

UNPACKING EXCLUSION IN THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to overhaul India's education system by promoting inclusivity, equity, and quality, with a focus on marginalized communities such as socio-economically disadvantaged groups, women, and children with disabilities. Despite the policy's progressive goals, challenges such as infrastructure gaps, inadequate teacher training, entrenched social biases, and digital divides persist, hindering marginalized groups' access to education. This paper explores the barriers to inclusive education outlined in NEP 2020 and the need for strategic interventions to achieve its vision of equitable access for all. The study highlights how systemic inequities, particularly those related to caste, gender, and class, exacerbate exclusion in education. It further examines the impact of rural-urban divides, socio-economic constraints, cultural and linguistic exclusions, and caste-based discrimination. The paper draws on Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory and Intersectionality to analyze the multifaceted nature of educational exclusion. It argues that while NEP 2020 provides a framework for addressing these challenges, its success depends on targeted interventions, increased financial investment, and continuous stakeholder engagement. The findings suggest that a dynamic, intersectional approach, alongside improvements in digital infrastructure and teacher training, is essential to overcoming these barriers and ensuring a more inclusive and equitable education system in India.

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