



Inclusive School Education for Children with Disabilities in the context of NEP 2020

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is widely recognized around the world as a basic human right and a key part of providing fair, high quality education for everyone. In India, the push for inclusive education has picked up serious momentum with the launch of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. This policy wants to change how education works in the country by making sure all learners including children with disabilities can access to school, learn equitably, and feel included. This research paper examines the concept of inclusive school education for children with disabilities in the context of NEP 2020. The paper explores the constitutional and legislative framework supporting inclusive education, including the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, and international commitments such as the United Nations Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). It further analyses the provisions of NEP 2020 related to inclusive education, teachers' preparation, curriculum adaptation, assistive technology, and equitable access. The paper also discusses the challenges that Indian schools face when trying to implement inclusive practices including infrastructural barriers, not enough trained special education teachers, social stigma against children with disabilities, and simply not having enough resources. Finally, recommendation are provided to strengthen inclusive



education through better implementation of existing policies, empowering and training teachers more effectively, getting communities involved, and using technology wisely to support inclusion. The study concludes that NEP 2020 gives India a forward-thinking, progressive framework for inclusive education. But having a good policy on paper is not enough. Effective implementation and sustained commitment are necessary to achieve educational equity for children with disabilities.

Introduction

Education is a basic right for everyone, and it's also a powerful way to change lives and build better societies. Inclusive education means all children learn together in regular schools, no matter if they have disabilities, different learning needs, come from different backgrounds, or speak different languages. It's about treating everyone fairly, making sure everyone can participate, and teaching kids to respect differences. For children with disabilities, inclusive education isn't just about getting a seat in a classroom—it's about making friends, fitting in socially, and growing up as well-rounded individuals.

India has made real progress in making education inclusive. The government has made laws and policies to support this, and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a big step forward. One of its main goals is simple: make sure every child gets quality education, especially those who are disadvantaged—including children with disabilities.

In the past, things were very different. Children with disabilities in India were often left out of schools entirely. When they did go to school, they were separated from other kids. Schools didn't have ramps, accessible bathrooms, or special equipment. Teachers weren't trained to help children with different needs. Because of this, many children with disabilities never went to school, and those who did often couldn't learn well.

NEP 2020 is trying to fix all of this. It wants schools to be open to everyone, with flexible learning that adapts to each child. It wants schools without barriers—physical and otherwise. It wants teachers to use teaching methods that include every student. This matches with global goals like SDG 4, which says all children everywhere should get quality education. It also supports India's Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, which says children with disabilities should go to regular schools near their homes.



This paper critically examines inclusive school education for children with disabilities in the context of NEP 2020, highlighting its opportunities, challenges, and implications for educational reform in India.

Objectives of the Study

This study sets out to:

- 1. Learn what inclusive education really means and why it's important for children with disabilities.**
- 2. Explore what NEP 2020 offers for inclusive school education—what it promises and how it plans to deliver.**
- 3. Identify the real-world challenges that make it hard to implement inclusive education in Indian schools.**
- 4. Offer practical solutions to make inclusive education work better under NEP 2020.**

Research Methodology

This study is descriptive and analytical in nature. It is based on secondary sources of data, including books, research articles, government reports, policy documents, journals, and online academic resources. The study primarily analyzes the provisions of NEP 2020 and related legislation concerning inclusive education for children with disabilities.

Concept of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is about making sure every child can learn together, no matter their abilities or disabilities. UNESCO (2020) explains it as changing school cultures, policies, and practices so that all students can participate and learn effectively.

Inclusive education differs from special education. Special education often separates children with disabilities into different schools or classes. Inclusive education keeps them in regular classrooms with their peers. Instead of making children fit into a rigid system, the system adapts to meet their needs.

The key principles of inclusive education include:

- Equality and non-discrimination – Everyone get fair treatment
- Respect for diversity – Differences are valued, not ignores.



- Participation and belongingness – Every child feel they belong.
- Accessibility and accommodation - Schools adopt to support all learners.
- Child-centered pedagogy – Teaching focuses on the child, not the other way around.

Inclusive education helps both children with disabilities and their classmates. It builds social skills, empathy, teamwork, and acceptance of differences among all students. For children with disabilities, it builds confidence, communication skills, and academic abilities.

Legislative and Policies Supporting Inclusive Education in India

Various constitutional and legislative initiatives have been undertaken by India for the promotion of inclusive education.

Constitutional Provisions

The Indian Constitution has made provisions for educational equity and justice via various articles:

- Article 21A provides the Right to Free and Compulsory Education.
- Article 41 requires the State to ensure provision of education and social assistance to individuals with disabilities.
- Article 46 ensures educational and economic benefits of weaker sections.

Right to Education Act, 2009

The Right to Education Act, 2009 ensures free and compulsory education to all children between 6-14 years. The Act focuses on non-discrimination and inclusion of marginalized groups.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

The Rights of Person with Disabilities Act, 2016 is another significant act for inclusive education. The Act requires schools and other educational institutions to make available reasonable accommodation and inclusive learning environment for children with disabilities.



Commitment to International Initiatives

India has signed UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) that makes provisions for inclusive education as a basic human right. The SDGs, specifically SDG 4, also highlight the issue of inclusive and quality education.

Inclusive Education in the Context of NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a paradigm shift towards inclusiveness in the Indian education system. The policy recognizes that children with disabilities are an integral part of education institutions and have the right to equal and quality education. NEP 2020 aims to ensure that no child is denied educational opportunities on account of physical, social, economic or other barriers by putting children with disabilities under the category of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). It promotes barrier-free access to schools, inclusive curricula and teaching practices, provision of assistive devices, teacher training in inclusive education, and flexibility in educational processes to meet the diverse needs of learners.

The policy is strongly in favour of building safe and accessible school infrastructure. Schools are encouraged to provide ramps, accessible washrooms, Braille signage, transportation facilities and other necessary accommodations to enable children with disabilities to participate in schools. Through these measures, NEP 2020 embodies the principle of universal design, making sure that educational settings are accessible and usable by all learners, irrespective of their abilities.

NEP 2020 also lays emphasis on adopting flexible curricula and child-centric pedagogical practices. It recommends teaching methods that respond to complex learning requirements through differentiation, experiential and sensory strategies. The policy acknowledges the need for modifying teaching methods for the meaningful participation and learning outcomes for children with disabilities. It also encourages using the Indian Sign Language as a tool for instruction and communication to the children with hearing impairments.

Another crucial part of the policy will be teacher preparation and continuing professional development. The NEP 2020 emphasizes the need to equip teachers with knowledge and skills on inclusive education, disability awareness, classroom adaptations, and individualized instruction. The policy emphasizes the role of special educators and collaborative teaching models (such as team-teaching) in creating effective and supportive learning environments for students with disabilities.



In NEP 2020, technology is considered an important enabler of inclusive education. It promotes the use of digital learning platforms, assistive technologies, screen readers, Braille-enabled devices, speech-to-text software, and audio-visual resources to improve accessibility and learning opportunities for children with disabilities. It emphasizes the need for the creation and development of digital educational content in accessible formats to ensure equal access to learning resources.

The policy also underlines the significance of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for children with disabilities. It acknowledges that early identification and intervention can greatly improve developmental and educational outcomes. With adequate support in early years, children with disabilities will be better equipped to participate successfully in formal schooling and life-long learning.

In addition, NEP 2020 stresses the importance of vocational education and life-skills development for empowering differently-abled people. By providing opportunities for vocational training and skill development, the policy aims to enhance employability, independence, and social inclusion. Such initiatives contribute to the overall objective of creating an equitable and inclusive education system that enables all learners to achieve their full potential and participate meaningfully in society.

Challenges in Implementing Inclusion in Schools

Even with progressive laws and policies promoting inclusive education in India, numerous obstacles still impede its successful implementation in schools. A significant barrier is the shortage of teachers who are properly trained. Many educators lack sufficient understanding of inclusive teaching methods and disability-related topics, which hinders their ability to meet the varied learning needs of students in regular classrooms. Another major obstacle is the poor state of school infrastructure, especially in rural and remote regions, where schools frequently lack accessible facilities, assistive technologies, transportation, and other necessary resources to support inclusive education. Social prejudices and negative attitudes toward disability also hinder inclusive education. These negative perceptions might deter families from enrolling children with disabilities in schools and can lead to discrimination in educational environments. Financial limitations also hinder the implementation of inclusive education, since it requires significant investment in infrastructure, teacher training, assistive technologies, learning resources, and supportive services. Moreover, numerous schools struggle with a lack of qualified special educators, counselors, and support personnel capable of offering tailored support to students with disabilities. The digital divide poses an additional challenge, since many children with disabilities have restricted access to technology, reliable internet, and digital learning materials that are accessible to them.



These barriers collectively restrict the full realization of inclusive education and highlight the need for sustained efforts, investment, and policy implementation to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all children.

Suggested Measures for Implementing Inclusive Education

To ensure that inclusive education is effectively implemented according to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, several important measures need to be taken. Teacher education and professional development programs should include inclusive education practices. This will equip teachers with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to meet the diverse learning needs of all students. Educational institutions should also work on building barrier-free infrastructure by providing accessible classrooms, ramps, transportation options, assistive technology, and learning resources that support children with disabilities. Community awareness and sensitization programs are also crucial. They help reduce stigma and promote positive attitudes toward disability and inclusion. Parents and local communities should actively participate in supporting inclusive educational initiatives and advocating for the rights of children with disabilities. Effective monitoring and evaluation systems should be set up to ensure that the provisions of NEP 2020 are followed consistently in educational institutions. Integrating technology can further strengthen inclusive education. Affordable assistive devices, accessible digital content, internet connectivity, and innovative learning tools can improve educational access and participation. Furthermore, collaboration among teachers, parents, special educators, policymakers, and community organizations is essential for creating supportive and inclusive educational environments.

Such coordinated efforts can help eliminate barriers to learning, provide individualized support, and ensure every child has equal opportunities for educational growth and development. By implementing these measures, the vision of an inclusive and fair education system outlined in NEP 2020 can be achieved more effectively.

Conclusion

The concept of inclusive education is vital to creating an equitable, democratic, and compassionate society. The National Education Policy 2020 is a holistic guide that helps create an environment of quality and inclusive education for children with disabilities in India. It highlights issues related to accessibility, equity, teacher training, technology, and pedagogy based on the learners' needs. Although NEP 2020 is a paradigm shift towards inclusion in Indian education, various obstacles are still associated



with the policy's effective implementation. The lack of infrastructure, unpreparedness of teachers, social stigmatization, and financial limitations are some of the issues hindering inclusive educational practices.

In order to implement the principles of inclusive education successfully, there should be a consistent approach from multiple sides, including the government, schools, teachers, family members, and society. Efficient implementation of inclusive strategies alongside community involvement and technology can create an atmosphere of inclusion for all children. Inclusion in education is both an educational change and a social movement aiming to promote justice, equality, and human rights. The foundation has been already set by NEP 2020, but it is up to us to implement it efficiently.

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