

Early Childhood Care and Education for Children with Disabilities in National Education Policy 2020 of India: A Critique

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Received: 28.07.2021 Accepted: 09.10.2021

Abstract

The recent implementation of the NEP 2020 signifies a momentous and significant shift from the previous educational landscape in India. This shift places a tremendous emphasis on the principles of inclusivity and holistic development. In the context of 'Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)' for children with disabilities, this study conducts a comprehensive and thorough analysis of the various provisions and far-reaching implications found within the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The research methodology employed in this study revolves around a qualitative research design. Thematic analysis was applied to the data, and the findings were interpreted within selected themes. Through an exhaustive literature review and document analysis, the study aims to comprehend the existing policies, provisions, and criticisms regarding early childhood care and education for children with disabilities in India, especially with reference to the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020.

Keywords: Early Childhood Care and Education, National Education Policy 2020, Inclusion, Children with Disabilities, Holistic Development, Critique.

Introduction

The early years of childhood are of utmost importance when it comes to the growth and development of both physical and cognitive abilities (Blauw-Hospers, and Hadders-Algra, 2005; Bruer, 1998). The extent to which an individual reaches their full developmental potential is determined by a combination of genetic factors and external influences (NCERT, 2006; Ramey, and Ramey, 1998). It is during these years, which are widely regarded as the most critical and pivotal in the lifelong development of children, that the speed of development experienced by individuals is notably and undeniably rapid beyond measure (NCERT, 2006). It was determined through extensive research conducted by highly esteemed neuroscientists that during the critical developmental stage of early childhood (Desai, and Mohite, 2011; Kaur et al., 2006), a multitude of synaptic connections are meticulously forged within the intricate neural network of the human brain. Moreover, it has been observed that by the tender age of three years, a staggering around 85 percent of the child's cerebral organ has undergone an intricate and awe-inspiring process of maturation and growth, resulting in the establishment of a sophisticated cognitive architecture (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000).

To ensure optimal growth and development, it is essential to provide healthcare, proper nutrition, education, shelter, and protection (Seth and Agarwal, 2016; Majnemer, 1998.). While healthcare measures have been well-established, there has been a lack of adequate attention given to education and learning during the crucial formative years (DWCD, 1993). It is in this context that the "consensus statement by the Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP) on early childhood development (ECD)" is highly commendable (Bharadva, 2020). This statement places a strong emphasis on brain development and

interventions for ECD, recognizing the need for early and inclusive interventions that are accessible to all individuals, particularly those from high-risk and marginalized backgrounds (Bharadva, 2020).

Need of Early Childhood Care and Education for CwDs

The prioritization of inclusion and overall development for children with disabilities (CwDs) in low- and middle-income settings is imperative to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Archambault, Côté, and Raynault, 2019). Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) serves as a vital component for CwDs due to various reasons. Initially, ECCE offers early intervention and assistance, thereby significantly enhancing their developmental outcomes (Cassady, Mucherah, and Hoffman, 2003). The identification of special needs at an early stage, coupled with appropriate interventions, can result in better long-term outcomes for these individuals (Farewell et al., 2020). Furthermore, ECCE facilitates the acquisition of crucial skills and abilities necessary for their holistic development, encompassing social, emotional, cognitive, and physical aspects (Etzold-Frometa, 2014). Tailoring early childhood programs to address the specific needs of CwDs ensures that they receive the requisite support and resources to flourish (Farewell et al., 2020). Additionally, ECCE assumes a pivotal role in fostering inclusivity and acceptance of CwDs within the wider community (Huang and Diamond, 2009). By providing opportunities for interaction and education alongside typically developing peers, ECCE dismantles barriers and promotes understanding and empathy among all children (Farewell et al., 2020; Purdue, 2006). Consequently, the ECCE for CwDs is indispensable for their overall well-being, development, and integration into society (DeVore and Russell, 2007). It serves as the bedrock for their future achievements and contributes to the establishment of a more inclusive and supportive environment for all children.

Need and Significance of the Study

Having a thorough understanding and awareness of the strategies formulated and implemented by the governing bodies regarding the allocation and implementation of healthcare provisions, as well as the facilitation of early childhood education and care, is of utmost importance to cater to the needs of every individual child within the nation's borders. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a comprehensive framework that lays out the vision and strategy for the advancement of education in India. Endorsed by the Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020, this policy aims to address the evolving requirements of the education system, promoting innovation, inclusivity, and holistic development. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India presents a comprehensive vision for transforming the education system, with a strong focus on inclusivity and equal access to high-quality education. The present analysis centers on the specific provisions of ECCE for CwDs within the NEP 2020. By examining these provisions, the article seeks to offer insights into the strengths, weaknesses, and potential areas for enhancement.

Objectives of the Study

The present study was carried out to serve the following two broad objectives:

1. To comprehend the nuances and intricacies of Early Childhood Care and Education as outlined in the National Education Policy 2020.
2. To critically examine and evaluate the provisions for Early Childhood Care and Education catering to the needs of children with disabilities as outlined in the National Education Policy of 2020 in India.

Research Questions

The present study was carried out to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the key nuances and intricacies of Early Childhood Care and Education, as articulated in the National Education Policy of 2020?
2. How effectively does the National Education Policy of 2020 address the specific needs of children with disabilities in the provisions for Early Childhood Care and Education?
3. What critical aspects of inclusion, support, and accessibility are present or lacking in the outlined provisions for Early Childhood Care and Education to cater to the diverse needs of children with disabilities in the National Education Policy of 2020?

Review of Literature

The provision of early ECCE for CwDs in India is a pressing requirement that demands attention (Samyukta, 2019). Ensuring the comprehensive integration and educational achievements of children with disabilities in India is imperative (Hirpa, 2021). The notion of inclusive early childhood care and education for children with disabilities has been acknowledged and embraced in Indian policy and

legislation for quite some time (Elena, 2017), and the country has implemented numerous policies and programs to address early childhood development (ECD) and early intervention services for children with developmental delays and disabilities (Rao et al., 2014). Nonetheless, there exist substantial gaps and deficiencies in the policies and ECCE program plans (Ansari and Nikam, 2021). Furthermore, it has been observed that the policies about early intervention services lack coherence and effective implementation mechanisms (Agrawal et al., 2021; Elena, 2017).

The readiness of schools, the training of teachers, and the awareness of stakeholders regarding the necessity and implementation process of ECCE for CwDs have been deemed inadequate (Harri, Nurafni, and Nuzulul, 2017). In addition, studies have indicated that the curriculum, teaching methods, and evaluation procedures are not suitably tailored to cater to the diverse needs of children with disabilities (Madan and Sharma, 2013). Moreover, it has been found that schools and ECCE centers often lack the necessary resources to effectively implement inclusive early childhood care and education programs (Putra, 2018; Harri, Nurafni, and Nuzulul, 2017). Teachers encounter challenges such as limited resources, inadequate training and knowledge, and insufficient administrative support (Putra, 2018; Ismiatun, & Atika, 2020; Srivastava, 2020). The limited facilities available to support CwDs in schools and ECCE centers present a hurdle to the implementation of inclusive ECCE (Sandro, 2016). In the realm of non-formal education, such as early childhood education, the concept of inclusive ECCE is not yet fully matured (Putra, 2018; Beighley, 2013). Thus, it is crucial to emphasize the development of inclusive and appropriate ECCE programs for CwDs (Ansari and Nikam, 2021; MWCD, 2013).

In “low- and middle-income countries”, inclusive early learning programs are often inaccessible, particularly in rural areas (Hanne, 2011; Rao et al., 2014). Furthermore, the implementation of national laws governing special education frequently receives criticism for not adequately addressing the needs of CwDs (Hanne, 2011; Srivastava, 2020). Additionally, the provision of educational resources in early childhood development centers is frequently overlooked at the national and local levels, especially in disadvantaged areas (Pang, and Richey, 2005; Rao et al., 2014; Panigrahy, and Swain, 2019).

The ECCE program for CwDs in India has been neglected, resulting in a lack of access to quality education and support (Grills, 2019). A study conducted in India revealed that CwDs had lower levels of educational exposure and achievement compared to their peers without disabilities. Despite government efforts to enhance ECCE through various initiatives and programs, the country has not been able to establish non-negotiable quality standards for ECCE (Reetu, Renu, and Adarsh, 2017). As a result, targets have been missed and the quality of ECCE for CwDs has been compromised. In summary, it is imperative to address the challenges and enhance the quality of ECCE for CwDs in India.

Research Methodology

A qualitative research design was employed for the present study. Using an exhaustive literature review and document analysis, the study aims to comprehend the existing policies, provisions, and criticisms about early childhood care and education for CwDs in India, with a specific focus on the NEP, 2020. This methodology was deemed most appropriate for conducting a policy critique (Alan R. Sadovnik, 2017; Sallee, and Flood, 2012), enabling a thorough exploration of the intricacies and perspectives surrounding ECCE in the NEP 2020, particularly about CwDs.

Data Collection & Analysis

To fulfill the objectives and address the research questions of this study, an extensive literature review was carried out to gain insight into the existing studies, policies, and criticisms concerning ECCE for CwDs in India. Subsequently, the researchers analyzed the National Education Policy 2020 document to ascertain the specific provisions, objectives, strategies, guidelines, and functional mechanisms, and explore gaps in ECCE for children with disabilities within the NEP 2020. The data was analyzed thematically and the findings were interpreted very systematically.

Results and Discussion

Key Nuances and Intricacies of ECCE in NEP 2020 (Objective – I)

The NEP 2020 in India places great importance on the significance of ECCE as a crucial stage in the overall education continuum (Kamala, 2020). The policy acknowledges “the significance of establishing a solid foundation in the early years of a child's life and aims to ensure that all children have equal access to high-quality ECCE” (Pandey, 2021). The NEP 2020 delineates the subsequent key points concerning ECCE:

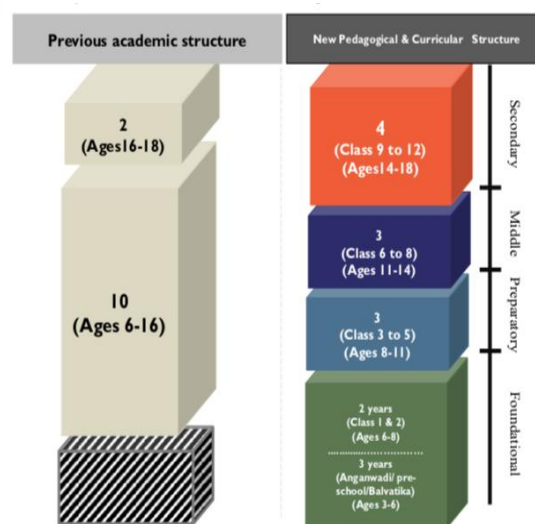
Universal Access: The policy strives to grant universal access to ECCE for all children aged 3-6. It underscores the importance of reaching children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, including those residing in rural and remote areas.

Holistic Development: NEP 2020 highlights “the holistic development of children during their early years, with a particular focus on their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical growth”. It acknowledges the crucial role of ECCE in establishing the groundwork for lifelong learning and well-being.

Curriculum and Pedagogy: The policy accentuates the necessity for age-appropriate, play-based, and activity-based learning approaches in ECCE. It encourages the utilization of local languages and dialects in teaching and learning to ensure the preservation and respect of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Professional Development: NEP 2020 underscores the importance of well-trained and motivated ECCE teachers and caregivers. It emphasizes the need for continuous professional development and support for individuals working in the ECCE sector.

Integration with School Education: The policy emphasizes the smooth transition from ECCE to primary education, ensuring that the progress made during the early years is built upon in subsequent stages of schooling.



Source: NEP 2020 Document

Overall, NEP 2020 acknowledges the pivotal role of ECCE in shaping the future of the country and aims to establish a solid foundation for all children by providing “universal access to high-quality early childhood care and education”.

The ECCE for CwDs in NEP 2020: A Critical Examination and Evaluation (Objective – 2)

The NEP 2020 in India outlines the significance of ECCE and its role in providing a strong foundation for children's lifelong learning and development. However, a critical analysis of the policy's approach to ECCE for CwDs reveals several areas that require attention and improvement.

Inadequate Implementation Mechanism: The issue that urgently needs attention is the implementation gap in ECCE under the framework of the NEP 2020 in India (Mishra, 2020). While NEP 2020 highlights the importance of ECCE and its role in establishing a firm basis for children's learning and development, there are obstacles in translating these policy goals into effective implementation on the ground (Pandey, 2021). One of the primary areas where the implementation gap exists is the unequal availability of high-quality ECCE across various regions and socio-economic backgrounds. Despite the policy's commitment to universal access, disparities in infrastructure, resources, and trained personnel impede the equitable provision of ECCE services, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Moreover, the successful integration of play-based and activity-based learning approaches, as prescribed in NEP 2020, necessitates comprehensive teacher training and professional development. However, the implementation gap lies in the inadequate investment and support provided to educators to effectively utilize these pedagogical methods, especially when addressing the diverse requirements of children, including those with special needs. Another aspect of

the implementation gap is the requirement for robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the quality and effectiveness of ECCE programs. Insufficient monitoring makes it difficult to assess the impact of ECCE initiatives, identify areas for enhancement, and ensure the intended outcomes of the policy are achieved. Additionally, aligning ECCE with the broader objectives of the education system, such as the seamless transition to primary education and the promotion of holistic child development, necessitates coordinated efforts among different levels of governance and stakeholder engagement. The implementation gap arises from the need for stronger coordination and collaboration among relevant authorities and organizations to ensure a unified and integrated approach to ECCE within the larger education framework (Huston, 2008). Addressing the implementation gap of ECCE in NEP 2020 requires a multi-faceted approach, including targeted investments in infrastructure, resources, and professional development, as well as the establishment of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. By bridging this gap, India can strive towards fully realizing the potential of ECCE in providing a solid foundation for children's learning and development, thereby contributing to the overall improvement of the education system.

Inadequate Teacher Training Programme: The NEP 2020 in India delineates the significance of ECCE (Pandey, 2021) and the necessity of well-trained educators to cater to the diverse requirements of children, encompassing those with special needs. However, there exist notable omissions in NEP 2020's approach to teacher training for ECCE educators serving. One substantial omission is the absence of specific and comprehensive guidelines for the training of ECCE educators to effectively facilitate CwDs. While the policy acknowledges the importance of inclusive education, it does not furnish detailed strategies or standards for equipping educators with the essential skills and knowledge to address the distinctive learning prerequisites of CwDs in the early childhood milieu (Times of India, 2021). Furthermore, there is a need for specialized training programs that concentrate on comprehending and implementing individualized learning plans, assistive technologies, and multi-disciplinary support systems for CwDs. These specialized training components are indispensable for educators to establish inclusive learning environments and provide tailored support to fulfill the diverse demands of CwDs in ECCE settings. Moreover, the policy could benefit from a stronger emphasis on practical, hands-on training experiences that allow educators to work directly with CwDs and gain practical insights into effective teaching strategies and interventions. Practical training opportunities can significantly enhance educators' capacity to create inclusive and supportive learning environments for CwDs within ECCE settings. Furthermore, the integration of ongoing professional development and support for ECCE educators serving CwDs is pivotal. NEP 2020 could provide clearer guidance on the provision of continuous training, mentorship, and resources to ensure that educators remain apprised of best practices and possess the necessary tools to address the evolving requirements of CwDs in early childhood education. Rectifying these omissions in NEP 2020's approach to teacher training for ECCE educators serving CwDs is imperative to ensure that all children, including those with special needs, receive high-quality, inclusive early childhood education. By providing targeted and comprehensive training for ECCE educators, India can endeavor to create a more equitable and supportive early childhood education system that caters to the diverse needs of all children.

Inadequate Resource Allocation and Infrastructure: The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India lacks a definitive standpoint on the allocation of resources and infrastructure for Early Childhood Care and Education centers that focus on CwDs. This absence of precise directives and provisions raises concerns regarding the sufficiency of resources and infrastructure to adequately support the varied requirements of CwDs within the ECCE framework. One of the primary concerns revolves around the absence of targeted resource allocation for ECCE centers that cater specifically to CwDs. Sufficient funding is indispensable to ensure that these centers possess the necessary resources, such as specialized learning materials, assistive technologies, and trained personnel, to provide tailored support for CwDs. The absence of specific provisions for targeted resource allocation may lead to an insufficiency of essential resources, thereby impeding the effective implementation of inclusive ECCE practices for CwDs. Furthermore, the policy fails to provide clear guidelines regarding the infrastructure prerequisites for ECCE centers that focus on CwDs. Accessible physical infrastructure, including facilities designed to accommodate diverse learning needs, is pivotal in creating inclusive learning environments. The absence of precise standards for infrastructure may result in inadequate facilities that do not fully meet the needs of CwDs, potentially obstructing their access to high-quality early childhood education. Additionally, the absence of a definitive standpoint

on resource allocation and infrastructure for ECCE centers that concentrate on CwDs may give rise to disparities in the availability of specialized services across different regions and communities. Without targeted provisions, there is a risk that certain ECCE centers may lack the necessary resources and infrastructure to effectively cater to the needs of CwDs, thereby leading to unequal access to quality early childhood education for this segment of the population. Addressing the absence of a standpoint on resource allocation and infrastructure for ECCE centers that focus on CwDs within the NEP 2020 is of utmost importance in ensuring “that all children, including those with special needs, have equitable access to high-quality early childhood education”. By providing specific guidelines and targeted provisions for resource allocation and infrastructure, India can strive towards establishing a more inclusive and supportive early childhood education system that satisfies the diverse needs of all children.

Lack of Parental and Community Engagement: The NEP 2020 in India places great emphasis on the significance of nurturing parental involvement and community engagement within the context of ECCE for CwDs. Nevertheless, a thorough examination of the policy's approach reveals several areas that warrant evaluation. To begin with, NEP 2020 aptly acknowledges “the critical role that parents and communities play in facilitating the comprehensive development of CwDs”. The policy duly recognizes the necessity for collaborative efforts between parents, caregivers, educators, and the wider community to establish inclusive and supportive environments for CwDs within the ECCE framework. This recognition stands as a positive aspect of the policy's approach, as it underscores the significance of involving all stakeholders in the ECCE of CwDs. However, the policy would benefit from more precise guidelines and strategies that effectively engage parents and communities in the education and support of CwDs within ECCE settings. While NEP 2020 acknowledges the importance of parental involvement and community engagement (Kamala, 2020), it fails to provide detailed frameworks or mechanisms for fostering meaningful partnerships between schools, ECCE centers, and families of CwDs. By offering clear guidelines and implementing best practices for involving parents in their children's learning, providing them with resources and support, and promoting community awareness and acceptance of CwDs, the policy's approach in this regard could be enhanced. Furthermore, the policy could place further emphasis on the necessity for targeted outreach and support programs that engage and empower parents of CwDs. Equipping parents with information, training, and resources to support their children's learning and development, as well as fostering a sense of community among families with CwDs, are essential components that could be more explicitly addressed within the policy. Moreover, NEP 2020 could benefit from a stronger focus on community-based initiatives and partnerships that aim to create inclusive environments for CwDs. Collaborative efforts with local organizations, community leaders, and support groups can play a significant role in promoting awareness, acceptance, and access to resources for CwDs within the broader community. By fostering stronger community engagement, the policy can contribute to creating a more inclusive and supportive ecosystem for CwDs within the context of ECCE. In conclusion, while NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of parental involvement and community engagement within the context of ECCE for CwDs, there is a need for more specific guidelines, targeted outreach programs, and community-based initiatives that effectively foster meaningful partnerships and create inclusive environments for CwDs within the ECCE system. Strengthening the policy's approach in these areas can contribute to building a more supportive and inclusive ECCE framework for CwDs in India.

Monitoring and Evaluation: The lack of a strong monitoring and evaluation framework within the NEP 2020 to evaluate the effectiveness of ECCE programs for CwDs is a significant gap that must be addressed. Continuous assessment of learning outcomes, feedback mechanisms from parents and educators, and data-driven insights are vital for enhancing and refining ECCE programs tailored to CwDs. A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework should encompass regular assessments of learning outcomes to track the progress of CwDs within ECCE programs. This should incorporate both academic and developmental milestones, enabling educators and stakeholders to gain insights into the effectiveness of the programs and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, feedback mechanisms from parents and educators play a crucial role in comprehending the unique needs and challenges of CwDs within ECCE settings. NEP 2020 must emphasize the significance of gathering feedback from these stakeholders to inform programmatic adjustments and ensure the effective fulfillment of the needs of CwDs. Furthermore, data-driven insights derived from monitoring and evaluation processes can provide valuable information for refining ECCE programs (Huston,

2008) tailored to CwDs. By analyzing data related to learning outcomes, participation, and the overall well-being of CwDs, policymakers, and educators can make well-informed decisions to enhance the quality and inclusivity of ECCE programs. In conclusion, the integration of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework within NEP 2020 is crucial to guarantee the effectiveness of ECCE programs for CwDs and their responsiveness to their unique needs. Through the continuous assessment of learning outcomes, the collection of feedback from stakeholders, and the utilization of data-driven insights, India can strive to refine and enhance ECCE programs, creating a more inclusive and supportive early childhood education system for children with disabilities.

Legal and Policy Framework: The synchronization between the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the prevailing disability rights laws and policies is of utmost importance to establish a robust legal basis for inclusive early childhood education (Kamala, 2020). While the policy highlights the significance of inclusiveness, it is imperative to ensure that it is in alignment with well-established disability rights laws and policies, as this will fortify the legal framework for inclusive education. Through the harmonization of NEP 2020 with existing disability rights laws and policies, India can guarantee the protection and upholding of the rights of CwDs within the early childhood education system. This synchronization can offer lucidity regarding the rights and entitlements of CwDs, as well as the responsibilities of educational institutions and authorities in delivering inclusive early childhood education. Moreover, a robust legal and policy framework can serve as a guiding principle for the advancement and implementation of inclusive practices within early childhood education. It can delineate the “obligations of educational institutions to cater to the diverse needs of CwDs”, provide imperative support services, and ensure the absence of discriminatory practices (Huston, 2008). In conclusion, enhancing the alignment of NEP 2020 with existing disability rights laws and policies will establish a firm legal foundation for inclusive ECCE in India. This synchronization can aid in safeguarding the rights of CwDs and promoting the development of inclusive and supportive ECCE practices throughout the nation.

Recommendations

The establishment of a robust implementation mechanism within the NEP 2020 for the ECCE tailored specifically to cater to the unique needs of CwDs requires a thorough and focused strategy. In this discourse, we hereby present feasible and practical suggestions to strengthen the implementation mechanism in question, aiming to enhance the efficacy and inclusivity of ECCE for CwDs.

1. *Development of an Inclusive Curriculum:* Elaborate a specialized curriculum framework for ECCE tailored specifically for CwDs, incorporating diverse learning styles, assistive technologies, and individualized learning plans. This curriculum should possess the qualities of flexibility and adaptability to cater effectively to the unique requirements of each child.
2. *Training and Professional Development for Educators:* Execute specialized training programs for ECCE educators that prioritize inclusive practices, early intervention strategies, and the utilization of assistive technologies. Continuous professional development should be provided to ensure educators are equipped with the necessary skills to effectively support CwDs.
3. *Allocation of Resources and Infrastructure:* Allocate specific funds for ECCE centers that cater to CwDs to guarantee the availability of specialized learning materials, assistive devices, and accessible infrastructure. This should include provisions for the creation of inclusive and barrier-free physical environments (Huston, 2008).
4. *Engagement of Parents and Communities:* Create outreach programs to educate and involve parents of CwDs in their children's early education. Foster partnerships with community organizations, support groups, and local leaders to establish a supportive ecosystem for CwDs within the community.
5. *Monitoring and Evaluation:* Establish a robust framework for monitoring and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of ECCE programs for CwDs. This should include regular assessments of learning outcomes, feedback mechanisms from parents and educators, and continuous improvement based on data-driven insights.
6. *Collaboration with Specialized Organizations:* Foster partnerships with organizations that specialize in special needs education to leverage their expertise and resources in implementing tailored ECCE programs for CwDs (Cameron & Tveit, 2017).
7. *Research and Innovation:* Encourage research and innovation in the field of ECCE for CwDs to develop evidence-based practices, interventions, and technologies that can enhance the learning experience for these children.

8. *Legal and Policy Framework*: Ensure that the legal and policy framework fully supports the rights and inclusion of CwDs in ECCE. This includes aligning with existing disability rights laws and policies to provide a strong legal foundation for inclusive early childhood education.

By putting into practice these suggestions and proposals, the National Education Policy of 2020 can construct and establish a strong and resilient framework that will effectively and efficiently facilitate the provision of top-notch, superior, and all-encompassing ECCE for CwDs thereby guaranteeing and assuring that they are provided with the requisite assistance, help, and necessary resources that will enable and empower them to achieve their comprehensive and well-rounded development in all aspects of their lives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be affirmed that the NEP 2020 in India has given considerable emphasis on the importance of ECCE. However, it is imperative to acknowledge the necessity for focused attention to be given to the inclusion and support of CwDs within the framework of this policy. To ensure that ECCE truly embodies the principles of inclusivity and accessibility for all children, it is crucial to address the distinct requirements of CwDs within the ECCE system. This can be achieved through the provision of targeted professional development opportunities for educators, as well as the integration of assistive technologies and individualized support systems. By actively recognizing and addressing these existing gaps in the system, India can actively work towards the establishment of a more equitable and supportive ECCE system, one that effectively nurtures the potential of every child, irrespective of their unique needs or abilities.

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Acknowledgments: The authors have aptly recognized and earnestly attributed acknowledgment to the scholars and experts whose works or portions of work have been consulted and referred to in composing the manuscript. The authors also express their deepest appreciation to all the unidentified reviewers and experts for their observations and significant suggestions, which have greatly aided them in improving and completing this manuscript.

Funding & Conflict of Interest: This work has not been funded or sponsored by any institute or funding agency. It is also declared by the authors that there is no conflict of interest.