

Equity and Inclusion in Education under NEP-2020: A Comparative Analysis between Urban and Rural Schools in Srikakulam District, Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effectiveness of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in promoting equitable and inclusive education in Srikakulam District, Andhra Pradesh, with a focus on the perspectives of male and female teachers from both urban and rural schools. NEP-2020 aims to address educational disparities related to gender, socio-economic status, geography, and disability, striving to create a holistic and accessible education system. The study involved a survey of 250 teachers (130 male and 120 female) from urban and rural schools in the district. The research aims to assess the level of awareness, implementation, and impact of NEP-2020, focusing on the challenges teachers face in promoting inclusive education. The study also explores gender differences in perceptions about the policy's effectiveness. Findings suggest that urban teachers demonstrate higher levels of awareness about NEP-2020 than rural teachers, with female teachers generally showing slightly greater awareness than male teachers. While most teachers feel that NEP-2020 positively impacts inclusivity, urban teachers report more optimism than their rural counterparts. Rural teachers face significant challenges, particularly in terms of infrastructure, resources, and socio-cultural barriers, with 60% of them citing infrastructure issues as a key hindrance. Gender sensitivity is also a major factor, with female teachers emphasizing gender inclusivity more than male teachers. Based on these findings, the study recommends targeted training programs for rural teachers, improved infrastructure in rural schools, and enhanced gender sensitivity in teacher training and curriculum development. This research underscores the need for a region-specific approach to effectively implement NEP-2020, addressing the unique challenges faced by urban and rural schools while promoting gender equity and inclusivity in education.

Keywords: *Equitable, Inclusive Education, NEP 2020*

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes providing equitable and inclusive education, with a vision to create a holistic, accessible, and quality education system for all students. The policy recognizes the importance of addressing disparities in education related to gender, socio-economic status, geography, and disability. In line with these goals, this study aims to explore the effectiveness of NEP-2020 in promoting inclusive education in Srikakulam District, Andhra Pradesh, by examining the

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perspectives of both male and female teachers in urban and rural schools. Srikakulam District, situated in the northeastern part of Andhra Pradesh, presents unique challenges and opportunities regarding educational equity. This study intends to assess the level of awareness, implementation, and impact of NEP-2020 in this region, focusing on both urban and rural educational settings. The survey conducted for this study includes 250 respondents: 130 male and 120 female teachers, with an equal distribution between urban and rural schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An analysis of existing research on NEP 2020, equitable education, and inclusion practices

Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To assess the level of awareness and understanding of NEP-2020 among teachers in Srikakulam District.
2. To examine the effectiveness of NEP-2020 in promoting equitable and inclusive education.
3. To identify the challenges faced by teachers in implementing inclusive education in both urban and rural areas.
4. To evaluate the differences in perceptions of male and female teachers regarding the implementation of NEP-2020.
5. To propose recommendations based on the findings to improve the inclusivity and equity of education in the region.

Hypotheses:

The main hypothesis of this study are:

- **H1:** There is a significant difference in the perception of equitable and inclusive education between urban and rural teachers.
- **H2:** Male and female teachers exhibit different levels of awareness and understanding of NEP-2020.
- **H3:** Teachers in rural areas face more challenges in implementing inclusive education compared to those in urban areas.

METHODOLOGY

Sample Selection: The study involved a total sample of 250 respondents from Srikakulam District, with the sample divided as follows:

- 130 male teachers (65 from urban and 65 from rural schools)
- 120 female teachers (60 from urban and 60 from rural schools)

Survey Design: The data was collected through a structured questionnaire that included both closed and open-ended questions. The questionnaire covered the following areas:

Data Collection: The survey was administered in person and online to ensure wide coverage. Teachers from both urban and rural areas participated in the survey during the months of December 2024 to February 2025.

Data Analysis: Data was analyzed using quantitative and qualitative techniques:

- Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the survey data.

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- T-tests and chi-square tests were employed to test hypotheses related to the differences between urban and rural teachers, as well as male and female teachers.
- Open-ended responses were coded and analyzed for common themes.

1. Awareness of NEP-2020:

- 80% of urban teachers reported a high level of awareness about NEP-2020, while only 55% of rural teachers expressed similar awareness.
- Female teachers demonstrated slightly higher awareness compared to male teachers (76% vs. 70%).

2. Perceived Effectiveness of NEP-2020 in Promoting Inclusivity:

- 75% of urban teachers felt that NEP-2020 had positively impacted inclusive education, compared to 65% of rural teachers.
- Male teachers in urban areas were more likely to believe that NEP-2020 promoted inclusivity (80%) compared to their rural counterparts (70%).

3. Challenges in Implementation:

- A major challenge reported by 60% of rural teachers was the lack of infrastructure and resources, compared to only 40% of urban teachers.
- 50% of female teachers in rural areas highlighted cultural barriers as a challenge, whereas male teachers in both urban and rural areas cited the lack of training as the primary obstacle.

4. Gender Differences in Perception:

- Female teachers were more likely to emphasize the importance of gender inclusivity, with 78% expressing this view, compared to 68% of male teachers.
- Urban female teachers were particularly vocal about the positive impact of NEP-2020 on gender equality in education.

Findings:

1. **Awareness:** Awareness of NEP-2020 is significantly higher among urban teachers compared to rural teachers. Gender differences in awareness are marginal, but female teachers report slightly better knowledge of the policy.
2. **Effectiveness:** The majority of teachers believe that NEP-2020 has had a positive effect on promoting inclusivity in education, with urban teachers being more optimistic than their rural counterparts.
3. **Implementation Challenges:** Rural teachers face greater challenges related to infrastructure, resources, and socio-cultural barriers. These challenges hinder the effective implementation of inclusive education compared to urban teachers.
4. **Gender Sensitivity:** Female teachers, especially in urban areas, are more inclined to recognize the significance of gender inclusivity in education and the role of NEP-2020 in promoting gender equity.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Enhance Training Programs:** More targeted training programs for rural teachers to improve their awareness and understanding of NEP-2020.
2. **Improve Infrastructure:** Address infrastructure gaps in rural schools to facilitate the effective implementation of inclusive education.

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- 3. Gender Sensitivity Programs:** Promote gender sensitivity in teacher training and curriculum design to support NEP-2020's goals of equity and inclusivity.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the importance of understanding the regional and gender-based disparities in the implementation of NEP-2020. While urban teachers report higher levels of awareness and optimism regarding the policy's impact on inclusive education, rural teachers face significant challenges, especially related to infrastructure and resources. The study also finds that female teachers, particularly in urban areas, are more likely to support the gender inclusivity goals of NEP-2020.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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