



The Relationship between Learning Agility and Inclusive Education in the Light of National Education Policy 2020

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20093620>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 18-04-2026

Published: 10-05-2026

Keywords:

learning agility, inclusive education, national education policy

ABSTRACT

The 21st century presents unprecedented challenges worldwide in terms of, increasing diversity and accelerating societal changes. Educational systems thus demand and must balance equity and adaptability in their experience. Inclusive education placed all learners, regardless of ability, socio-economic status, cultural background and gender, together in mainstream classroom experience with appropriate support. Learning agility refers to the capacity to rapidly learn and unlearn the learned, and apply to the new knowledge in an uncertain context. Thus, inclusive education and learning agility are interconnected and mutually reinforcing constructs that hold transformative potential for 21st-century classroom experiences. This paper examines conceptual, empirical and policy evidence to demonstrate the bidirectional synergy in the sense that: an inclusive environment demands and nurtures agile educators and student agility, thereby sustaining effective inclusion. Agile learning methodologies, analysis, on UDL, linking learning agility to academic buoyancy and well-being, reveal how UDL and flexible pedagogies operationalise the link between learning agility and inclusive education. A critical examination of NEP 2020 reveals the alignment through its emphasis on flexible curricula, “learning how to learn”, teacher competence-building for fulfilling diverse classroom needs, and



equitable access for all students from all strata, including SEDs and CWSN. An explicit integration of the learning agility framework is absent, and the present study underscores the pressing need for a targeted professional development framework and policy that facilitates responsive instruction in diverse settings and refinement to harness this synergy and also discusses the implications for outcome measurement that prepare resilient, adaptable learners for a VUCA world and future-ready education systems globally and within National Education Policy implementation. The paper concludes with recommendations for teacher development, policy and agile frameworks to advance inclusive practices in dynamic educational contexts.

INTRODUCTION

The challenges of the 21st century are unprecedented in their speed of technological disruption, cultural diversity, climatic uncertainty, and widening socio-economic disparities. The educational system has to balance equity (where none is left behind) and adaptability (where none is left behind in adapting to change). These are met through inclusive education and learning agility.

“Inclusive education is defined as ‘a system of education wherein students with and without disabilities learn together, and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities.’ It is not only inclusive education but also encompasses other SEDGs such as girls, transgender, SC/ST/OBC/minority students, rural students, migrant students, and urban poor students.” This is as defined in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016 in India and approved in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Learning agility is defined in organisational studies but is now being applied in education as the capacity to ‘learn quickly from experience, unlearn quickly from experience, experiment, and collaborate to generate insights and apply them in novel ways.’ It includes mental agility (critical thinking), people agility (collaboration), change agility (experimentation), and results agility (delivering under pressure). In an educational setting, it is “learning how to learn,” which is one of the fundamental principles of NEP 2020.

Regarding the Indian educational system, NEP 2020 is “the first ever education policy of the 21st century.” It specifically outlines that there is a need for “holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-



oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible, and... enjoyable” learning that is not just “rote learning,” but is more oriented toward “critical thinking,” “adaptability,” “innovation,” etc. However, there is a scarcity of academic discourse on how inclusive education and learning agility go hand in hand in the context of the NEP 2020. This paper aims to fulfil that scarcity with an in-depth synthesis and analysis.

Inclusive education and learning agility are highly interrelated terms that go hand in hand in contemporary education systems. Inclusive education is an educational approach in which all children, irrespective of their disabilities or learning styles, are educated together in a single classroom or school setting. On the other hand, learning agility is defined as “the ability to quickly learn from experiences, unlearn outmoded approaches, adapt to new or uncertain situations, and apply learning in new ways.” This includes mental agility or critical thinking, people agility or collaboration, change agility or experimenting, and results agility or high-pressure performance. Although learning agility is most commonly used in leadership or organisational settings, it is equally important for education for both educators and students.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Inclusive Education Research has shown that inclusive education is beneficial for academic achievement, social and emotional development, empathy levels, and employability. In the context of India, the New Education Policy 2020 has implemented inclusion in Special Education Zones (SEZs), the Gender Inclusion Fund, the appointment of special educators with cross-disability training, standardisation of Indian Sign Language, assistive devices, and the promotion of the use of the mother tongue up to Grade 5. Rakshit (2025) presented a comprehensive literature review of the NEP 2020 mandates, the principles of inclusive education, and existing research on teacher preparedness and analysed challenges such as infrastructure, attitudes, training and solutions for implementing inclusion. The study highlights NEP’s emphasis on equitable access and flexible pedagogies, which build learning agility by enabling teachers to adapt methods for diverse learners. Rajkonwar (2023) conducted a critical literature review examining barriers to inclusion under NEP 2020, drawing on prior studies and policy gaps. The study discusses systemic obstacles (eg, teacher training deficits) and how NEP’s inclusive framework requires agile, adaptive teaching practices to overcome them and promote student learning agility.

Several studies on inclusivity and NEP 2020, explore the role of shifting to inclusive models, flexible learning environments, adaptability (learning agility) for all students, issues in higher education, stresses



teacher training for agile, practices that enhance students ability to learn across diverse contexts etc. digital divide as a barrier to NEP- driven inclusion were also studied, NEP's push for multidisciplinary, learner centric approaches that enhance learning agility in diverse settings directly links agile learning principles (flexibility, iteration, adaptability) for inclusive education outcomes (Munoz Artega et l., 2023) Bidirectional Synergy and Agile Methodologies explains inclusive classrooms are inherently agile because exposure to diverse peers cultivates people and change agility, and UDL's multiple pathways promote experimentation and reflection. Yet educator agility in adapting quickly to individual student needs is crucial for inclusion.

In a 2025 phenomenological study on two assistant teachers in Indonesian inclusive schools, five factors contributed to the development of "teaching agility": understanding student character, experience, a conducive school culture, flexibility in the curriculum, and educator motivation. Training and resource constraints impacted it. A Research trend has also begun to link agile methodologies, like Scrum-based agile learning, and inclusive education, demonstrating better collaboration, student intervention, and student advancement in SLDS, such as dyscalculia.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Although there is a strong theoretical base for inclusive education and learning agility, as well as NEP 2020's focus on flexibility and equity, there is little integration between the two in empirical or policy literature. Most studies in India have focused on either access or teacher attitudes in isolation. There is little exploration into how inclusive education can foster learning agility or vice versa. There is also little exploration of the areas of NEP 2020 implementation gaps in teacher development and outcome measurement. This study attempts to fill the gap in the literature by providing a global literature review and a specific NEP 2020 analysis to inform recommendations for diverse contexts in India, including Kerala.

Objectives

1. To conceptualise the interrelationship between inclusive education and learning agility.
2. To investigate how inclusive education can foster learning agility in students and educators.
3. To examine the provisions of NEP 2020 that can foster or enhance the interrelationship between inclusive education and learning agility.



4. To develop policy recommendations for incorporating learning agility into inclusive education in India.

DISCUSSION

The evidence points to an impressive virtuous cycle. Inclusive environments require educators to be agile (real-time differentiation, integration of assistive technologies, cultural responsiveness) while at the same time promoting student agility through collaborative problem-solving, multiple routes, and self-reflective practice. NEP 2020 offers an excellent policy framework. The clear mandate within it to “not only learn but learn how to learn, innovate, adapt, and absorb new material” mirrors learning agility. Flexibility in the curriculum (“no hard separations” between subjects, selection of subjects, semester/modular systems), multilingualism, vocational streams from Grade 6, and mandatory B.Ed. Training in “teaching children with disabilities, multi-level teaching, and learner-centred, collaborative learning” offers structural enablers.

Assistive technologies, resource centres, and SEZs can remove further obstacles, enabling teachers to concentrate on effective facilitation rather than remediation. Nevertheless, the policy does not specifically mention or measure learning agility as a specific competence nor integrate it into Continuous Professional Development (CPD). Without specific frameworks (such as agility self-assessment tools, agile-style teacher training packages, or UDL mandates), the implementation could remain focused on accessibility rather than agility. The phenomenological research from Indonesia reinforces the need for teachers to have an enabling environment and flexible curriculum approaches, precisely what NEP is promising but must now implement.

How Inclusive Education Requires and Builds Educator Learning Agility

The implementation of inclusive education is not static; rather, it requires continuous adaptation to different student needs (e.g., special needs, cultural/linguistic differences, different ability levels). Teachers, as well as assistant/support teachers, need to quickly learn new techniques, adjust the curriculum, incorporate auxiliary tools, and accommodate different characters in short periods of time. This is where teaching agility (or simply the application of learning agility in the context of teaching) is seen as an important factor, defined as the capacity to rapidly adapt flexibly to different learning needs.

Phenomenological research on assistant teachers in Indonesian inclusive schools revealed the following factors for developing teaching agility:



- Deep understanding of each student's character,
- Collective teaching experience,
- School support system,
- Curriculum flexibility,
- Self-Motivation.

Shortcomings such as a lack of training or facilities underscore the importance of ongoing professional development. Moreover, educators in dynamic systems need to assimilate new approaches, espouse new trends (e.g., technology integration), and apply them to support effective learning for all—exactly what learning agility facilitates.

Without educators learning agility, inclusive education will fail; with learning agility for educators, inclusive education will thrive. Teachers can personalise support, foster belonging, and turn challenges into growth opportunities.

How Inclusion Cultivates Learning Agility in Students

Inclusive classrooms cultivate learning agility in all students. This is because students are exposed to different peers and teaching approaches, which create dynamic environments that simulate reality in terms of complexity:

- Learning agility is developed through interacting with different peers, working collaboratively on different problems, and working together to solve problems (people agility)
- Multiple teaching approaches, like differentiated instruction and UDL, offer different ways of interacting with, representing, and expressing what is learned; they encourage experimentation and quick application of what is learned (change and results agility).
- Facing obstacles like schoolwork or social interactions triggers rapid learning from experience, self-directed change, and reflection—crucial elements of learning agility.

Studies have confirmed that inclusive environments have a positive impact on the academic performance, empathy, problem-solving skills, and adaptability of students both with and without disabilities. Growth mindsets are developed in inclusive classrooms because failures are seen as opportunities for growth, which fosters resilience and agility.

Agile Approaches and Methodologies Support Inclusive Design



Ideas borrowed from Agile Methodologies are found to have a high affinity with Inclusive Design approaches such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Agile Methodology enables:

- Rapid prototyping and adaptation of learning activities
- Rapid iteration based on student feedback and performance
- Rapid response to learning barriers

Research studies have identified Agile Learning Methodologies as solutions to deal with the complexity of adapting learning activities for special needs in inclusive education.

Psychological and Cultural Inclusion Fosters the Development of Agility

A psychologically and culturally safe, respectful classroom environment where every individual feels valued and respected, and where there is a focus on equity and the diversity of learning styles, ensures that all feel comfortable to experiment, to err, and to learn from those errors. This is the essence of building learning agility in the classroom. When students/teachers feel included in the classroom, they will be more open to experimenting and learning.

Thus, to summarise, learning agility is the foundation and the end result of inclusive education in the classroom. Teachers require learning agility to effectively implement inclusion in the classroom. Students require learning agility to benefit fully from the rich and diverse learning experience. The system benefits when learning agility is developed in the classroom.

IMPLICATIONS

For practice, learning agility training should be incorporated into professional development. This can include reflective case studies, simulations, and collaboration. UDL/MTSS should be implemented in schools to remove barriers and enhance agility. Assistant teachers and paraprofessionals need special attention for developing the five factors found in the Indonesian study.

For Policymakers, a flexible curriculum, and accessible infrastructure must be provided for continuous training. Evaluation systems should align with equity (inclusion metrics) and flexibility (agility development indicators).

For Research: Longitudinal and cross-cultural research is needed to examine the effects of inclusive education on the development of learning agility across diverse student groups. More quantitative research should be done on the phenomenological study from Indonesia. Other potential influences include culture/socioeconomic status.



For educators, leaders, and policymakers, the intentional connection between the two concepts means investing in professional development systems that are agile and responsive, curriculum models that are malleable and responsive, and cultures that are open and accepting. The outcome is more equitable and more, resilient educational systems in which everyone benefits.

Policy Recommendations After Analysing NEP 2020

The positive aspects of NEP 2020 (its flexible curriculum, teacher empowerment, its focus on equity, and its alignment with RPwD) offer an excellent opportunity. The recommendations to bridge the gap are as follows:

1. Explicit Integration of Learning Agility in Teacher Education and CPD:

Modify the 4-year integrated B.Ed. and National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) to include mandatory components on various aspects of learning agility, agile teaching methods (like Scrum methodology for planning), and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Extend NCTE-RCI synergy to include special educators as well. Include mandatory annual CPD hours for agility assessment and teaching methods.

2. Curriculum and Assessment Reform:

Task PARAKH and NCERT to integrate agility parameters (like reflection journals, adaptive problem-solving activities) in NCFSE and student assessments. The flexible modular/semester structure of NEP 2020 can be utilised to develop micro-credentials focused on agility.

3. Institutional and Resource Support:

Incorporate “Agility Resource Centres” in every school complex, like special education resource centres. Provide digital resources (like enhancements to DIKSHA) to track agility in real time and enable personalised learning paths. Scale up SEZs with targeted agility interventions for SEDGs.

4. Monitoring, Research, and Incentives:

Establish national indicators for “inclusive learning agility” in the Performance Grading Index. Support longitudinal research on the development of agility in “inclusive” versus “segregated” environments.



Provide incentives to teachers who display high levels of teaching agility (rural/hardship allowances tied to the completion of agility CPD courses).

5. Community and Technology Leverage:

Partner with the NEP objectives in technology and community leverage by training parents and volunteers in basic agile methodologies for home-based education of CWSN.

These recommendations call for no fundamental structural changes but rather the enhancement of existing NEP infrastructure. They would catalyse India's path to highly agile and inclusive education systems.

CONCLUSION

Inclusive education and learning agility are not two separate phenomena but intertwined, complementary forces. When coupled in practice, they can help create classrooms where diversity becomes the catalyst for growth, resilience, and innovation. Inclusive education creates and nurtures learning agility, while learning agility supports inclusive education in a significant way. NEP 2020 has provided the visionary foundation for this new normal with its focus on flexibility, 'learning how to learn,' inclusion, and teacher empowerment. With the effective use of UDL, MTSS, professional development opportunities, and evidence-based practices, education systems can build learning environments; where all students, not just survive but thrive in a world characterised by diversity and change. This will yield a more equitable, resilient, and future-ready generation capable of meeting the challenges of an uncertain world. Realising the true potential of NEP 2020 requires the intentionally cultivating of learning agility in the practice of inclusion. With the proposed policy interventions, India has the potential to be at the forefront of the world in the practice of inclusive and agile education systems that not only help learners cope with the changing world but also help them thrive in shaping it with confidence, compassion, and agility. The integration of inclusion and agility is not an option but the foundation of Viksit Bharat.

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