

Enhancing the Implementation of National Education Policy-2020 at Elementary Level: Role of Social worker

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Abstract

National Education Policy-2020 introduced new structure of school education to fulfill the student's need of 21st century. This conceptual paper discussed the common objectives of school of social work and National Education Policy-2020 (NEP-2020). Content analysis method was adopted to analyze the NEP 2020 and other document regarding quality learning, comprehensive development and school of social work. It highlighted the role of social worker for the effective implementation of NEP-2020 and also explored the areas for social worker to contribute in the successful execution of NEP-2020. School of social work advocates for Fostering equity and inclusivity, comprehensive growth, School –family interaction, Counseling services, Community collaboration, Opportunities for Capacity building, People's participation for enhancing the learning experience of students.

Keywords – *National Education Policy-2020 (NEP), School of Social work, National Association of Social Work (NASW), implementation, community collaboration, inclusion and equity.*

Introduction

The National Education Policy-2020 (NEP-2020) has been introduced in the education system of the country in the year 2020. After a long time period, this policy aimed to reform the educational structure according to the change in need of the 21st century students. It will drag the focus of Indian education system towards flexibility, inclusivity, life skills and experiential learning for enriching learning experience of students. NEP-2020 highlighted the collaborated role of community, teachers, parents and stakeholders including social workers for creating effective learning environment. With this new transformation, education system has created a need for trained social workers in both urban and rural areas. With this integration of trained social workers in to the education system, NEP-2020 aims to create a supportive learning environment that nurture every child's potential with their individuality, promote equity & inclusivity and ensures overall wellbeing with value based education. This policy shifted from classroom learning towards applied and experiential learning with skill development for future preparedness. It majorly focuses on the holistic development with 360-degree assessment of the student including mental, physical, intellectual and cultural development.

NEP-2020 recognizes the critical role of trained social worker to identify the diverse individual, social, psychological needs of students. NEP-2020 and School of social work share a same vision of holistic development of students, promoting inclusivity & equity, value based and community focused education. School of social work is a specialized field of social work that trained the social worker for addressing the emotional, behavioral and social challenges faced by students in school or any educational settings. It creates a bridge between school, family and community to enhance the learning experience of students and to provide necessary support to the students for their both academic and personal development. School of Social Work prepares students to address their problems as well as other social problems affecting their life. On a broader view, School of Social Work acts as an academic institution that work for improvement of the well-being of

individual, families and community as a whole. The goals of School of Social work and NEP-2020 are very closely aligned, as they both deal with not only academic growth but also nurture the sense of social responsibility. School of Social Work plays a crucial role in fulfilling the goals of NEP-2020's i.e. emotional and social development of students, skill development, critical thinking and experiential learning and interdisciplinary education. School of Social Work and NEP-2020 both work in the same direction to enhance the learning experience of students by emphasizing experiential learning, social responsibility, strengthening sense of ethics and emotional and social well-being. School of Social Work plays a significant role by accommodating academic knowledge with practical experience, promoting critical thinking, emotional and social intelligence. It provides a framework to fulfill the goal of NEP-2020 to prepare students as an adept and efficient change maker for development of society at large.

NEP-2020 emphasizes the importance of social workers in the part of school education, particularly in chapters 2.9- regarding nutrition & health, 3.3-as support system for teachers and community, 5.10- help teachers for effective implementation of school complex, 6.5- collaborate with parents, teachers and students for improving attendance and learning outcome from economically disadvantaged groups and female students, 6.20- sensitize for inclusive school curriculum, 7.5 and 7.7- efficient resourcing and effective governance through school complexes and clusters.. It advocates for the presence of trained social workers in all schools to improve educational quality and guarantee universal access. Social workers are essential in addressing critical areas, including assisting students with learning challenges, inclusion, awareness for educational services and promoting active community involvement. Their involvement will significantly contribute to successfully realizing the goals of the NEP-2020. It provides opportunities for trained social worker to support education system in addressing various challenges and creating an effective learning environment.

Literature Review:

The National Association of Social Work (NASW) emphasizes the need for establishing Schools of Social Work in alignment with the NEP-2020. NEP-2020 focuses on enhancing education quality and ensuring inclusive access, the association advocates for trained social work professional to support students, teachers, and communities effectively. Schools of Social Work can play a critical role in addressing learning barriers, promoting mental well-being, teacher-parent collaboration, ensuring inclusion & equity and foster community participation, aligning with the NEP-2020's vision for holistic, inclusive and effective learning development and equitable education.

In 2005, National Association of Professional Social Workers in India (NPASWI) was established to strengthen social work profession all over the country. It contributed in various ways to improve the quality of services for social welfare and development. In the year 2019, it started a campaign to establish school complexes and appoint school social workers to help the teachers as well as students and make the learning process easier.

School of Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) also defines School of Social Work as a specialized field within the broader social work profession, focusing on supporting students' well-being and academic success. School social workers bring unique expertise to the educational system and student services teams. As trained mental health professionals, they address mental health and behavioral concerns; provide positive behavioral support, and offer academic and classroom assistance. They also collaborate with teachers, parents, and administrators while delivering individual and group counseling or therapy. By promoting a conducive environment for teaching, learning, and personal growth, school social workers play a vital role in advancing

the school's mission. Employed by school districts, they strengthen the connection between home, school, and community, ensuring holistic student success.

Central board of secondary education refers to school social workers as Health Wellness Teachers, while the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) strictly enforces requirement of School Social Worker and School Counselor.

National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) also find the significant role of school of social work professional in the improvement of learning environment and overall development of students. School of Social Workers creates a bridge between student, teacher, families and communities to achieve the academic success. They create a positive learning environment by supporting students, strengthening policies, facilitating community participation, providing counseling, resource mobilization and need based interventions etc.

The above institutional bodies identified the need of social worker to enhance the learning experience of students as well as support the teachers, parents and communities as a whole. They take initiative like school complex, counselor in school, stakeholders meeting, parent-teacher meetings, school management committee meetings etc. All the institutions has the same vision for the achievement of universal education and enriched learning experience of students as well as the sustainable development goal by UNESCO to bring equal opportunities of education for each and every child.

Objective:

The objective of the present paper is to highlight the role of social worker and to explore the areas for contribution of social worker in the effective implementation of NEP-2020 at elementary level.

Methodology –

The present study was based on the content analysis, therefore in this paper document analysis method was adopted to National Education Policy-2020 document and secondary data was drawn from various online sources regarding NEP-2020 and social work profession, such as websites of Ministry of Education, Ministry of Human Resources, National Council of Educational Research and Training, Central Board of Secondary Education, National Association of Social Work etc.

Major areas for the contribution of School of Social work in the effective implementation of NEP-2020:

Social workers play a key role in implementing the NEP-2020's vision by:

- **Fostering equity and inclusivity**

Education is the fundamental need of human development. Indian constitution declared 'Right to Education for All' under article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Researches reveal that constitutional orders and other efforts improved the educational status of the country but still there is a huge problem of drop-out, low enrollment and attendance rate from marginalized sections. UNESCO highlighted the need for the awareness of inclusive education in the Sustainable development goal-4: ensuring inclusive, equitable and quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Social workers can help identify and address barriers to ensure that all students have equal educational opportunities. They have significant role in supporting to students from marginalized section such as children with special needs and mainstream them towards barrier free education for all.

- **Supporting comprehensive growth**

Social workers can help students with their emotional, social, and academic needs through counseling and support services. School of social work builds an educational setting to trained students to understand and advocates for social justice, policy needs and human rights. It helps students to understand the need and importance of continuous learning for self-improvement and development at both individual and societal level.

• **School –family interaction**

School is a place where children learn, grow and acquire skills. School of social work advocates for strong partnerships between schools and families through parent education programs and home visits. Students often carry burden of family problems in schools, Social worker works as a connecting link to build a strong bond between student, parents and teachers. Through this partnership social worker contributes to early identification and intervention of student's behavioral problems and improves student's mental health. Students with a better adjustment with him, school and parents achieve improved academic success.

• **Counseling services-**

Students in their adolescence experience various emotional, social and behavioral problems inside or outside their home that adversely affect their adjustment with the society, development as well as their academic performance. Every student has their own way of learning, therefore it is necessary to identify their ways of learning and help them out. Early identification and intervention of emotional, social and behavioral barriers help to minimize their impact on their academic performance. NCERT and CBSE appointed a counselor in schools, who can identify the problems faced by the students in the classroom, playground, with peers and teachers etc. and students can also contact with counselor and share their problems which act as barrier in their development. From past years these counselor was appointed in schools but their services are not benefitting as much as desired in the student's academic success, because of lack of attention towards student's needs. School of Social Work and NEP-2020 both recommended to appoint a counselor or trained social worker in every school to help each and every student who need help to improve not only their academic performance but also help in their holistic development. School of Social Work clarifies the role of counselor in school; provide Counseling services & life skills programs for students, parents for helping them to manage effectively with the challenges leads to better classroom behavior and learning experience.

• **Community collaboration**

Social workers can help foster collaboration between schools, family, community and local organizations. It provides opportunities for students to understand social needs and problems. It bridges the gap between school, family and community. They can also help in ensuring that the school-age children are actively attending the school. Social workers can contribute for the objective of NEP-2020 that focuses on holistic learning and well being by promoting community engagement in elementary level education. NEP-2020 and School of social work both align at the same point that the need of mental health awareness among teaching professional, families and communities. It will create sensitization for behavioral issues of students and lead for better understanding for student's mental, social and behavioral problems. It will also help teaching professionals to understand student's different learning patterns and their problems regarding learning process.

• **Opportunities for Capacity building**

School of social work plays a vital role in the student-teacher relationship. Friendly-school environment and teacher's positive attitude accelerate the student's academic performance. It identifies the barriers and gap in

the learning process of the students and intervenes to provide enriched learning environment for each and every student through teacher's trainings, workshops, focus group discussions, counseling of teachers etc. Social workers share their expertise in areas like child development, mental health, and classroom management. Social workers help teaching professionals to promote inclusivity and intercultural understanding through workshops and trainings. Teaching at elementary level should be effective and interactive as it is the foundational level of learning. On site Supportive supervision is an effective initiative that observes the gap in the learning process and strengthen the teaching method at the same time. It also provides opportunities to the teachers to discuss their problems and strategies to improve learning environment.

• People's participation

Students in their growing age learn from both the direct and indirect ways. School of Social work promotes people's participation and their initiatives to support students in learning outside their school. Local NGOs and freelancers develop after-school programs, software, interactive online sessions and awareness programs etc. that enhance students' knowledge, understanding, skills and overall development. PRATHAM, ASER and other organizations are contributing in the assessment of learning outcomes of students, their various difficulties in learning process, development of effective learning material including print rich material, e-books, audio books, Read along app etc.

Conclusion – School of Social Work plays a significant role in ensuring the holistic development of students by addressing not only their academic needs but also their emotional and social well-being. This policy combines classroom learning with applied and experiential learning for comprehensive development of students. It majorly focuses on holistic development with 360 degree assessment of students including mental, physical, intellectual and cultural development. As education becomes more inclusive and focused on mental health- especially with the goals set by NEP-2020, the importance of school of social work will continue to grow. School Social workers can create an effective nurturing environment where students can reach their full potential through collaboration, intervention and advocacy. NEP-2020 would play a prominent emphasis on the role of social workers viewing them as crucial to achieving the policy goal by actively engaging with communities, advocating for marginalized groups and providing support services to students to ensure access to education for all.

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