist agendas. Organizations and individuals are working to claim the Hindutva regime, including the Queer Hindu Alliance and Tran's rights activist Laxmi Narayan Tripathi (Bhattacharya, 2019; Banerjea, 2022). Over the past forty years, LGBTQ politics have become central to discussions in Europe and North America, with significant legislative advancements in areas such as equal citizenship and rights. The current issue is the supposedly effective pushback of populist nationalists against the liberal order that has been in place in North America and Europe. Consequently, a growing number of LGBTQ people in North America and Europe are openly endorsing populist-nationalist political organizations. Additionally, using the perspectives of Queer IR and Homonationalism, this study aims to investigate if Puar's (2007b) ideas need to be further theorized in light of what Campani & Lazaridis (2017).

## **Background of the Study:**

The discussion of sexuality—particularly its complex and adaptable nature—has led to increased divisions within contemporary conservative parties (Spierings, 2020, pp. 48–49). A nativist narrative

often highlights the cultural threat posed by the typically Muslim "immigrant other" while selectively incorporating pro-LGBTQ+ discourse (Spierings, Lubbers, and Zaslove, 2017, pp. 216–237). This intersection of LGBTQ+ and nativist objectives is referred to as "homonationalism" by Puar (2018), as it reflects the biopolitical encapsulation of gay individuals within the imperial goals of Western nation-states, where these individuals are seen as "homonormative." According to Social Identity Theory (SIT), the focus of the (digital) right on the negative aspects associated with LGBTQ+ communities could undermine the positive identity of LGBTQ+ individuals within this context.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

- To explore how homonationalism is expressed and manifests itself.
- To analyze the impact on LGBTQ+ communities.

### **Discussion:**

#### **Objective 1: To explore how homonationalism is expressed and manifests itself**

Homonationalism, a term coined by Jasbir Puar, refers to the ways in which LGBTQ+ rights are co-opted by nationalist ideologies to reinforce exclusionary politics, often marginalizing racial, religious, and immigrant communities. It manifests in various socio-political contexts where nations use LGBTQ+ inclusivity as a marker of progress and modernity while simultaneously justifying xenophobia, Islamophobia, and restrictive immigration policies. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Western liberal democracies, where governments and political actors champion same-sex marriage, anti-discrimination laws, and Pride celebrations while simultaneously implementing policies that discriminate against racialized and immigrant populations. By presenting LGBTQ+ rights as a Western ideal, these nations create a binary opposition, positioning non-Western cultures—particularly those in the Global South—as inherently homophobic or regressive. This narrative reinforces cultural superiority and fuels neocolonial discourse under the guise of human rights advocacy.

Homonationalism is also evident in military and foreign policy decisions. Some countries use LGBTQ+ rights as a justification for interventionist policies, portraying themselves as liberators of oppressed queer individuals in "backward" nations. For example, in the post-9/11 era, narratives surrounding LGBTQ+ oppression in the Middle East were weaponized to legitimize military interventions while ignoring the historical role of Western powers in destabilizing these regions. Similarly, refugee and asylum policies often selectively welcome LGBTQ+ individuals from repressive regimes while maintaining broader anti-immigrant policies, reinforcing the idea that only those who conform to Western norms of queerness are deserving of protection.

Domestically, homonationalism is reflected in the way LGBTQ+ identities are incorporated into mainstream politics and consumer culture. Corporate sponsorship of Pride events, for instance, showcases a sanitized and market-friendly version of LGBTQ+ existence that aligns with nationalist and capitalist interests. Meanwhile, queer individuals who exist outside of this acceptable framework—particularly those who are non-white, disabled, or gender non-conforming—often remain excluded from policy considerations and societal acceptance. The selective inclusion of LGBTQ+ rights within nationalist discourse ultimately upholds systemic inequalities rather than dismantling them.

In essence, homonationalism reveals the paradox within modern LGBTQ+ advocacy, where progress is celebrated in ways that sustain other forms of oppression. Understanding its manifestations helps to critically analyze how queer liberation can be genuinely pursued without reinforcing nationalist exclusions and marginalizing already vulnerable communities. True inclusivity requires recognizing and challenging the ways LGBTQ+ rights are instrumentalized for political gain, ensuring that queer liberation is not used to justify oppression in other forms.

**Objective 2: To analyze the impact on LGBTQ+ communities.**

Homonationalism has profound and often contradictory effects on LGBTQ+ communities, shaping their experiences, rights, and social acceptance in complex ways. While it has contributed to increased

visibility and legal protections for some LGBTQ+ individuals, it simultaneously reinforces systemic inequalities by privileging certain identities over others. This selective inclusion creates divisions within the LGBTQ+ community, benefiting those who conform to state-approved narratives of queerness while marginalizing those who do not.

One of the key impacts of homonationalism is the **reinforcement of racial and class hierarchies within LGBTQ+ movements**. In many Western nations, queer individuals who align with dominant cultural and political norms—typically white, cisgender, middle-class, and assimilated into mainstream society—are more likely to benefit from legal protections such as marriage equality and workplace discrimination laws. However, LGBTQ+ people of color, immigrants, and those from non-Western backgrounds often face additional barriers, including racism, xenophobia, and economic instability. These disparities highlight how homonationalism prioritizes a sanitized, depoliticized version of LGBTQ+ identity that serves national interests while neglecting the struggles of the most vulnerable members of the community.

Another significant impact is the **exploitation of LGBTQ+ rights for nationalist agendas**, which can distort the true objectives of queer liberation. Governments that adopt homonationalist policies often use LGBTQ+ rights to bolster their image of progressiveness while simultaneously enacting xenophobic, Islamophobic, or anti-immigrant policies. This dynamic can create tensions within LGBTQ+ communities, particularly among those with intersectional identities who find themselves caught between state-sanctioned queer acceptance and broader systemic oppression. For instance, LGBTQ+ asylum seekers often face discriminatory policies that question the legitimacy of their identities, reinforcing the notion that queerness must align with Western cultural expressions to be considered valid.

Additionally, homonationalism affects **LGBTQ+ activism and advocacy**, shifting its focus towards assimilation rather than radical transformation. Corporate sponsorship of Pride events and the commercialization of LGBTQ+ identities often depoliticize queer struggles, reducing them to consumer-friendly narratives that align with capitalist interests. This limits the ability of grassroots movements

to challenge deeper structural inequalities, such as poverty, police brutality, and healthcare disparities that disproportionately affect marginalized LGBTQ+ individuals.

Ultimately, homonationalism creates a fragmented LGBTQ+ landscape where some gain acceptance at the expense of others. To achieve true queer liberation, it is essential to challenge the exclusionary aspects of homonationalism and advocate for a more inclusive and intersectional approach that uplifts all members of the LGBTQ+ community, regardless of race, class, or nationality.

### **Conclusion:**

This study demonstrates the widespread impact of homonationalism on LGBTQ+ politics, lobbying, and activism—areas in which we excel. It illustrates how nationalist agendas that selectively include LGBTQ+ rights serve to devalue intersectional identities, uphold social hierarchies, and strengthen exclusionary ideologies. By favoring white cisgender and middle-class gay people above oppressed groups including queer immigrants, trans people, and people of color, homonationalism moves the focus of queer activism from radical freedom to state-sanctioned inclusion. Moreover, states' and companies' pinkwashing efforts weaken the political significance of LGBTQ+ rights, turning them into instruments for image improvement rather than real social change. The ability of LGBTQ+ activism to confront border concerns of systemic oppression, such as racism, xenophobia, and economic inequality, is compromised by its depoliticization. This research highlights the significance of intersectional and inclusive methods to action to counteract the consequences of homonationalism. LGBTQ+ groups need to fight against exclusionary narratives, oppose nationalist collaboration, and promote social justice that benefits everyone in the community. Queer activism can only make a meaningful contribution to the destruction of oppressive structures and the development of a more just and inclusive society by recovering its radical origins and promoting global solidarity.

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## **BREAKING BARRIERS: BRAHMO SAMAJ'S VISIONARY ROLE IN NINETEENTH CENTURY WOMEN'S EDUCATION**

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### **Abstract:**

Following the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the establishment of British rule in India led to profound changes in Bengal's social structure. As the 18<sup>th</sup> century progressed Calcutta emerged as a hub for the elite. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century this elite class had consolidated its dominance across various sectors of society. The social standing of women in pre-British India was vastly different. The British were convinced that the expansion of Western education would usher in societal transformations that would also foster women's development. The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a significant push for women's education, driven largely by social reformers educated in Western ideals. Among these reformers, the Brahmo Samaj played a vital role in championing women's education and empowerment. This chapter explores the Brahmo Samaj's influential contributions to the advancement of women's education and the women's liberation movement during this period.

**Keywords:** *Brahmo Women, Education, Empowerment, Brahmo Samaj*

### **Introduction:**

**R**aja Ram Mohan Roy was a pioneering advocate for women's social development in India. He boldly challenged the patriarchal norms of Hindu society, recognizing that women's empowerment was crucial for societal progress. Following in Raja

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Ram Mohan Roy's footsteps, the Young Bengal group also endeavored to promote women's education and empowerment through publications like *Enquirer* and *Acquisition of General Knowledge (GK)*. The radical thinkers among them posed provocative questions, challenging societal norms: "If God created both men and women, why should men dominate women?" The primary prerequisite for societal progress is the advancement of women's status, a reality acknowledged by social reformers. Robert May of the London Missionary Society pioneered girls' education in Bengal by establishing a school in Chinsurah in 1818.

In the 1830s, liberal-minded Hindus initiated clandestine educational initiatives for women. Notable examples include Surasundari, daughter of P.K. Thakur, and Harasundari, daughter of Shibchandra, who received private tutoring at home. However, such endeavors were largely confined to Brahma and Christian communities. The Brahma women esteemed as respectable ladies in society, surpassed their contemporaries in various aspects, including education, etiquette, and cultural refinement. While women's education was gaining momentum in the 1860s and 1870s, its quality remained subpar. In contrast Brahma women received superior education, distinguishing themselves as pioneers in women's empowerment.

### **Brahmo Women: Setting a New Standard:**

In the nineteenth century, women's lives were confined within the four walls of their homes. They were bound by traditional norms and customs, which held significant importance in matters like marriage, property ownership, and inheritance. However, Brahma women's lives were not restricted to the domestic sphere. They were the first to recognize the educational benefits of travel. Through traveling to various places, Bengali women became aware of nationalism. Brahma women pioneered innovative changes in clothing and ornamentation (Borthwick, 1984). In 1865 the Brahma youth group *Sangat Sabha* convened to discuss and redefine women's attire. They advocated for simplicity and discouraged excessive spending on jewelry, suggesting instead that resources be allocated to more meaningful pursuits. Notably, Brahma women broke convention by wearing shoes, a practice conservative women had previously avoided. Women of the *Bharatiya Brahma Samaj* and *Adi Brahma Samaj* broke away from

tradition by adopting surnames instead of the conventional "Devi" or "Dasi" suffixes. They also used titles such as "Kumari" (Miss) and "Sreemati" (Mrs.), signifying a shift towards modernity and equality. By taking these bold steps, Brahmo women played a pivotal role in challenging and transforming traditional social norms (Chakraborty, 1963).

### **Brahmo Woman's Outlook on Marriage:**

Traditionally, the primary objective of marriage was to produce a male heir. However, in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Western-educated Brahmos challenged this conventional view. This shift in perspective also influenced women's perceptions of marriage. As a result, greater emphasis was placed on mutual understanding, love, and compatibility between spouses. The practice of marrying off daughters at a young age was also discouraged. (Borthwick, 1984) For instance, Brahmo leader Chandicharan delayed his daughter Kamini's marriage until she was 30 years old. She eventually married Kedarnath Roy in 1894. This trend of delayed marriage was not uncommon among Brahmo women, who often prioritized education and personal growth over early marriage. Inspired by British lifestyle, the Brahmo community developed the concept of a harmonious and happy family. Keshab Chandra Sen, in particular, was impressed by the British family structure in 1870. This exposure influenced the marital choices of Brahmo women, with many girls in the 1850s and 1860s selecting their own husbands within the Brahmo community, prioritizing compatibility and mutual respect (Murshid, 1983).

### **Brahmo Men's Role in Promoting Women's Education:**

The primary factor behind the success of women's education within the antahpur (inner quarters) during the 1850s and 1860s was the efforts of young Brahmo men and Hindus influenced by Brahmo ideals (Chakraborty, 1963). Women such as Kumudini, Nistarini Devi, Brahamamoyee, Manorama Majumdar, and Jnanada Devi received education thanks to the initiatives of their Brahmo husbands (Murshid, 1983). Swarnakumari Devi was educated due to the efforts of her Brahmo father, Debendranath Tagore. In 1877, Satyendranath Tagore sent his wife, Jnanada Devi, to England for higher education. During her time abroad, she became proficient in English and acquired some

knowledge of French (Chowdhurani, 1957). Satyendranath Tagore played a pivotal role in the women's emancipation movement in British India. He was the first Indian to join the Indian Civil Service. After returning from England in 1864, he was appointed Assistant Magistrate and Collector in Ahmedabad, Bombay, and broke convention by taking his wife with him to his posting. This was a groundbreaking move, as most men of that era did not take their wives with them to their places of work. Satyendranath's social standing enabled him to take this step, which was not feasible for many other men (Murshid, 1983).

### **Bethune School: A Catalyst for Women's Education:**

The Bethune School founded in May 1849, played a pivotal role in promoting women's education particularly among upper-class Hindu women. Initially the school began with 11 students but soon dwindled to 7 due to societal pressures. The presence of male teachers made it challenging to maintain the purdah system, leading to parental reluctance in sending their daughters to school (Murshid, 1983). Although the Bethune School was not widely successful, it pioneered the initiative of gentlemen sending their daughters to school. Later the Victorian College adopted a more flexible approach to women's education but failed to achieve widespread success. In contrast the Mahakali Pathshala established in 1863, successfully struck a balance between education and social conservatism (Borthwick, 1984).

### **Role of Keshab Chandra Sen:**

Keshab Chandra Sen was a Bengali social reformer, religious leader, and writer. In the 1850s, a segment of the Bengali elite recognized the necessity of women's education. The 1860s saw the emergence of the women's emancipation movement, particularly among young Brahmo leaders, Christian families, and Hindu families influenced by Brahmo ideals (Kopf, 1979). Keshab Chandra Sen was a prominent figure among the Brahmos. In 1862, Sen founded the Brahma Bandho Sabha to promote women's education. The following year, Umesh Chandra Dutta a young Brahmo leader, established the Bamabodhini Sabha, which published a journal providing a platform for Bengali women to share their writings. Between 1909 and 1922 women collaborated with men in editing the journal. The Bamabodhini Sabha soon aligned with Keshab Chandra Sen's initiatives, and in 1865, he founded the

Brahamika Samaj to provide religious instruction to women. On April 14, 1871, Keshab Chandra Sen, aided by Miss Pigot, established the Bamahitaisini Sabha. The society hosted weekly meetings where women discussed various topics in the presence of men (Chakraborty, 1963). However, debates arose regarding Western-style education for women. The Bamahitaisini Sabha eventually led to the formation of the Nari Hitaisini Sabha, a separate organization that became the women's wing of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, due to male dominance (Borthwick, 1984).

### **Women's Educational Framework:**

At this time there was a debate about whether women should receive the same education as men. In the 1860s, it was argued that women should focus on domestic skills such as household chores, cooking, sewing, and childcare. Umesh Chandra Dutta and Keshab Chandra Sen advocated for women's education tailored to their needs. However between 1872 and 1873 the Indian Brahma Samaj split into two factions. Keshab Chandra Sen and his followers believed that women did not need to study subjects like geometry and philosophy. On the other hand liberal members of the Brahma Samaj, such as Shivanath Shastri, Durga Mohan Das, Dwarakanath Ganguly, Ananda Charan Khastagir, and Sashipada Banerjee, argued that women should have access to all branches of human knowledge (Chakraborty, 1963).

After the establishment of the Hindu Female School under Annette Akroyd's supervision, a debate ensued regarding higher education and women's participation in university examinations. Kadambini Basu, a student of Akroyd's school was permitted to take the university examination publicly. In 1873 the Hindu Female School founded by Akroyd, established the first residential school for girls. Dwarakanath Ganguly revitalized the school in 1876. On February 23, 1874 the Syndicate of the University of Calcutta, and on April 27 the Senate approved the rules for female candidates (Karlekar, 1991).

### **Role and Contributions of Arya Nari Samaj and Banga Mahila Samaj:**

In 1878 the Brahma Samaj underwent another split, leading to the formation of the Naba Bidhan Brahma Samaj and the Sadharan

Brahmo Samaj (Sastri, 1912). Keshab Chandra Sen, founder of the Naba Bidhan Brahmo Samaj established the Arya Nari Samaj. Its objective was to educate women about their ancient heritage, while opposing foreign customs but supporting beneficial foreign influences (Borthwick, 1984). On August 1, 1879, Monmohan Ghosh, Durga Mohan Das, Dwarakanath Ganguly and other liberal young leaders of the General Brahmo Samaj founded the Banga Mahila Samaj. Notable members included Radharani Lahiri, Swarnaprabha Basu, Kadambini Basu, Kamini Sen, and Saraswati Sen. The organization's monthly journal, "Bamabodhini Patrika", was edited by Kamini Roy in 1881. The Banga Mahila Samaj aimed to provide women with higher education, promote gender interaction, enhance living standards, and engage women in various occupations. It also offered employment opportunities for unmarried women and widows, publishing books like "Saral Niti Path" for children's moral education (Borthwick, 1984). The Arya Mahila Samaj and Banga Mahila Samaj were rival organizations, as the former opposed Western-style liberation.

### **Initiative of Brahmo Women in Forming Women's Organizations:**

Brahmo women played a significant role in establishing women's organizations in India during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1882 Swarnakumari Devi, the daughter of Debendranath Tagore, founded the women's branch of the Theosophical Society in Calcutta. Due to a lack of female members it closed down in 1886, prompting her to establish the Sakhi Samiti in 1886. The primary objective of this institution was to educate widows and unmarried women, making them financially self-sufficient. The Sakhi Samiti organized exhibitions of handicrafts made by women. According to Sarala Devi the Sakhi Samiti also provided legal assistance to rape victims. Although the institution did not publish its own magazine, Swarnakumari Devi's edited magazine 'Bharati' was significant (Chakraborty, 1963).

In 1884 Brahmo women established a Sunday school for Brahmo children, where they organized textbooks, examinations, and awards. In 1896 they launched a children's magazine called 'Mukul' (Borthwick, 1984). Kadambini Lahiri, a Brahmo widow, founded the 'Bharat Mahila Samiti' in 1895, as mentioned in Shivanath Shastri's 'History of the Brahmo Samaj' (Sastri, 1912). Brahmo women actively participated in various voluntary organizations, acquiring formal skills

and opportunities to engage in public issues. The Brahma women evolved into social women in the 1870s (Murshid, 1983).

### **Empowering Women through Enhanced Political Awareness:**

The women in the inner quarters (zenana) also became politically conscious. The colonial rule's impact which led to racial discrimination against men, extended to the women in the inner quarters, providing them with valuable experience. Previously politics was considered unsuitable for women. However during the Ilbert Bill controversy women engaged with political issues for the first time. Many women including aristocratic ladies urged Ripon to pass the bill. Under Kamini Roy's leadership Bethune School students united, raising awareness among nationalist politicians about women's participation in politics. Hindu nationalists transformed women into symbols of nationalism, facilitating its growth (Borthwick, 1984). Saraladevi Chowdhurani's involvement in politics was significant, as she recognized the need for revolutionary nationalism to liberate the country (Chowdhurani, 1957).

Following the Indian National Congress's establishment in 1885, many women engaged in political activities. In 1889 Swarnakumari Devi and Kadambini Ganguly attended the Congress's Bombay session. The 1890 Calcutta session saw active women's participation with Kadambini Ganguly delivering a speech. In 1901, Saraladevi Chowdhurani's song was performed at the Congress session. Women continued to participate actively in later Gandhian movements (Chakraborty, 1963).

### **Conclusion:**

The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a significant transformation in the social landscape of India, with women playing an increasingly active role in various social movements. The Brahma Samaj played a pivotal role in the women's liberation movement during this era. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a pioneering figure of the Brahma Samaj, spearheaded this movement. His advocacy for women's education and property rights helped create a ripple effect, inspiring future generations of social reformers. Brahma women were at the forefront of various social initiatives, paving the way for women from the inner quarters (zenana) to engage in broader social activities. The Brahma Samaj was

instrumental in transforming the dynamics of relationships within the zenana. By promoting education and social interaction, the Brahma Samaj helped break down the barriers that had traditionally confined women to the domestic sphere. Brahma women broke free from the constraints of the purdah system, setting a precedent for other women to venture into the outside world. They achieved remarkable success in various professions, including teaching, medicine, and politics – a domain previously dominated by men. The support of Brahma men was crucial to the endeavors of Brahma women. Many Brahma women received education thanks to the efforts of their husbands or fathers. In conclusion, the Brahma Samaj and Brahma women played a pivotal role in the 19<sup>th</sup> century women's awakening movement in India. Their advocacy for women's education, property rights, and social reform helped create a lasting impact on Indian society, paving the way for future generations of women to pursue their goals and aspirations.

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## EDUCATION: A TOOL FOR ERADICATING CHILD LABOUR

Sourav Kumar Roy <sup>1</sup>, Debjani Guha <sup>2</sup>

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### Abstract:

The proper development of children is the most important priority of any country as the most important asset of any country is its children. In the industries of developing countries like India, millions of children are engaged in brick-making, carpet weaving, garment production, agriculture, mining, fishing and so on. Many children are bonded labourers or sexually exploited to forego education, safety and childhood. This research intends to investigate the prevalence and type of child labour, socio-economic factors leading to its continuation and impediments to education in vulnerable communities. Some of the causes of child labour such as the curse of poverty, no access to education, social backwardness, disease or disability, insufficient family income, large families, poverty, illiteracy etc. Child Labour Hazards manifest as general child injuries and abuses. This category includes cuts, burns, and lacerations, fractures, tiredness and dizziness, excessive fears and nightmares, drugs and alcoholism, physical abuse, emotional neglect, etc., which are ultimately results of the described phenomenon. The findings indicate the role of poverty, unemployment, lack of awareness, traditional beliefs, and gender discrimination in the perpetuation of children's labour. Economic hardship prompts families to rely on children's income, while infrastructural and geographical barriers hinder access to education. The alternative would include vocational training and skill-building programmes, which give children

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skills to be employed elsewhere, reducing dependence on hazardous work and building future opportunities. Awareness programmes and community-based activities prove key to promoting education as anti-child labour. Government policies, NGO interventions, and collaboration among stakeholders are crucial in implementing sustainable solutions. The study emphasizes the need for a multi-faceted approach that combines economic support, education, and social reform to break the cycle of child labour and secure a dignified future for children.

**Keywords:** *Child Labour, Vocational Training, Skill-Building Programmes, Community-Based Awareness Programmes*

### **Introduction:**

The primary duty of the state and society is to educate the youngsters as they grow up and carry out the process of creating a new civilization. Since our children represent the future of our nation, it is quite regrettable that so many of them are working on other projects during school hours rather than attending classes. The Government of India implemented the RTE Act 2009 to encourage children to attend school and adopted Article 21A (86th Amendment) in 2002 to overhaul the education system. Children between the ages of 6 and 14 are entitled to free and compulsory education under the RTE Act. In spite of this, a large number of youngsters in the community are not receiving any education. In a landmark triumph following 60 years of independence, the Right to Education (Free and Compulsory Education Act) went into effect on April 1, 2010, offering free education to pupils aged 6 to 14 up to class 8. The ILO has a caretaker role in the United Nations General Assembly's (UNGA) declaration of 2021 as the "International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor." Every state is obligated by the resolution to end child labour in all its forms by 2025. The worst types of child labour include human trafficking, forced labour, and contemporary slavery to determine what prompt and practical steps should be taken to ensure its ban and elimination. Additionally, it acknowledged "the global partnership for the implementation of the goals and targets relating to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the elimination of child labour."

**Significance of the Study:**

This study aims to provide a holistic understanding of child labour, its causes & consequences and policies and legislations adopted in India around 10 million children are at risk. The study also emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to address the socio-economic factors directly responsible for perpetuating the cycle of child labour including poverty, illiteracy and lack of resources. It highlights the physical, emotional and psychological damage caused to child labourers and underscored the need for protective policies. It also assesses the role of government action, NGOs and national law in combating the problem. Yet even with legal frameworks, such as the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, the persistence of child labour reflects failure in enforcement and political will. This study is important for policymakers, educators, and social reformers to create ways to eradicate child labour and guarantee children the right to an education and a safe childhood.

**Objectives of the Study:**

The objectives of the study are –

- To analyze the nature of child labour across various industries in India.
- To analyze the socio-economic factors contributing to child labour.
- To identify barriers to education that contribute to the persistence of child labour in vulnerable communities.
- To evaluate the role of vocational training and skill-building programmes in supporting children who are at risk or already involved in child labour.
- To explore the role of community-based initiatives and awareness programmes in promoting education.

**Research Methodology:**

The researchers employed a qualitative research method in this study. For their study, the researchers gathered data from relevant govt. documents, authentic books and prevailing NCLP (National Child Labour Project) schools of the country.

## Findings & Discussion:

The following discussions have been made in accordance with the objectives of the study-

### **Objective 1: To analyze the nature of child labour across various industries in India**

There is an urgent need to listen to the voices of these vulnerable children as the first step in the fight against child labour. Children of our nation are engaged in bonded labour, brick industry, carpet weaving industry, garments industry, sexual exploitation and pornography etc.

- **Bonded Labour:** Bonded labour, in which children are made to work as a way to pay back debts, is one of the most pernicious types of child labour. Whole families are frequently caught in this system and unable to break free from the cycle of exploitation.
- **Brick Industry:** Children work for long hours under difficult conditions in the brick business in various areas of the world. They suffer from physical strain, are exposed to dangerous toxins, and are not allowed to receive an education.
- **Carpet Weaving Industry:** As carpet weaving is so complicated, it increases the likelihood of physical illnesses and prevents these kids from receiving an education and a better future.
- **Garment Industry:** Child labour is also a major component of the worldwide clothing industry. From picking cotton to sewing clothing, children work at several levels of the production process.
- **Agriculture, Mining, and Fishing:** Children are frequently employed in agricultural, mining, and fishing in rural areas. They are subjected to physical dangers in these dangerous industries, including handling hazardous machinery, poisonous chemicals, and inclement weather.
- **Sexual Exploitation and Pornography:** Child pornography and other forms of sexual exploitations are serious issues. Children are deprived of their innocence, thrust into this unthinkable world, and exposed to horrible tragedies.

- **Interplay with Education:** Education is significantly hampered by child labour. Lack of education restricts their opportunities and feeds the cycle of poverty for decades to come. A concentrated effort to give education top priority and provide these children with chances is needed to break down this barrier.

**Objective 2: To analyze the socio-economic factors contributing to child labour**

- **Poverty:** Because of poverty, parents are unable to pay for their children's education and force them to start working at the young age.
- **Social and Economic Backwardness:** The primary cause of child labour in India is also social and economic backwardness. Parents frequently lack awareness of numerous information and child education programmes due to illiteracy. Child labour has been fostered by their lack of education, illiteracy, and, as a result, their ignorance of their rights.
- **Family Tradition:** At the voluntary level, the issue of child labour in India is exacerbated by cultural and traditional family norms. Many families feel that they are not destined for a happy life and that their main source of income and subsistence is the ancient custom of working.
- **Discrimination between Boys and Girls:** We have been socialized to think that girls are less strong than boys and that they cannot be compared on an equal basis. Girls are denied an education because they are perceived as weaker than boys. It is common for daughters to work alongside their parents in labourer households.
- **Large Family Size:** A large family with little money cannot live a happy existence. Better education, entertainment, health care, and chances to develop a good family environment are thus unavailable to family members.

**Objective 3: To identify barriers to education that contribute to the persistence of child labour in vulnerable communities**

- **Economic Barriers:** Such families in these communities are likely under significant economic pressure themselves and may depend upon the income generated by the labour of their

children to afford necessities such as food, housing, and healthcare. When education is regarded as a cost and not an investment, it is more likely that children will be sent to work than school.

- **Geographical and Infrastructure Barriers:** In remote regions, children typically have important geographic barriers to education. This leads to inability of children, especially in remote regions, to access schooling because the time and energy to reach an educational institution is impractical.
- **Cultural and Social Norms:** In certain cultures, there is a long-standing belief that children work for the family income as opposed to going to school. Higher rates of child labour among females are a result of gender norms that promote early marriage or employment and place less importance on schooling.
- **Child Labour as a Coping Strategy:** When parents are unable to obtain formal job, children may be sent to work to augment the family income or because the family cannot afford to pay adult labour.
- **Lack of Awareness about Importance of Education:** Parents and other caregivers may not completely get how education may lead to greater employment prospects, better health, and higher living standards if they themselves have had limited access to education. In these situations, children are frequently viewed as extra labourers rather than as potential future members of society who would benefit from their education.

**Objective 4: To evaluate the role of vocational training and skill-building programmes in supporting children who are at risk or already involved in child labour**

- **Understanding Vocational Training and Skill-Building Programmes:** These programmes give kids specialized education with an emphasis on giving them real-world, hands-on skills that they can employ right away in the workplace. Trades like carpentry, tailoring, welding, and electrical work are examples of these abilities, as are more contemporary abilities like computer programming, graphic design, and culinary arts.
- **Vocational Training as an Alternative to Child Labour:** Offering skill-building programmes gives kids the means to go

from low-wage, risky labour to respectable, secure, and well-paying occupations. By lowering children's reliance on risky and exploitative child labour, vocational training can enhance their long-term prospects, safety, and social status.

- **Economic Empowerment through Skill Development:** Giving kids useful skills increases the likelihood that they will be able to take advantage of better employment prospects that will benefit their family financially. The cycle of generational poverty that frequently fuels child labour can be broken when these kids stop working as children and assist in bringing their family out of poverty.
- **Building Long-Term Career Opportunities:** Vocational training helps children in the short term by giving them alternate sources of money, but it also helps them in the long run by giving them the chance to have a successful career. Through these programmes, children can acquire skills that can help them develop in their careers and eventually raise their earning potential.
- **Government and NGO Involvement:** Particularly in areas where child labour is most common, governments must provide a supportive policy climate that encourages the launch and expansion of vocational training programmes. To guarantee that these initiatives reach the most disadvantaged communities, NGOs and international organizations can be crucial in providing funds, carrying out, and overseeing them.

#### **Objective 5: To explore the role of community-based initiatives and awareness programmes in promoting education**

- **Community Ownership and Local Engagement:** Community-based projects might collaborate with nearby schools to plan educational activities or provide financial aid to encourage parents to bring their kids to school. These initiatives, which lessen the financial strain on families, can involve offering school supplies, uniforms, or scholarships. Sometimes local companies or non-governmental organizations collaborate with communities to provide adult employment possibilities, which lessen the need for children to work.
- **Building Supportive Networks for Families:** These programmes frequently include social support networks that help

families get over the financial and practical obstacles that keep kids from going to school. Initiatives might, for example, provide parents chances to earn money through microfinance programmes or training for small company growth. These initiatives make it more viable for families to send their children to school by increasing household economic stability, which lessens the pressure on kids to work.

- **Creating Safe and Supportive Learning Environments:** By promoting safer schools, improved teacher preparation, and more inclusive teaching methods, community-based initiatives may significantly contribute to raising the standard of education. These initiatives make sure that kids who may not otherwise be able to attend school because of financial difficulties, disabilities, or other obstacles get the chance to study in a nurturing setting.
- **Leveraging Partnerships between Stakeholders:** Collaboration between different stakeholders, such as governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, foreign organizations, and local enterprises, is frequently essential to the success of community-based programmes. These stakeholders may increase the effectiveness of awareness campaigns and community initiatives by cooperating, exchanging information, and coordinating their activities. In order to make sure that no one is left behind, partnerships may also provide a network of support for educators, families, and children.
- **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feedback:** To make sure that programmes are adjusting to local requirements and problems, feedback mechanisms should also be in place. Programme shortcomings can be found and adjustments can be suggested with the use of monitoring and evaluation. Stakeholders may guarantee that awareness campaigns and interventions continue to be pertinent and successful over time by regularly evaluating their effects.

### **Conclusion:**

It can be said that, poverty, social backwardness, gender discrimination, and ignorance are the primary causes of child labour, which are still serious problems in many different industries. Due to financial difficulties, families are forced to depend on their children's



income, which denies them an education and exposes them to dangerous working circumstances. Access to education is further restricted by geographic and cultural obstacles, which feeds the cycle of exploitation. However, by giving kids useful skills and lowering their reliance on exploitative labour, vocational training and skill-building programmes provide a hopeful alternative. A comprehensive strategy that prioritizes education, economic empowerment, and social change is necessary to end child labour and ensure a safe and respectable future for children. Community-based initiatives and awareness programmes are also important in promoting education as a solution to child labour. Governments, NGOs, and stakeholders must work together effectively to enforce policies, improve educational accessibility, and provide financial support to vulnerable families.

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# **PERSPECTIVE ON INCLUSION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES: POLICIES AND CHALLENGES FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

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## **Abstract:**

The constitution has specific provisions pertaining to education's efficacy, equity, efficiency, and accessibility as well as protections for people of different sexes, castes, races, disabilities, and religions. Disabled children in inclusive communities with a broad population of people of various ethnicities, religions, goals, and impairments are the foundation of the inclusion movement. Inclusion encompasses a variety of practices that are ultimately components of social inclusion. Leadership responsibilities, curricular elements, teaching standards and approaches of present age will need to whole system. This is due to the fact that inclusive education emphasizes the involvement of all children and removal all forms of barriers. There are important distinctions between actuality, policies, execution, and planning. There are a number of obstacles to putting inclusion into practice, both in terms of infrastructure and resources. Basically, educators, the government and society at large are now very concerned about the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstreaming educational settings. But it takes a lot of preparation, resources, execution, and constructive work to accomplish this aim in a third-world nation like India. This paper aims to highlight the real situation, including the policies, challenges and

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opportunities of implementing 100% inclusion in mainstream education as well as fully social participation of the disabled children.

**Keywords:** *Inclusion, Equality, CWDs, Challenges, Policies, Empowerment*

### **Introduction:**

Inclusion brings education and society together to empower everyone. Social barriers are kind of social curse. Through education it is possible to overcome all the barriers of the society and bring equality. Equality will be made possible by introducing inclusive education in the society. Through inclusive education, the exclusions of the society will be excluded and the concept of inclusion will be formed. According to Luhmann (1990), the concept of inclusion means encompassing of the entire population in the performance of the individual function system. On the one hand, these concern access to these benefits and on the other, dependence of individual modes of living on them. To the extent that inclusion is achieved, group disappear. On the other hand, UNESCO-2000 defined, “Inclusive education is concerned with removing all barriers to learning and with the participation of all learners vulnerable to exclusion and marginalization. It is a strategies approach designed to facilitate learning success for all children. It addresses the common goals of decreasing and overcoming all exclusion from the human right to education, at least at the elementary level and enhancing access, participation and learning success in quality basic education for all”. From segregation to inclusion, the inclusive education system in India goes through several hurdles. To look at the disability as a special ability, it's required a change in the mindset. Finally, the government of India came up with such a policy which include the minute details (Juni khyat, 2020). The government of India act also emphasized non-discrimination and barriers free education access for all participation.

CWDS also stand children with disabilities. This term typically refers to children who have physical, mental or developmental conditions that may require special care, support and accommodations. UNICEF's report on the status of disabilities in India 2000 states that there are around 30 million Children in India suffering from Some form of disabilities. The six all India educational survey (NCERT,1998) reports

that out of India's 200million school age Children 6 -14 years, 20 million require special needs education. While the National over age for gross enrollment in school is over 90 percent, less than five percent of children with disabilities are in schools. According to the EFA global monitoring report 2010: reaching the marginalized, children with disabilities remain one of the main groups being widely excluded from quality education.(Singh & Agarwal, 2015). Inclusion of children with disabilities is not just about meeting legal requirements but about creating a society where all children regardless of their abilities, values, supports and given the tools they need to succeed. As such, policies must continue to evolve to ensure that schools have the resources, training and support systems they need. Additionally, fostering an inclusive culture within educational institutions, involving families, communities and policymakers in the process and raising public awareness about disabilities can help break down barriers to inclusion.

### **Policies of Inclusion for Children With Disabilities:**

“Inclusive education is a child's right, not a privilege” - UNESCO2021. Inclusion of CWDs in the Indian context can be divided into two major periods of pre-independence and post-independence.

#### **(a) Pre - independence Period:**

In the pre- independence period, legal provisions for CWDs were very limited. There was no comprehensive national legal framework regarding their education and rights. Originally, the gurukul system of Education was prevalent. Charity based special schools were the focus rather than rights-based approach to education. The effort that were made were largely due to charitable organization, Social reformers and missionaries. During the early British era, founded the first school for blind children in Calcutta in 1820.The idea of welfare for people with disabilities gained transaction throughout the world in the years following world war II. The Constituent assembly of India established in 1946, later legislative acts that would incorporate disability provision were made possible by this.

#### **(b) Post- Independence Period:**

After independence the Indian government took some positive steps for the people disabilities. They are:

- **Constitution of India:**

Article 15 (1) ensure that quality and non- discrimination for all citizens in India.

Article 21 states the right to life and personal liberty.

Article 45 of the Indian constitution guarantees free and compulsory education for children up to the age of 14. It is part of the directive principles of state policy.

- **Indian Education Commission or Kothari Commission (1964-66):** recommended should be provided through a system of integrated education for CWDS. It emphasized that special schools and regular school should work together to create a more Inclusive environment.

- **Integrated Education of the Disabled Children (IEDC) 1974:** This program was Introduced in 1974 by the Ministry of welfare, central government. aim Provide educational opportunities to all children with disabilities under the general school system. Provided with financial support for books, school uniform, special equipment aids, transportation.

- **National Policy on Education:**

- 1 **NEP 1968:** Focused on special schools, minimal Integration, removing disparities and equal opportunities.

- 2 **NEP 1986:** Promoted Integration into mainstream schools with support mechanisms, teacher training and resource center.

- 3 **NEP 1992:** Several changes from 1986. emphasized on universal access, enrollment, retention, Community involvement.

- **District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) 1994:** recommended Integrating Children with disabilities into regular schools, promoting the idea of inclusive education.

- **Person With Disabilities (PWD) Act, 1995:** Ensure that create a more Inclusive society and provide equal opportunities,

protection of rights and full participation for Children with disabilities.

- **National Trust Act (1999):** National trust act, 1999 commonly known as the national trust for welfare of persons with autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation and multiple disabilities. Emphasized on quality of life for children with disabilities and their families Provide with early intervention, specialized care, financial support etc.
- **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), 2002:** SSA recommended on free and compulsory education, for all children including with disabilities providing free and compulsory education in primary level and giving support service like resource allocation, teachers, special educators, assistive devices.
- **Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009:** Emphasized on Right to Education for all children age of 6-14 years. Providing special education support, non- discrimination policies, teacher training, accessibility and ensure that more equitable and Inclusive society.
- **Rastriya Madhyamika Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), 2009:** Recommended on Children with disabilities have equal opportunities in secondary education and focus on inclusion, accessibility, teacher training and community involvement, give a more equitable environment.
- **RPWD act, 2016:** The rights of persons with disabilities act is a comprehensive provision to equal opportunities, enhance the quality of life and promote the full Inclusion. Specific recommendations for children with disabilities including such as accessibility, education, employment, health care and social security.
- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** Provide various recommendation to ensure Inclusive education for children with disabilities. This recommendation includes-
  - To arrange regular schooling from primary to higher education.
  - Moderate to severe disabilities Children have attending regular or special schools.
  - Severe disabilities Children will be options for home - schooling

- Ensuring equitable access and opportunities for all students.
- Providing scholarship schemes, financial support, quality education for CWDs.

### **Major Challenges for Implementation of Inclusion for CWDs:**

Inclusive education provides opportunities for all to work together. But still the dream of inclusive education is not succeeding some of the challenges are being faced. They are discussed below-

- **Low students enrollment:** 100% number of Student with disabilities are not possible to enrollment, therefore as a result undermines the concept of education for all.
- **Lack of competence:** Lack of competencies among teachers is a significant issue in inclusive education system around the world.
- **Rigid curriculum:** A rigid Curriculum can be create barrier for their educational success and overall development. The traditional curriculum does not fulfill diverse needs, ability, opportunities and requires skills for student with disabilities.
- **Lack of teacher training and professional development:** proper teacher training and professional development of teacher are better equipped to support Children with disabilities and improved educational outcomes and opportunities for all learners.
- **Lack of positive attitude of parents and teachers:** Teachers and parents' positive attitude can be play important role for students with disabilities. A positive attitude can build up a child self-esteem, confidence, motivation etc.
- **Lack of infrastructure:** Lack of infrastructure is a barrier to Inclusive education because the well management system of all materials is not enough in all places such as inaccessible classrooms, playgrounds, transportation, additional support system etc.
- **Inadequate assistive devices:** providing assistive devices we can help their more independent, full participation and empowerment in overall quality of life through include devices such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, communication boards, adapted toys etc.



- **Lack of community involvement:** Community help success of Inclusive education and giving their opportunities, providing resources, fostering understanding, give benefits.
- **Policy gaps:** The Policy gaps significant barriers to their full Inclusion in society, particularly in education, healthcare, community participation for student with disabilities.

### **Recommendation and Suggestion:**

Some recommendations and suggestions are discussed below for the Implementation of Inclusive education.

- **Social Inclusion:** Social Inclusion play a crucial role for their development, overall well-being, offer equal opportunities and foster friendship as well as bring equality to society and create a more inclusive environment.
- **Positive attitudes:** Positive attitudes(such as teachers, parents, stakeholders, policy makers, politicians) towards disabilities can help people full empowered and more independence.
- **Right to education:** The concept of right to education for all children is a fundamental aspect of ensuring to equality of education. To promote their independence, self-esteem, integration into society.
- **Reformation of curriculum:** Reforming to curriculum essential for providing equitable learning opportunities and provide flexible, adaptive learning environment.
- **Reconstruction for Teacher Education Programme:** Teacher education programme is a crucial component, these will be better prepared to create an inclusive environment and promoting their social, emotional, academic development.
- **Arrangement of proper resources in school:** Proper arrangement resources in school create Inclusive, supportive, learning environment for equal opportunities to succeed in academically and socially.
- **Proper funding:** Proper funding can significantly role play the quality of life for children with disabilities and their families. Government, private, legislative support can ensure the providing necessary resources for a better future.
- **Peer tutoring:** Incorporating Peer tutoring into the classroom can an inclusive environment for every Student.

- **Cooperative learning:** Cooperative learning providing a supportive and beneficial framework for students with disabilities to engage, learn, grow academically and socially and promoting Skills such as communication, team work, problem solving etc.

### **Conclusion:**

Inclusion is a tool that combats discrimination and improves efficiency and effectiveness by engaging all individuals. Children with disabilities barriers to inclusion such as less student's enrollment, lack of sufficient teachers, inadequate infrastructure, lack of assistive devices etc. Government of India has taken many steps for inclusiveness right to minimum education for all children on the basis of caste, religion, language. Present society demands for an inclusive approach for full Inclusion. The success of inclusion of children with disabilities depends on many factors such as community support, high quality teaching materials, appropriate assistive devices, curriculum changes, testing methods, professional and skill teachers, scholarship for students etc. So, in inclusion it can be said that creating an inclusive society for children with disabilities is a very challenging task especially in a country like India for requires mass Community mobilization and involvement. Through inclusion will be make inclusive and equitable society and ensure that independence, self-esteem, equality, positive attitude will develop in all disabled children.

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# INTEGRATING HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS: A TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH

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## Abstract:

Human Rights Education (HRE) is a transformative approach that empowers students with the knowledge, values, and skills to promote justice, equality, and active citizenship. Schools serve as crucial platforms for integrating human rights principles into curricula, pedagogy, and institutional policies, fostering a culture of dignity, empathy, and social responsibility. By embedding HRE across disciplines and adopting interactive, participatory teaching methods, educators can enhance students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. However, the effective implementation of HRE faces several challenges, including political resistance, cultural barriers, and resource constraints. Addressing these obstacles requires teacher training, curriculum reforms, digital learning tools, and global collaborations. The future of HRE in schools lies in policy support, interdisciplinary integration, and technological advancements, ensuring that education remains a powerful force for social transformation. By cultivating human rights awareness and ethical leadership, schools can empower students to become proactive advocates for inclusivity, democracy, and sustainable development. Strengthening HRE will contribute to a more just, equitable, and rights-conscious global society.

**Keywords:** *Human Rights Education, Active Citizenship, Equality, Social Justice, Critical Thinking, Transformative Learning*

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## **Introduction:**

**E**ducation serves as a powerful tool for fostering social transformation, and integrating Human Rights Education (HRE) in schools plays a crucial role in shaping responsible, ethical, and globally conscious citizens. HRE goes beyond imparting knowledge of rights and responsibilities; it cultivates a culture of respect, equality, and justice among students. By embedding human rights principles in school curricula, pedagogy, and institutional policies, education can empower young minds to advocate for inclusivity, social justice, and democratic values. The integration of HRE aligns with international frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4.7), which emphasize the role of education in promoting peace, tolerance, and human dignity. Schools, as microcosms of society, are uniquely positioned to nurture these values by fostering critical thinking, empathy, and active participation in civic life. However, despite its significance, the implementation of HRE in schools faces several challenges, including resistance from traditional education systems, lack of trained educators, and socio-cultural barriers. Addressing these challenges requires a transformative approach that integrates human rights principles into curriculum design, pedagogy, and school policies while engaging stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and communities. This paper explores the importance of Human Rights Education in schools, strategies for its effective integration, the challenges involved, and best practices from global contexts. By embracing HRE, schools can become catalysts for a more just, equitable, and inclusive society.

## **Conceptual Framework of Human Rights Education:**

Human Rights Education (HRE) is a transformative process that fosters awareness, understanding, and commitment to human rights principles. It equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to promote dignity, equality, and social justice. The conceptual framework of HRE is grounded in philosophical, legal, and pedagogical dimensions. Philosophically, HRE draws from liberalism, which emphasizes individual freedoms, critical pedagogy, which sees education as a tool for empowerment, and constructivism, which

encourages learners to actively engage in human rights discourse. These perspectives highlight the importance of education in fostering democratic participation and social transformation. Legally, HRE is supported by international frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966) and Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966), and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011). These documents affirm education as a fundamental right and emphasize the role of education in promoting human rights. Pedagogically, HRE adopts a transformative and participatory approach, encouraging experiential learning, critical thinking, and active engagement. It integrates human rights topics across disciplines and employs interactive teaching methods such as discussions, role-plays, and case studies. The three key dimensions of HRE—knowledge and understanding, values and attitudes, and skills for action—ensure a holistic learning experience. Despite its significance, HRE faces challenges, including political resistance, cultural barriers, and lack of resources. Strengthening HRE requires curriculum integration, teacher training, digital learning tools, and policy development. By embedding human rights principles in education, HRE fosters informed and responsible global citizens committed to social justice and equality.

### **Role of Schools in Promoting Human Rights Education:**

Schools play a vital role in promoting Human Rights Education (HRE) by fostering awareness, critical thinking, and active citizenship among students. As educational institutions, they provide a structured environment where human rights principles such as dignity, equality, freedom, and justice can be taught, practiced, and upheld. One of the primary ways schools contribute to HRE is through curriculum integration. By embedding human rights concepts into subjects like social studies, history, and civics, schools ensure that students understand their rights and responsibilities. Interactive teaching methods, including discussions, debates, role-playing, and case studies, help students engage with real-world human rights issues and develop problem-solving skills. Beyond academics, schools also promote HRE through their institutional culture and policies. A school that upholds inclusive, non-discriminatory, and participatory practices fosters an environment of respect and equality. Policies against bullying,

discrimination, and corporal punishment reinforce human rights values, ensuring that students experience a rights-respecting culture firsthand. Teachers play a crucial role in implementing HRE by acting as role models and facilitators. Professional development programs should equip educators with the necessary skills to teach human rights effectively. Schools can also collaborate with human rights organizations, NGOs, and community groups to provide experiential learning opportunities such as field visits, awareness campaigns, and student-led initiatives. Despite challenges such as political resistance, cultural barriers, and resource limitations, schools remain key agents in shaping socially responsible individuals. Strengthening teacher training, incorporating digital tools, and fostering global partnerships can enhance the effectiveness of HRE. By embedding human rights principles in education, schools empower students to advocate for justice, equality, and human dignity, contributing to a more informed and compassionate society.

### **Strategies for Integrating Human Rights Education in Schools:**

Integrating Human Rights Education (HRE) in schools requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that combines curriculum development, pedagogy, school policies, and community engagement. By embedding human rights principles into the education system, schools can cultivate a culture of dignity, equality, and active citizenship among students. One of the most effective strategies is curriculum integration, where human rights topics are incorporated into various subjects such as social studies, history, literature, and ethics. For instance, history lessons can explore the evolution of human rights, while literature classes can analyze themes of justice and oppression. Additionally, project-based learning can encourage students to research and address real-world human rights issues, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Another key approach is adopting interactive and participatory teaching methods that actively engage students. Strategies such as debates, simulations, role-playing, storytelling, and case studies allow students to analyze human rights violations and explore solutions. Digital tools, multimedia resources, and virtual reality experiences can further enhance engagement by providing immersive learning opportunities.

Schools should also establish a rights-based institutional culture, ensuring that policies, practices, and interactions reflect human rights values. This includes promoting non-discriminatory policies, anti-bullying initiatives, gender equality programs, and student participation in decision-making. Creating a safe and inclusive learning environment where students feel respected and valued reinforces the principles of HRE beyond the classroom.

Teacher training and capacity building are crucial for the successful implementation of HRE. Schools should provide professional development workshops, seminars, and access to HRE resources to equip educators with the necessary knowledge and skills. Teachers must be prepared to facilitate sensitive discussions on topics such as discrimination, social justice, and human dignity.

Collaboration with human rights organizations, NGOs, and community groups can further enrich HRE programs. Schools can organize guest lectures, field visits, awareness campaigns, and student-led initiatives to provide hands-on experiences and real-world perspectives on human rights issues. Engaging parents and local communities in discussions and activities can also reinforce human rights values at home and in society.

Despite challenges such as political resistance, cultural differences, and resource constraints, a well-structured and holistic approach can make HRE a fundamental part of school education. By fostering awareness, empathy, and action-oriented learning, schools can empower students to become responsible global citizens who advocate for human rights, social justice, and equality in their communities and beyond.

### **Challenges in Implementing Human Rights Education:**

Despite its significance, implementing Human Rights Education (HRE) in schools faces numerous challenges, including political, cultural, institutional, and resource-related barriers. These challenges hinder the full integration of human rights principles into educational systems and impact the effectiveness of HRE programs.

One of the primary obstacles is political resistance. In some regions, governments may perceive HRE as a threat to authority, fearing that it could encourage critical thinking, activism, and resistance against



oppressive policies. As a result, HRE may be censored, diluted, or entirely excluded from national curricula. Additionally, conflicts and authoritarian regimes often suppress discussions on democracy, freedom, and human rights, limiting students' exposure to these crucial concepts. Cultural and religious barriers also pose significant challenges. Societal norms and traditions may conflict with universal human rights principles, particularly regarding gender equality, freedom of expression, and minority rights. Some communities resist HRE topics that challenge long-standing beliefs, making it difficult for educators to address issues such as LGBTQ+ rights, child rights, and gender-based violence.

At the institutional level, lack of teacher training and preparedness is a major hurdle. Many educators are unfamiliar with human rights concepts or lack the confidence to facilitate discussions on sensitive topics. Without proper training and pedagogical support, HRE may be reduced to theoretical discussions rather than engaging, action-oriented learning experiences.

Another challenge is the shortage of resources and materials dedicated to HRE. Many schools, particularly in developing regions, struggle with limited textbooks, outdated curricula, and inadequate funding to support HRE programs. Additionally, digital tools and innovative teaching methods are often unavailable, making it difficult to create interactive and participatory learning environments.

Resistance from parents and local communities can further hinder the implementation of HRE. Misinformation or misunderstandings about human rights may lead to opposition from families who fear that HRE promotes values contrary to their cultural or religious beliefs. To overcome these challenges, policy reforms, teacher training programs, community engagement, and resource mobilization are essential. Schools must adopt context-sensitive approaches while ensuring that HRE remains a transformative tool for fostering equality, justice, and active global citizenship.

### **Future of Human Rights Education in Schools:**

The future of Human Rights Education (HRE) in schools is poised for transformation, driven by technological advancements, policy reforms,

and global collaboration. As societies become more interconnected, there is an increasing need for education systems to empower students with the knowledge, values, and skills to uphold human rights, social justice, and global citizenship. One of the most promising developments in HRE is the integration of digital technologies. Online platforms, virtual reality experiences, and interactive digital tools can provide immersive learning opportunities, enabling students to explore human rights issues in real-world contexts. Additionally, artificial intelligence (AI) can personalize learning experiences, ensuring that students engage with content relevant to their socio-cultural environments. Future HRE will also emphasize interdisciplinary learning, embedding human rights topics into various subjects such as science, technology, economics, and environmental studies. This approach ensures that students understand human rights in relation to global challenges such as climate change, artificial intelligence ethics, and social inequalities. Policy support and curriculum reforms will play a crucial role in strengthening HRE. Governments and educational institutions must work together to mandate HRE as a core subject, ensuring its inclusion in national curricula. Teacher training programs will also need to be enhanced, equipping educators with the necessary skills to facilitate discussions on sensitive and complex human rights issues. Additionally, collaboration with global organizations, NGOs, and civil society will expand HRE beyond classrooms, fostering student engagement in community initiatives, activism, and policy advocacy. Schools will play a more active role in promoting democratic participation, civic responsibility, and ethical leadership. Despite ongoing challenges, the future of HRE is promising. By embracing technology, policy reforms, and global partnerships, schools can cultivate a new generation of socially responsible, empathetic, and proactive individuals committed to defending human rights and building a more just and equitable world.

**Conclusion:**

Integrating Human Rights Education (HRE) in schools is a transformative approach that fosters awareness, empathy, and active citizenship among students. By embedding human rights principles into curricula, pedagogical practices, and school policies, education becomes a powerful tool for promoting dignity, equality, and justice in society. Despite challenges such as political resistance, cultural

barriers, and resource limitations, schools remain crucial in shaping socially responsible and informed individuals. Strengthening teacher training, digital learning tools, and global collaborations can enhance the effectiveness of HRE, ensuring that students develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and advocacy skills. The future of HRE lies in innovative teaching strategies, policy reforms, and community engagement. By fostering a rights-based culture in schools, education can empower students to become champions of human rights, contributing to a more just, inclusive, and democratic world.

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## PROMOTING HEALTH AWARENESS AND HYGIENE IN SCHOOLS

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### Abstract:

The holistic development of children depends crucially on the awareness schools create about health together with hygiene instruction. This chapter examines health and hygiene priorities in schools by presenting solutions to implementation barriers while discussing appropriate methods. Health education provides knowledge both basic and advanced that helps students develop enduring practices about proper nutrition while learning hygiene essentials alongside mental health understanding. Schools have a special role in addressing health inequalities because poor physical health triggers disproportionate levels of school absences and academic decline while creating lasting physical and mental health problems. Educational institutions focus on three main strategies through their health educational approach which consists of curriculum integration and hygiene education and school environment maintenance. The methods proposed for education involve instructor training program workshops and increasing family engagement and the utilization of government health programs. The chapter examines resource limitations together with cultural restrictions and insufficient training for teachers and provides answers by engaging communities and developing skills. The

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chapter demonstrates public health transformation through the analysis of case studies and evidence-based research while showing schools' potential as health promotion hubs. Hiring schools to put health education first will produce better educational results coupled with stronger community wellness for incoming generations.

**Keywords:** *Health Awareness, Hygiene Education, School Health Programs, Public Health Promotion, Child Development*

### **Introduction:**

The learning environment in schools develops crucial competencies across three areas: academic learning plus personal and social well-being. Schools maintain vital importance in delivering health education that improves two essential components of a child's health development. Schools provide their students with essential health-related knowledge while teaching practical skills which enable them to stay healthy (Basch, 2011). The analysis centers on school-based health education focusing on awareness and hygiene while investigating methodological approaches alongside related obstacles together with practical resolutions. A child's academic success together with social development fundamentally depends on their health and hygiene interconnection. Work absences and educational setbacks impact students negatively while causing permanent abnormalities of physical and mental growth (Sawyer et al., 2012). A combination of health awareness programs at schools with hygiene education programs results in enhanced public health achievements. An extensive examination will illustrate the ways schools function as operational bases for health advancement together with behavioural transformation activities.

### **Importance of Health Awareness in Schools:**

Health awareness in schools is vital for several reasons -

- **Enhanced Academic Performance:** Research led by Basch (2011) alongside multiple other reports shows that student health strongly impacts their academic performance. People with good health achieve better exam results and better concentration levels with better memory function.

- **Disease Prevention:** Through education about proper hygiene habits such as washing hands and handling food and maintaining personal cleanliness students become less likely to spread diseases including diarrhoea and influenza and respiratory infections (Hillier, 2020; Caruso, 2018).
- **Mental Health Promotion:** Education about mental health through promotion efforts builds individual resistance to mental stress and lowers social prejudice and promotes prompt therapeutic interventions. Today's increasing mental health emergencies among young people make well-targeted educational approaches especially vital (Aggleton et al, 2010).
- **Behavioural Foundations:** Through school settings students can learn essential healthy lifestyle practices from physical activity and carefully balanced eating to proper personal care practices which ensure their wellness throughout life (Brown & Summerbell, 2009).
- **Community Impact:** Highly aware students teach essential health practices to their community members who spread these beneficial practices to society beyond their own family unit (Díaz-González et al, 2020).

### **Hygiene Education: Building Healthy Habits**

The educational framework in schools teaches students necessary information about cleanliness and health while aiming to create enduring healthy routines. The primary aspects include -

#### **(A) Personal Hygiene:**

- **Hand washing:** Hygiene education starts with effective instruction on hand washing with soap and water which constitutes the base of cleanliness education. Research shows that hand washing effectiveness reaches a 50% reduction when done correctly(Hillier, 2020).
- **Oral Hygiene:** The importance of brushing teeth twice daily together with their need for routine dental appointments gets stressed in school-based education. A significant part of dental health programs consists of presenting proper brushing technique demonstrations (WHO, 2003).

- **Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM):** Addressing menstrual hygiene is crucial for adolescent girls. An appropriate menstrual hygiene practices and fact-based education about menstruation will lead to both improved student attendance and elevated classroom confidence (Muralidharan & Dasgupta, 2017; Lutters, Sivakumar, & Baurle, 2018).
- **Grooming and Personal Cleanliness:** Students who understand regular bathing practice and optimum clean clothing standards and managed nail care demonstrate reduced infection likelihood while developing positive self-image (WHO, 2003).

**(B) Environmental Hygiene:**

- **Clean School Premises:** Schools need to sustain clean facilities throughout their classrooms and playgrounds and restrooms so all pupils can reduce infection exposure. A student cleanliness program involving the entire student body helps teach students to take suitable responsibility (Deroo et al, 2015).
- **Waste Management:** Teaching students to classify their waste correctly into three sections functions both as environmental education and sickness prevention instruction (Jones & Reed, 2005).
- **Access to Safe Water and Sanitation:** All educational institutions must provide accessible water supply as well as working sanitation services. Children going without access to basic water sanitation and proper healthcare facilities risk developing waterborne diseases and must miss class (Karon et al., 2017).

**(C) Nutritional Awareness:**

The teaching of nutrition happens to be essential as a fundamental component of health education. Schools can promote healthy eating habits by -

- **Including Nutrition Education:** Learning about healthy eating habits combined with lessons on why fruits and vegetables matter and why junk food leads to health risks (Brown & Summerbell, 2009).



- **School Meal Programs:** Using India's Mid-Day Meal Program students can take one daily serving of nutritious food which enhances their health status while maintaining their focus (Ramachandran, 2019).
- **Healthy Canteens:** School canteens need to provide students access to nutritious eating choices while eliminating sweet beverages along with processed temp foods (Díaz-González et al, 2020).

### **Strategies for Promoting Health Awareness and Hygiene in Schools:**

Promoting health awareness and hygiene in schools is essential for fostering a safe and supportive learning environment. By integrating health education into the curriculum, encouraging proper hygiene practices, and engaging students in wellness initiatives, schools can instill lifelong healthy habits. Collaboration with parents and communities further enhances the effectiveness of these efforts.

#### **(a) Integration into the Curriculum:**

A structured addition of health principles to school educational content guarantees enduring instruction across necessary subjects. Examples include -

- **Subject-Specific Lessons:** The inclusion of health lessons takes place throughout science and social studies education as well as physical education classes.
- **Interactive Learning:** Role-playing games along with experiments and storytelling enable students to learn through practice in ways that keep their attention.
- **Multimedia Tools:** Educational materials including videos along with animations and interactive applications transform complex teaching material into child-friendly formats (Canton, 2021).

#### **(b) Role of Teachers:**

Through their daily activities teachers serve as leading figures who advance health education. Their responsibilities include -

- **Modelling Healthy Behaviours:** Educators who demonstrate proper hygiene techniques together with balanced lifestyles show children how they should maintain their health.
- **Conducting Health Workshops:** Educational workshops concerning mental health as well as first aid training and nutrition provide essential knowledge for students.
- **Identifying Health Issues:** Through proper observation teachers should identify student health problems which enables quick medical intervention (Jakasania et al., 2023).

**(c) Parental Involvement:**

Home health education needs parents to act as essential contributors for support. Schools can -

- **Organize Parent Workshops:** Schools need to provide training for parents about how they can support their child's health maintenance process.
- **Provide Regular Communication:** Educational health updates and periodic health tips can be shared either through newsletters or educational apps.
- **Encourage Participation:** Parents should actively participate in school health programs which include projects about improving cleanliness standards and sustaining nutritious diets (Union, 2011).

**(d) School Policies and Infrastructure:**

Health education requires a school environment which supports students. Key aspects include -

- **Health Policies:** Public schools need mandatory policies that regulate important health initiatives including medical inoculations and assessment sessions and urgent treatment protocols (WHO, 2000).
- **Hygiene Facilities:** The fundamental need of students requires both clean water and soap access alongside Hyge guard supplies and operating restrooms.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** Every school must possess both medical equipment for responding to emergencies together with

qualified staff who can deliver care during health crises (Lahariya, 2018).

**(e) Collaborations with External Agencies:**

- **Government Programs:** Through Ayushman Bharat educational institutions can access health services that include wellness activities along with medical examinations.
- **NGO Partnerships:** Health organizations bring medical knowledge and financial assistance to run health campaign programs along with educational workshops.
- **Healthcare Professionals:** Professional healthcare providers who visit schools regularly give expert guidance about health matters while also delivering expert care for students. Education institutions deal with obstacles in their mission to promote health education.

**Addressing Challenges in Promoting Health Awareness:**

Promoting health awareness in schools faces challenges such as misinformation, lack of resources, and varying socio-economic backgrounds. Overcoming these barriers requires a multifaceted approach, including comprehensive health education, community engagement, and policy support. Schools must adopt inclusive strategies to ensure all students develop essential knowledge and habits for lifelong well-being.

- **Resource Constraints:** Restricted funding will reduce access to hygienic educational resources and teaching tools.
- **Cultural Barriers:** The discussions face barriers because of social taboos particularly when they involve menstrual hygiene (Muralidharan & Dasgupta, 2017).
- **Teacher Training:** Educational programs for health delivery require better-trained instructors to produce effective results.
- **Parental Resistance:** Fortunately, this reluctance stems from cultural or religious concerns about discussing sensitive matters.
- **Lack of Monitoring:** When regular monitoring and evaluation sessions are not part of a program it becomes difficult to maintain consistent implementation (Deroo, Walter, & Graham, 2015).

## Overcoming the Challenges:

Overcoming challenges in promoting health awareness requires innovative strategies, including interactive education, community involvement, and policy reinforcement. Schools must address resource gaps, combat misinformation, and ensure inclusivity to foster a culture of well-being, empowering students with essential health knowledge and lifelong hygiene practices.

- **Policy Advocacy:** Organizations must push for greater public funding of health programs in educational institutions to solve their funding problems.
- **Community Engagement:** Partnering with leaders from the community allows programs to surmount issues related to cultural differences by building dependable relationships.
- **Capacity Building:** When teachers receive both educational training and proper resources, they become more qualified to teach health education effectively.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Networks of television and other media platforms can successfully popularize the value of teaching health knowledge to the general population.
- **Regular Monitoring:** Through regular evaluations health programs maintain their effectiveness and preserve consistent standards of operation (O’Byrne et al., 1996).

## Conclusion:

Through education institutions parents can build vital health and hygiene behaviours which children will use throughout their lives. A combination of health education integration into learning material with community-building supports and parent engagement enables schools to solve major societal and health problems. Educators together with policymakers and health professionals must make combined efforts to establish educational environments backed by holistic health practices. When schools implement comprehensive health programs, they provide improved academic results along with financial advantages to healthcare while establishing strong community wellness outcomes. Health education programs face existing challenges but become manageable through team efforts along with creative solutions and dedicated ongoing support for educational health initiatives. Schools

dedicated to health awareness and hygiene create societies that remain both healthy and happy and productive at the same time.

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## NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020: KEY CHANGES IN SCHOOL EDUCATION

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### Abstract:

National Education Policy is very essential for social, economical and educational progress in any nation. NEP 2020 is a comprehensive policy of Indian education system. Dr. K. K. Kasturirangan was the chairman of the policy. This study explores the key changes of school education in the view of NEP 2020. The objectives of the study are to find out the key features of NEP 2020 in special reference to school education, to know the ECCE, pedagogy and new curriculum structure, foundational literacy and numeracy in the view of NEP 2020. The research method is qualitative in nature and documentary analysis technique is used to address the specific objective. The present study revealed that NEP 2020 is a comprehensive education policy of school education. It emphasizes universal access to education at all levels, ranging from pre-primary to grade 12. ECCE is the learning foundation of all children and it is the goal of NEP 2020. The study also revealed that Attaining foundational literacy and numeracy for all children is the key focus of NEP 2020. It is suggested new pedagogy and curriculum structure 5+3+3+4.

**Keywords:** *NEP 2020, School Education, ECCE, Foundational Literacy, Pedagogy, Curriculum Structure*

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## **Introduction:**

**T**he role of education has a significant impact on the development and growth of the economy and the development of human resources in various ways (Pallathadka et al., 2021). A National Education Policy is a comprehensive structure to guide the development of education in India (Devi and Cheluvvaraju, 2020). New Education Policy 2020 (NEP) is a new comprehensive policy. The first NEP was implemented by India in 1968 and next after long gap in 1986 and recent one under leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2020 (Kumar, 2021). To formulate a new education policy, the Central Government in 2017, Dr. K.K. Kasturirangan constituted a committee under the chairmanship of the Kasturirangan committee drafted the National Education Policy 2019 (Verma and Kumar, 2021). Regardless of their socioeconomic status, the policy strives to offer all students with an equitable, accessible, and high-quality education that will prepare them for lives as responsible and useful members of society. There are five founding pillars of NEP-2020 i.e. Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability. The primary aims of the policy is to universalize of pre primary education, primary education. It recommended at all levels of school education i.e. to ensure the quality of school education, 5+3+3+4 pattern curriculum structure, enhancing teacher preparation programmes, reorganising the legal framework governing education, and reforming the current exam and assessment system.

## **Review of Related Literature:**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has been a transformative framework aimed at reshaping India's education system with a focus on inclusion, equity, and holistic development. Several researchers have analyzed different aspects of NEP 2020, evaluating its approaches, strengths, and limitations in promoting inclusive and multidisciplinary education. Jana and Halder (2023) explored NEP 2020's efforts toward inclusive education at both school and higher education levels. Using a documentary research method with qualitative analysis, their study highlighted NEP 2020's initiatives and concerns, while also pointing out its limitations in fully implementing inclusive education.



Roy (2022) conducted a philosophical analysis of NEP 2020's holistic and multidisciplinary approach, reviewing past policies to assess its long-term significance. The study emphasized NEP 2020's role in skill development, problem-solving, and its potential impact on contemporary Indian education.

Saxena (2021) provided an overview of NEP 2020, focusing on its policies, innovations, and implications for the Indian education system. Through predictive analysis, the study underscored NEP 2020's emphasis on universal education access, from pre-primary to grade 12.

Singh and Mishra (2023) conducted a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on equity and inclusion in Indian education, analyzing NEP 2020's alignment with constitutional principles and its approach to educational inclusion.

Arora (2021) analyzed NEP 2020's key recommendations for inclusive education, acknowledging its innovative efforts while highlighting the challenges in ensuring education for people with disabilities.

The studies collectively indicate that NEP 2020 presents a progressive vision for inclusive and multidisciplinary education in India. While it emphasizes access, equity, and skill development, challenges remain in its implementation, particularly regarding inclusion at all levels. Future research and policy refinements will be essential in overcoming these limitations to ensure truly inclusive education for all.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The major objectives of the study are mention below-

- To find out the main features of NEP 2020 in reference to school education.
- To know the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in the view of NEP 2020.
- To know the pedagogy and new curriculum structure of NEP 2020.
- To know the foundational literacy and numeracy in the view of NEP 2020.

- To know the universal pre-primary education to 12 grades in the view of NEP 2020.

### **Method of the Study:**

The method of the current study is qualitative in nature. The documentary analysis method was used to carry out the investigation. Research that uses government documents or private documents as its information source is known as a "documentary study." Documents that may be used for systematic evolution as part of a study take variety of forms. They included advertisement, agendas attendance register, minutes of meetings; manuals, background papers books and brochures diaries and journal, event programs letters, and memoranda, maps and charts, newspapers, press releases, program proposals, application form and summaries and televisions programme scripts, organizational and institutional reports survey data and various public records (Bowen, 2009).

### **Discussion:**

#### **Objective 1: To find out the main features of NEP 2020 in reference to school education**

The NEP 2020's primary goal in terms of education in schools is as follows -

- **Universal Education:** Ensure Universal Access at All Educational Levels from Pre-K to Grade 12.
- **Promote ECCE:** Ensuring that all children between the ages of 0 and 3 receive high-quality early care and education.
- **Curriculum Structure:** 5+3+3+4 curriculum and pedagogical structure.
- There are no clear distinctions between the sciences and the arts, between academic and extracurricular activities, or between job prospects and academic ones.
- **Multilingualism:** Promote multilingualism and Indian languages with a strong emphasis; the home language, mother tongue, local language, or regional language will be used as the primary medium of teaching until at least Grade 5, but ideally until Grade 8 and beyond.

- **Assessment:** Modifications to assessment: up to two Board Exams per school year, one for the main test and one for development, if desired.
- **School Complex:** Ensuring that all resources are accessible via school complexes and clusters.
- **SSSA:** Establishing the SSSA (State School Standards Authority).
- **Vocational Education:** Training in vocational education in school.

**Objective 2: To know the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in the view of NEP 2020.**

Early childhood stage is very crucial for children's brain development. But numerous young children, particularly those from socioeconomically disadvantaged households, do not currently have access to high-quality ECCE. To gradually achieve nationwide access to excellent ECCE for all children is the goal of NEP-2020. Anganwadi Centres will be improved with top-notch facilities, playthings, and qualified Anganwadi workers/teachers to ensure that everyone has access to ECCE. Every Anganwadi shall be housed in a building that is well-ventilated, well-built, kid-friendly, and has an enriched atmosphere for learning. ECCE institutions are consists of (a) standalone Anganwadis; (b) Anganwadis co-located with primary schools; (c) pre-primary schools or sections covering at least age 5 to 6 years co-located with current primary schools; and (d) standalone pre-schools. Before turning five, every child is expected to transfer to a "Preparatory Class" or "Balavatika" (i.e., before Class 1) taught by an ECCE-qualified teacher. The preparatory class is based on play based learning with an emphasis on fostering early reading and numeracy as well as the development of cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor skills. NCERT will create a sub-framework for children ages 0 to 3 and a sub-framework for children ages 3 to 8 as part of a national curriculum and pedagogical framework for early childhood care and education (NCPFECCE).

### **Objective 3: To know the pedagogy and new curriculum structure of NEP 2020.**

The NEP 2020 will guide a new pedagogy and curriculum structure on the basis of student's developments and needs. The suggested new pedagogy and curriculum structure are 5+3+3+4 which consists of four stages. These are given below-

- The foundational stage- 3 years preschool and 2 years elementary education (3-8years).
- The preparatory stage- Grade 3 to 5 (8-11 years).
- The middle stage- Grade 6 to 8 (11-14 years).
- The secondary stage- Grade 9 to 12 (14- 18 years).

The aim of the curriculum is holistic development of the students and it is key emphasis on skills, critical thinking, and experimental learning. There is no hard separation among science and arts, curriculum and extracurricular activities, vocational and academic streams.

### **Objective 4: To know the foundational literacy and numeracy in the view of NEP 2020.**

Attaining foundational literacy and numeracy for all children is the key focus of NEP 2020. The highest priority of the present education system is to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in elementary school by 2025. By 2025, a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy will be established with the primary goal of concentrating on early language and math proficiency in Grades 1–3. Developing school preparedness through interim 3 is one strategy. All Grade 1 students will receive a month-long play-based school preparation module; there will be a greater emphasis on reading, writing, speaking, counting, arithmetic, and mathematical thinking; there will be ongoing evaluation and adaptive testing; there will be a national repository of top-notch resources on foundational literacy and numeracy; teacher vacancies will be filled; peer tutoring and volunteer opportunities will be established; school libraries will be established in every village. Initiatives to guarantee the availability, accessibility, quality, and readership of books across regions, languages, grade levels, and genres will be implemented, along with the creation of a national book promotion policy.

**Objective 5: To know the universal pre-primary education to 12 grades in the view of NEP 2020.**

By 2030, NEP 2020 seeks to attain a 100% gross enrolment ratio in pre primary to 12 grades education. The NEP 2020 will be undertaken effective and sufficient infrastructure of school education, alternative and innovative centres of education to facilitate universal school attendance by closely monitoring pupils' learning levels and ensuring that children who are falling out are reintegrated into mainstream education. To make sure that all school-age children are enrolled and learning in school, teachers, counsellors, and social workers with training who are affiliated with schools or school complexes will engage with students and their parents on an ongoing basis.

**Conclusion:**

NEP 2020 is the comprehensive education policy of India in twenty first century. This education policy is very remarkable in the aspect of school education. So many changes of school education should be suggested by NEP 2020. The present 10+2 school education should be replaced by 5+3+3 structure according to NEP 2020. A strong foundation of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) beginning at age 3 is also incorporated into the new 5+3+3+4 structure with the goal of fostering improved general learning, development, and student wellbeing. The aim of the school curriculum is holistic development of the students. The NEP 2020 doesn't address a child's physical development, both physical and mental developments are very crucial for student's learning. The creation of a new curriculum and pedagogical framework for ECCE will be the main emphasis of NCERT. The policy also explores in detail the training and development of Anganwadi trainers through both short-term and long-term initiatives. a constructive drive to formalise the structure and delivery of ECCE. By 2025, achieving universal basic reading and numeracy in elementary school is the top priority of the current educational system and NEP 2020 aims to achieve a gross enrolment ratio of 100% in pre-primary through 12th grade by 2030.

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## **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: INSIGHTS FROM NEP 2020**

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### **Abstract:**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasises inclusivity as a fundamental component of equitable and high-quality education, represents a dramatic change in India's educational environment. Within the context of NEP 2020, this chapter examines the potential and difficulties that come with implementing inclusive education. The chapter analyses major obstacles, including socio-cultural prejudices, inadequate teacher preparation, resource constraints, and infrastructure deficiencies, by drawing on policy research, case studies, and emerging practices. It looks at how these issues disproportionately impact underprivileged populations, such as linguistic minorities, children with impairments, and socioeconomically challenged communities. NEP 2020, on the other hand, presents revolutionary chances to promote inclusivity. The policy's focus on localised curricula, technology integration, holistic development, and universal access offers a strong basis for building inclusive educational ecosystems. This chapter focuses on effective projects that make use of NEP 2020's tenets, including community-driven support networks, adaptive learning technologies, and teacher empowerment initiatives. It also provides practical methods for stakeholders to close the gap between policy and practice, such as integrating universal design principles, creating capacity, and collaborating across sectors. This chapter contributes to the discourse on inclusive education as a crucial element in advancing social justice

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and sustainable development in India by critically analysing the two facets of opportunities and obstacles. It calls on everyone to collaborate in order to make policy objectives a reality and guarantee that every student, regardless of background, has a place in the educational system.

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Education, NEP 2020, Marginalized Communities, Educational Policy, Teacher Training, Technology Integration*

### **Introduction:**

Inclusive education, which ensures that every child, regardless of their abilities, socio-economic status, or background, has access to quality education, stands at the heart of achieving equitable and sustainable development. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced by the Government of India, marks a transformative shift in the country's educational landscape by emphasizing inclusivity and equity as fundamental principles. This chapter explores the challenges and opportunities presented by NEP 2020 in fostering an inclusive education system. Beyond just granting access to schools, inclusive education aims to provide an environment where all students can thrive and reach their full potential. With India's diverse socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, putting in place an inclusive education framework is both crucial and difficult. In view of this variety, NEP 2020 highlights the importance of addressing educational disparities to build a more equitable and just society. This chapter starts by looking at the key NEP 2020 components that directly affect inclusive education, like the emphasis on early childhood care and education (ECCE), the integration of children with special needs (CWSN), and the goal of reducing dropout rates among marginalized groups. The strategy aims to overcome systemic barriers and promote equity in order to make the Indian educational system more adaptable, accessible, and resilient. However, implementing policy is fraught with challenges. The effective implementation of inclusive education is still hampered by socio-cultural biases, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of teacher preparation. Furthermore, NEP 2020 underlines that eliminating the digital divide is crucial to ensuring inclusion in the context of technology-driven learning settings. The policy, however, also creates new opportunities for reform and novelty. It promotes the



use of technology, adaptable curricula, and locally relevant solutions to satisfy the various requirements of students. NEP 2020 promotes collaborations between the public and private sectors, laying the groundwork for a more inclusive and participatory educational system. This chapter attempts to provide a comprehensive analysis of these potential and challenges using case studies, real data, and expert perspectives. By contributing to the broader discussion on inclusive education and offering helpful recommendations for educators, practitioners, and lawmakers committed to fulfilling the objectives of NEP 2020, it aims to achieve this. NEP 2020 presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to modernize India's educational system in order to bring it into compliance with global standards for inclusion and equity. Although there are many obstacles in the way, the policy's focus on inclusive and holistic development offers a strong foundation for resolving systemic injustices and promoting an inclusive educational culture.

### **Significance of the Study:**

The study holds significant relevance in the contemporary educational landscape, particularly in the context of India's transformative National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Inclusive education, which aims to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities and from marginalized communities, is a cornerstone of the NEP 2020. This research is crucial as it explores the practical implementation of inclusive education policies, identifying both the barriers and enablers that influence their success. By examining the challenges—such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of trained educators, and socio-cultural biases—alongside the opportunities presented by technological advancements, community engagement, and policy support, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the current state of inclusive education in India. Furthermore, it offers actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to bridge gaps and leverage opportunities, ensuring that the vision of an inclusive and equitable education system, as envisioned by NEP 2020, is realized. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on educational equity and social justice, emphasizing the need for systemic changes to create a more inclusive society.

## **Objectives of the Study:**

The objectives of the study are as follows -

- To analyze the key provisions of NEP 2020 that promote inclusive education and assess their potential impact on addressing educational disparities.
- To identify the challenges faced by educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in implementing inclusive education practices as outlined in NEP 2020.
- To explore the opportunities created by NEP 2020 for fostering inclusivity in education, particularly for marginalized and differently-abled students.
- To examine the role of teacher training and professional development in achieving the goals of inclusive education as envisioned by NEP 2020.
- To evaluate the role of technology and digital tools in promoting inclusive education as emphasized in NEP 2020.

## **Discussion of the Study:**

**Objective 1: To analyze the key provisions of NEP 2020 that promote inclusive education and assess their potential impact on addressing educational disparities.**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes inclusive education through several key provisions aimed at bridging educational disparities. It promotes equitable access by focusing on socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), including girls, children with disabilities, and marginalized communities. NEP 2020 mandates gender-inclusion funds, special education zones, and flexible curricula to accommodate diverse learning needs. It also enhances early childhood education, multilingual instruction, and digital learning to ensure accessibility. Teacher training on inclusive pedagogies further strengthens its impact. These measures have the potential to reduce dropout rates, improve learning outcomes, and create a more equitable education system, fostering social mobility and national development. However, effective implementation and resource allocation remain crucial for achieving true inclusivity.

**Objective 2: To identify the challenges faced by educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in implementing inclusive education practices as outlined in NEP 2020.**

Implementing inclusive education under NEP 2020 presents several challenges for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders. Educators face difficulties in adapting curricula, addressing diverse learning needs, and accessing adequate training in inclusive pedagogies. Policymakers struggle with resource allocation, infrastructure development, and monitoring the effectiveness of inclusion strategies. Stakeholders, including parents and community members, often lack awareness or face socio-cultural barriers that hinder participation. Additionally, digital and linguistic disparities, limited assistive technologies, and teacher shortages further impede progress. Ensuring equity in remote and underprivileged areas remains a major hurdle. While NEP 2020 provides a robust framework for inclusion, successful implementation requires sustained funding, collaborative policymaking, and continuous capacity-building to create an education system that truly embraces diversity.

**Objective 3: To explore the opportunities created by NEP 2020 for fostering inclusivity in education, particularly for marginalized and differently-abled students.**

NEP 2020 creates numerous opportunities to foster inclusivity, particularly for marginalized and differently-abled students. It promotes universal access to quality education through flexible learning pathways, gender-inclusion funds, and special education zones. The policy mandates multilingual education, bridging linguistic gaps for diverse learners. Enhanced teacher training in inclusive pedagogies ensures better classroom engagement. Technology-driven learning, including assistive technologies, improves accessibility for differently-abled students. Scholarships and targeted financial aid support economically disadvantaged groups. By prioritizing equity, digital learning, and community participation, NEP 2020 lays the foundation for an education system that accommodates diverse needs, reducing disparities and fostering social empowerment.

**Objective 4: To examine the role of teacher training and professional development in achieving the goals of inclusive education as envisioned by NEP 2020.**

Teacher training and professional development are crucial for realizing the inclusive education goals of NEP 2020. The policy emphasizes capacity-building programs to equip educators with skills in differentiated instruction, assistive technologies, and inclusive pedagogies. Specialized training in universal design for learning (UDL) and multilingual education enables teachers to cater to diverse student needs, including marginalized and differently-abled learners. NEP 2020 also advocates for continuous professional development (CPD) through workshops, online courses, and peer learning. Furthermore, the policy promotes pre-service and in-service training to ensure that teachers are well-prepared to implement inclusive strategies effectively. Strengthening teacher education institutions (TEIs) and integrating inclusion-focused modules in teacher preparation programs are key priorities. By enhancing educators' competencies, NEP 2020 aims to create supportive learning environments that reduce dropout rates, improve academic outcomes, and foster equity in education. However, effective implementation requires sustained investment, policy support, and collaboration among stakeholders.

**Objective 5: To evaluate the role of technology and digital tools in promoting inclusive education as emphasized in NEP 2020.**

NEP 2020 underscores the transformative role of technology and digital tools in fostering inclusive education by ensuring equitable access to learning resources. Digital platforms, assistive technologies, and open educational resources (OER) help bridge educational gaps for marginalized and differently-abled students. The policy promotes digital learning through the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), which supports teachers in integrating technology-driven pedagogies. For students with disabilities, NEP 2020 advocates the use of assistive devices, screen readers, and AI-powered learning tools to enhance accessibility. Additionally, multilingual e-content and adaptive learning platforms cater to diverse linguistic and cognitive needs, ensuring personalized learning experiences. Online learning opportunities, facilitated through initiatives like DIKSHA, SWAYAM, and PM eVIDYA, provide flexibility for students in remote or

underserved areas. However, challenges such as the digital divide, infrastructure limitations, and teacher preparedness must be addressed to maximize technology's impact. NEP 2020 calls for public-private partnerships to expand digital infrastructure and improve internet connectivity in rural areas. Furthermore, teacher training in EdTech integration is essential for effective implementation. By leveraging technology, NEP 2020 envisions an inclusive education system that accommodates diverse learners, promotes accessibility, and enhances learning outcomes, ultimately reducing educational disparities across socio-economic backgrounds.

### **Conclusion:**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to create a fair educational environment for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, gender, ability, or cultural background. This vision provides a roadmap for educational reform in India, but challenges include closing the gap between practice and policy, large investments in curriculum development, teacher preparation, and infrastructure, and addressing systemic injustices and socio-cultural biases. The policy's emphasis on early childhood care, vocational education integration, foundational literacy and numeracy, and technology for accessibility and personalized learning could bridge gaps for students with disabilities and those in remote areas. NEP 2020 offers previously unheard-of possibilities to reinvent education in India, notwithstanding these obstacles. Building an enabling environment requires collaboration from a variety of stakeholders, including communities, NGOs, educational institutions, and governmental organizations. Regular monitoring, feedback mechanisms, and evidence-based decision-making are necessary to convert the policy's objectives into measurable outcomes. The Indian educational system has both challenges and opportunities as a result of NEP 2020. India can make tremendous strides towards universal access to inclusive, high-quality education by addressing systemic barriers and applying innovative strategies, uplifting individual students and advancing the socioeconomic advancement of the country.

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## **TRANSFORMING IDEAS, TRANSMITTING VALUES: A NEW ROAD TO GENDER EQUALITY**

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### **Abstract:**

Before speaking about gender equality, we must clear the concept between social ‘gender’ and physiological ‘sex’. Though apparently we find little or no difference between the two, at the deep- structure level the distinction is still prominent. While gender refers to the person’s strong feelings of becoming male, female or transgender, sex denotes an individual’s external biological determinant and internal reproductive systems. The concept of gender and sex of a person may not be the same always. Whatever it may be, the phallogocentric world always looks upon the feminine-self as the ‘other’, de-centred mere commodities. The feminist thinker Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* categorically says that “gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it”. Here lies the role of education to ignite the minds and spirits of the weaker section with sparks of knowledge. The ultimate aim of education is to live and let live and to fulfill this aim, the Government of India has come up with quiet a handful of policies to protect the ‘other’. They bridge the gender gap by incorporating gender inclusiveness, gender equality and providing quality education to all students with a diversified curricula which focus on critical thinking and experiential learning. The National Education Policy 2020 takes a major role in this arena along with the Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 (SDG) which address almost all the gender issues acting as a barrier in the field of education.

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**Keywords:** *Gender Equality, Phallocentricism, National Education Policy, Sustainable Development Goals, Sarva Sikkha Abhijan*

### **Introduction:**

*“Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in Man”- Swami Vivekananda.*

The role of education lies, irrespective of class, culture and gender, in the “manifestation “of the inner potential of any human being. Women are born with enough potential to attain perfection of their lives, but the continuous hindrance of the phallocentric world poses to be a stumbling block for them to have their achievement ascertained. The old customs and conventions are still here in our cultural scenario, only in different norms and forms. Hence, we are not shocked to learn that early marriage, dowry system, and many other ills and evils are still in vogue for ‘other’-ing the weaker section of the society. Their wings have been clipped by different so-called norms of the patriotic code of conduct which percolated in the society for decades and have snatched away the power of flight of women even if their wings are unclipped. Real development and liberalization of women are possible only when we will have not to chant the almost cliched words of Rabindranath Tagore: *Nariki Nijer Bhagyoy korar keno nahi dibe adhikar*. This “adhikar” or right is guaranteed by education and different educational policies acting as safeguard to the women.

Keeping in view of providing equal rights to women in all fields and aspects of life from property and education to marital and sexual rights, the 2030 Agenda’s commitment of Government of India to achieve gender equality is prominent and transparent based on the norms contained in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

### **Objectives:**

Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)s have been endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016. Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG) and SDG 5 commits to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for



all along with lifelong learning opportunities and protection of women in workplace. Its key targets are -

- Free primary and secondary education for all irrespective of gender.
- Access to quality and fruitful pre-primary education for all children.
- Eliminate all types of gender disparities in the field of education.
- Encourage inclusive education and provide safety for the girl child in the school premises.
- To eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres including child marriage, trafficking and sexual exploitation.
- To ensure full participation of women in decision making and leadership.
- To provide universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.
- To promote and encourage women empowerment by encouraging and enabling the use of information and communication technology.
- To adopt, strengthen and enforce legislation policies so as to ensure equal rights to women and girls in all fields.

### **Gender Equality:**

Gender equality is denotative of providing equal rights and opportunities for girls and boys in all spheres of life. The milestone definition on gender equality given by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10th December 1948 is as follows: *“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” and that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, birth or other status.”* The Articles 14,15(1), 15(3), 16,21 and 23 of the Indian Constitution guarantee gender equality. But the path to gender equality in India is not at all a smooth one, it is all stones and pebbles. Continuous struggle to fight the patriarchal society to uproot the ingrained concepts of child marriage, child abuse and trafficking needs much patience, resilience and a positive mind-set. The key issues which need to be addressed in gender equality are -

- Limited access of women to education.
- Gender-based violence in domestic fields.
- Bridging the gender gap.
- Disparities in salary due to gender discrimination.
- Decision making power of women related to marriage and timing of birth.
- Protection and preservation of safety of women in their area of work.

**Major Initiatives taken by the Government in the field of Education to Achieve Gender Equality:**

Women education plays a significant role in the development of the country. An educated woman can not only contribute to the education of her children but also to the finances of the family and on a larger scale may help in the overall financial growth of the country.

**(A) National Education Policy (NEP), 2020:** The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 synergies with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and SDG 5 among the 17 SDGs endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016. SDG 4 keeps in view of providing equal rights to women in all field, that is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and provide lifelong learning opportunities for all” and SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality in the field of education and provide protection to women in the workplace. and aims to reflect transformative reforms in the educational arena. It lays stress on gender inclusiveness in the field of education, especially in schools, including women and transgenders. It signifies the importance of quality education through varied changes in the curricula and counts on equity of students at large.

**(B) Beti Bachao Beti Padhao:** Government of India launched the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2015 which started in Panipat, Haryana. Its English translate goes as “Save the girl child, educate the girl child”. It stresses on declining child sex ratio, voices against gender discrimination and promotes education of the girl child and overall change the mindset of the people towards the girl child. Honour killing is still being practised in many remote villages of India where girl child is murdered at birth as it is believed to have brought dishonour to the family. So, it is the call of the hour to protect the girl

child and this is where the importance of this scheme lies. Its main objectives are:

- Improvement in the child sex ratio of the country.
- Ensure survival and protection of the girl child.
- Prevent gender- based sex selective education.
- Promote and ensure education of the girl child.

**(C) Samagra Sikkha Abhijan (SSA):** SSA, launched in 2018 is an integrated scheme on School Education which tries to bring three schemes under one umbrella, Sarva Sikkha Abhijan, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan and Teacher Education. The scheme is in accordance with SDG 4, Sustainable Goal for Education. Besides providing free and compulsory education to all children at school level in accordance with the Sarva Sikkha Act of 2009, it also alignes with the National Education Policy 2020. It encompasses inclusive education by bridging gender gaps in schools, minimizing learning gaps and enhancing learning outcomes. To refer, the Goal SDG- 4.5 states that “By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of Education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.” Its main objectives related to women education are -

- Implementing recommendation of National Education Policy 2020.
- Free and compulsory education for children of 6 to 14 years of age.
- Bridging social and gender gaps.
- Focus on girl child education.
- Reduce dropout rates and ensuring retention of children in schools until the completion of elementary education.

**(D) NISHTHA:** NISHTHA (National Initiative for School Heads’ and Teachers’ Holistic Advancement) is an integrated teacher training programme under the scheme Samagra Sikkha in 2019-2020. It aims at “Improving Quality of School Education through Integrated Teacher Training”. Its main objectives are -

- To train teachers to create a joyful, interactive and inclusive classroom environment.
- To train teachers to act as the first level counsellors and be alert of the emotional and psychosocial responses of the students.
- To train the teachers so as to develop and strengthen the hidden skills of the students and enhance their personal growth.
- To train the teachers to help the students develop their psychosocial qualities.
- To develop a stress-free environment in the school where students will feel free to exhibit their skills.
- To stress on activity-based learning for better grasping of the learning material.
- To train the teachers to stress on holistic development of the children.

**(E) Rani Laxmibai Aatma Raksha Prashikshan:** It is a self defense programme under the Samagra Sikkha Scheme for girls in elementary and secondary schools to ensure safety of girls and boost their self-confidence, was launched in the year 2023-2024 and was implemented in schools for a period of three months from 01.01.2023 to 31.12.2023. The fund allotted is 5000/ per month per school for a period of three months. The skills taught are Karate, Taekwondo, Wushu, and Judo. Its main objectives are -

- Teach self-defence technique to the girls so that they can defend themselves from unwanted physical assault.
- To inculcate self confidence among girls.
- To make the girl students aware about good touch and bad touch.
- To help girls aware about the women helpline numbers and use them in any sort of adverse and difficult situations.
- To educate girls about laws related to domestic violence.

**(F) Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme (KGBV):** KGBV Scheme was launched by the Government of India in July, 2004 with a view to set up residential school for the girls of the backward communities, especially SC, ST and OBC. KGBV Scheme later merged with the SSA in the XIIth plan with effect from April, 2007 which finally merged with the bigger umbrella of Saamagra Sikkha Abhiyan (2018-19). The scheme focuses on -

- Quality education of girls from disadvantaged sections from class VI to XII.
- It covers girls from SC, ST, OBC, Minority Communities and BPL families.
- KGBV provides the facility of at least one residential school of girls for the backward communities in each block.

In spite of all the above policies implemented by the Government, the real life scenario is somewhat different. There is a marked hiatus between the theoretical agenda of the policies undertaken and their practical implications.

So, the question automatically bubbles in our cerebrum: Are the “other” really safe to pursue education and build careers in a safe environment where they will not be subjugated to any type of mental or physical assault?

When we probe deeper into the situation, it echoes something different. The feminine gender has been covered with an invisible veil behind which the darker side of the masculine mask is exposed. They constantly treat their subjects as mere objects of possession whom they can torment with different facets of torture, be it social, economic, psychological or psychosocial thereby imposing heavy taxation on their brain. Deprivation in the cultural world till persists. Women are regarded as culturally inferior to their male counterpart as they are primarily conceived as embodiment of nature bereft of intellectual embellishment. From a time immemorial they have been denied access to the world of literature and culture which had been thought to be a hegemonic property.

Going back to the dawn of human civilization we may say that as Greek Ecclesiast John Chrysostym (AD 347-407) called women, "Foe to friendship, and inescapable punishment, a necessary evil". This tendency to look upon women as derogatory creatures continued when Alexander Pope, a British Poet, asserted, "Most women have no character at all. With the evolution of civilization, the first voice of the ‘subaltern’ was sounded in A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792) by Mary Wollstonecraft who argued for women to be “duly prepared by education to be the companions of men” and call for the members of her sex to manage their lives by recognizing that their

rights and abilities are equal to those of men. Thus, the need for women education as a safeguard to socio, political and economic injustice is emphasized by Virginia Woolf in her treatise *A Room of One's Own* (1929). She points out the dichotomy and hypocrisy of the male writers who posit women as fantasies in writings while in reality it is opposed to them. What a girl needs to exist and to be fertile in the world of creation is "a room of one's own." Simone de Beauvoir in her seminal work *The Second Sex* (1949) postulates the condition of women in a telling manner. "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman ...it is the civilization as a whole that produces this creature intermediate between man and eunuch, which is described as feminine".

### **Conclusion:**

Taking into consideration all these facets of lives of women and the need for the abolishment of gender discrimination we may say that a congenial socio- cultural environment should be given to the women for their real progression. If not so, equality will remain only a fiction, not a reality. We should render women such a space in which they will create new life, new vision and a thinking, so to say, a new relationship to the universe with a bold assertion of their own power.

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# EDUCATE TO ELEVATE: ROLE OF LEARNING IN GENDER PARITY

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## Abstract:

Education is essential for promoting gender equality in the quickly evolving world of today because it addresses historical inequalities that restrict possibilities for women and oppressed genders. This chapter examines how education provides equal access to resources, leadership positions, and opportunities for personal growth, thereby bridging the gender gap. In order to create an environment where everyone, regardless of gender, has equal opportunities to achieve, educational institutions can challenge traditional gender norms by implementing inclusive curricula and gender-sensitive teaching practices. Through education, students may challenge social norms, stand up for their rights, and make well-informed decisions about their futures. Beyond merely imparting knowledge, it builds self-esteem, shapes attitudes, and fosters the idea that men and women should have equal freedom to follow their dreams. Additionally, the study highlights the broader societal benefits of gender-equal education, such as greater social mobility, increased economic participation, and a reduction in gender-based violence. By integrating gender equality into educational policies and practices, societies can foster long-term, sustainable change that contributes to a more just world. Ultimately, this book chapter emphasizes that gender-equal education is essential for a society where all individuals have equal opportunities for success and fulfillment.

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**Keywords:** *Gender Equality, Education, Inclusive Learning, Empowerment, Gender-Sensitive Teaching, Equal Opportunities*

### **Introduction:**

**E**ducation is one of the best ways to eliminate gender bias, empower women, and create equal opportunity. The globe still struggles with gender inequality (UNESCO, 2020). Despite progress, education inequities persist, especially in low-income, rural, and conflict-affected areas. In these conditions, early marriage, gender-based violence, cultural norms, and insufficient infrastructure limit girls' access to high-quality education. Education may interrupt these loops by giving people the information and tools to question gender conventions. We can inspire girls and boys to question cultural norms and broaden their chances by creating inclusive, gender-sensitive schools. Gender equality in education benefits individuals and society since educated people are more likely to work and contribute to economic growth.

A holistic approach to education quality and availability is needed to close the gender gap. This requires gender-responsive curricula, inclusive teaching practices, and teacher training to ensure an equal opportunity environment. Teachers influence student attitudes and create an inclusive, respected environment. Policies must also address child marriage, gender-based violence, and school discrimination. Encourage girls to pursue STEM careers to provide equal opportunity. Governments, educators, and communities must collaborate to make education inclusive and accessible for all children to break gender stereotypes and promote equality.

### **Importance of Education in Achieving Gender Parity:**

Education empowers people by giving them the knowledge and skills to question gender norms and conventional roles that limit women and other marginalized genders. Gender-sensitive curriculum may eliminate preconceptions and promote respect, equality, and diversity in education. Education gives equal opportunity access, giving boys and girls equal access to resources, leadership roles, and personal growth, giving them fair chances for success in life. Women with higher education are more likely to advocate for gender equality, work,

and contribute to economic progress, which advances society. By questioning cultural norms and behaviours that sustain gender-based violence, education can reduce it. It also fosters social mobility and economic involvement, giving women and men equal economic possibilities, creating a more balanced and equitable society. Finally, gender-equal education fosters a culture where equality is the norm, fostering social growth and development for future generations.

### **Theoretical Background:**

Gender equality in education remains a critical issue, with research highlighting the role of educational practices in challenging gender norms. Adams and Patel (2021) examined gender-sensitive teaching methods and found that such approaches disrupt traditional gender roles, creating inclusive learning environments for both males and females. Their study emphasized the necessity of a gender-responsive curriculum to confront stereotypes and promote equitable learning opportunities. Similarly, Gonzalez et al. (2022) explored the impact of STEM education on gender equality, revealing that gender biases discourage girls from pursuing STEM careers. They recommended gender-neutral STEM courses and proactive measures to empower female students in science and technology fields. Addressing these biases early in education is essential for long-term inclusion in STEM disciplines. Furthermore, Miller and Zhang (2023) investigated the link between gender-equal education and economic growth, concluding that societies prioritizing education for all genders experience faster economic development. Women with higher education contribute to entrepreneurship and innovation, fostering sustainable economic stability. Lastly, Singh and Sharma (2024) analyzed government policies promoting gender equality in education, highlighting that scholarships and gender-equitable curricula significantly improve female education, particularly in marginalized communities. Their findings underscore the importance of policies ensuring equal access and quality education for all genders.

### **Empowering Teachers for Gender Equality:**

Empowering teachers for gender equality is crucial in fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments. By equipping educators with knowledge, skills, and strategies, they can challenge stereotypes,

promote fairness, and support diverse identities. Gender-sensitive teaching enhances student outcomes, nurtures respect, and contributes to a more just and progressive society.

- **Equal Access to Education for All Genders:** All genders must have equal access to education in order to achieve economic independence, social mobility, and empowerment. Individual development and community prosperity are hampered by gender inequalities in education, particularly for females and gender minorities. Addressing obstacles including cost, physical accessibility, and social standards is necessary to provide equal access. All genders must be given the chance to realize their full potential at educational institutions. In order to promote gender equality and advancement in society at large, this step is essential.
- **Promoting Gender Equality in Classroom Practices:** Promoting gender equality in classrooms helps dismantle stereotypes and foster inclusivity. Gender-sensitive teaching, like using neutral language and equal participation, improves attitudes towards equality. Encouraging all genders in subjects like STEM for girls and caregiving for boys creates a balanced approach. This empowers students and supports a more equitable learning environment.
- **Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Educational Settings:** Gender-based violence (GBV) in schools impacts students' wellbeing and makes it more difficult for them to receive an education. Gender-sensitive initiatives and anti-violence regulations lower the number of GBV cases. Safety is promoted through counselling, teaching on respectful relationships, and clear reporting procedures. These initiatives create welcoming spaces where people of all genders can flourish.

### **Persistent Barriers to Gender Parity in Education:**

Despite progress, several challenges hinder the attainment of gender parity in education. These include socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, and institutional barriers.

- **Economic Constraints:** Due to budgetary constraints, families in many low-income nations place a higher priority on the

education of males than girls. Instead of going to school, girls are frequently required to help out around the family (GPE, 2020). Female students are disproportionately impacted by the lack of safe learning environments, affordable education, and transportation (UNICEF, 2021).

- **Institutional Barriers:** Curriculum that perpetuates stereotypes is a common way for educational institutions to reinforce gender biases. Additionally, the lack of female role models in leadership and teaching positions can deter young girls from pursuing higher education and professional careers (OECD, 2018).
- **Cultural Norms and Societal Expectations:** Gender equality in education is severely hampered in many areas by cultural norms and societal expectations. These conventions frequently promote gender role preconceptions and give preference to boys' schooling over girls'. A change in cultural attitudes and beliefs is necessary to dismantle these firmly held assumptions, although this can be difficult and take time. Girls are frequently deterred from seeking education by deeply embedded gender stereotypes, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) professions (UNESCO, 2021). Women's access to school is further restricted by cultural norms such as gender-based violence and early marriage (Plan International, 2019).
- **Lack of Gender-Sensitive Policies and Resources:** Gender-sensitive policies, resources, and frameworks to promote gender equality are still lacking in many educational institutions. Achieving equality becomes challenging in the absence of clear policies or sufficient funding to meet gender-specific requirements, such as schooling for girls in rural areas or for gender minorities. Both financial resources and political will are needed to create and carry out such plans.
- **Inadequate Teacher Training on Gender Equality:** Teachers play a critical role in shaping attitudes towards gender equality, yet many educators may not be sufficiently trained in gender-sensitive teaching methods. Without proper training, teachers might unknowingly reinforce gender biases through classroom interactions, curricula, and teaching styles. Effective teacher training on gender equality is crucial for overcoming this challenge.
- **Gender-Based Violence and Harassment:** Gender-based violence and harassment in schools can deter girls and gender

minorities from accessing education and thriving in learning environments. It is essential to have effective anti-violence policies, reporting mechanisms, and support systems to ensure that schools are safe and inclusive spaces for all students.

- **Lack of Female Role Models in Education:** In many educational settings, particularly in STEM and leadership roles, there is a lack of female role models. This absence can discourage girls from pursuing these fields. Encouraging more women into these professions and highlighting female role models can inspire young students and reduce gender disparity in education.

### **Strategies for Promoting Gender Parity Through Education**

To achieve gender parity in education, concerted efforts from governments, educational institutions, and civil society are required. The following strategies can help address existing gaps -

- **Encourage Policy Reforms for Equal Access:** Governments should keep enforcing and bolstering laws that guarantee all genders equal access to education, with a special emphasis on underrepresented populations like girls and gender minorities. To level the playing field, policies like affirmative action, legal frameworks, and scholarships should be taken into account. This includes mandated gender-sensitive curricula, subsidies for underrepresented groups, and legislation prohibiting gender discrimination (World Bank, 2020).
- **Promote Gender-Sensitive Pedagogy:** Gender stereotypes should be questioned and varied role models should be encouraged in curricula. A more inclusive learning environment can be achieved by implementing gender-sensitive teaching strategies (UNESCO, 2019). Teachers should get training on gender-sensitive teaching strategies, such as addressing stereotypes in texts and class activities, providing equitable participation opportunities, and use inclusive language. This contributes to fostering an atmosphere in which people of all genders feel powerful and capable of succeeding in any sector.
- **Financial Support and Infrastructure Development:** Providing scholarships, free menstrual hygiene products, and safe transportation can help remove financial and logistical

barriers to girls' education. Schools should also improve infrastructure, including separate sanitation facilities for boys and girls (UNICEF, 2020).

- **Focus on Intersectionality in Gender Equality Programs:** Initiatives for gender equality should consider the intersections of socioeconomic class, disability, and race. This makes sure that all pupils, particularly those who face exacerbated disadvantages, gain from educational improvements. Social views can be changed by including communities in conversations about gender equality and the advantages of education. Higher enrolment and retention rates can be promoted by initiatives that inform parents about the value of girls' education (Plan International, 2021).
- **Encouraging Women in STEM and Leadership:** Targeted initiatives to increase female participation in STEM fields and leadership roles can create more opportunities for women. Mentorship programs and affirmative action policies can help bridge gender gaps in traditionally male-dominated sectors (OECD, 2020).
- **Increase Awareness and Action Against Gender-Based Violence:** Educational institutions must implement robust anti-violence policies and raise awareness about gender-based violence (GBV) within schools. This includes training staff to handle and report incidents, establishing counselling services for victims, and educating students on respect and consent.
- **Incorporate Gender-Responsive Curriculum and Mentorship Programs:** In order to meet the needs of females and gender minorities, schools should implement mentorship programs and gender-responsive curricula. This will promote more general cultural shifts toward equality and aid in closing gender gaps in historically male-dominated industries like STEM.

### **Conclusion:**

Education is essential for advancing gender equality and closing the gender gap. We enable people, particularly females and gender minorities, to question social conventions by creating inclusive, gender-sensitive environments. Even while there has been progress, there are still many obstacles to overcome, especially in

underprivileged areas where access to school is hampered by gender-based violence, early marriage, and cultural traditions. A thorough strategy is required, emphasizing both access and high-quality education. Equal opportunity requires inclusive teaching practices, gender-responsive curricula, and teacher preparation. Policies should promote girls' involvement in male-dominated professions like STEM and overcome obstacles like child marriage. By promoting social and economic advancement, achieving gender equality in education benefits both people and societies. To do this, governments, educators, and communities must work together.

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