



## New education policy and inclusive education in India

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### Abstract

The primary objective of the education system in India is to ensure that all children have equal access to learning opportunities and are able to achieve academic excellence, regardless of their socio-economic or cultural background. This policy reiterates the commitment to addressing the disparities in access, participation, and educational achievements across all social categories within the context of school education. It emphasizes that this objective will remain a primary focus in all education sector development initiatives. One of the key goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) is to enhance inclusivity and improve accessibility in education for all pupils. The policy calls for the establishment of alternative educational programs for children who may lack access to conventional schools, with the expansion of early childhood care and education, in order to achieve this objective. This article endeavors to evaluate the NEP policy from the perspective of practitioners amidst the plethora of op-eds and criticism around it. The current investigation focused on certain segments within the "school education" domain, examining key aspects of the policy life cycle throughout a five-year timeframe. This encompassed the stages of policy formulation, implementation, and the absence of comprehensive evaluation.

**Keywords:** Inclusive education, new education policy, school education, cultural background

### Introduction

Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. Inclusive and equitable education, while indeed an essential goal in its own right, is also critical to achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation. The education system must aim to benefit India's children so that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of circumstances of birth or background. This policy reaffirms that bridging the social category gaps in access, participation, and learning outcomes in school education will continue to be one of the major goals of all education sector development programs. The appropriate kind of education does not prioritize any one ideology, regardless of its potential to offer a future utopia. It does not rely on any specific system, no matter how meticulously designed, nor does it aim to condition individuals in a certain manner. Education, in its authentic essence, entails facilitating the personal development and liberation of individuals, enabling them to flourish profoundly in love and moral excellence. Our focus should lie on cultivating interest rather than conforming the child to an idealistic template. The primary objective of education is to cultivate a well-rounded individual who possesses the ability to effectively navigate the complexities of life in its entirety. Contemporary education is significantly shaped by the perspectives of Mahatma Gandhi, who espoused the belief that education serves as a potent tool for eliciting an individual's optimal qualities and fostering their holistic development. The individual envisioned a concept known as "Swaraj," in which every member of the nation would have a life devoid of any forms of exploitation, characterized by complete equality and fraternity. The realization of this vision hinges on the condition of inclusivity within society, whereby all individuals are encompassed and valued. Furthermore, in accordance with the guidelines set forth by

The World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen 1995), an inclusive society can be defined as a societal framework that encompasses all individuals, each endowed with their respective rights and obligations, and actively engaged in the functioning of said society. In pursuit of this objective, numerous education policies and commissions have formulated novel suggestions aimed at advancing the nation through the comprehensive development of learners, encompassing all individuals. The National Education Policy of 2020 has been recently published and is currently being implemented. Its primary objective is to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and the development of effective learning skills among citizens. This is particularly important in order to adapt to the rapid changes occurring in the global knowledge landscape. The policy emphasizes the importance of inclusive education in achieving these goals. Currently, the government is formulating numerous novel plans and regulations aimed at fostering inclusivity for all individuals. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are some deficiencies in terms of physical, participatory, and educational achievements that must be addressed in practice.

### The Meaning of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education refers to the provision of education to all pupils, ensuring that each student is regarded as an equal participant in the educational journey. The concept of 'inclusive education' represents a progression beyond integrated education by encompassing not only children with disabilities but also advocating for an educational system that encompasses all individuals. An inclusive classroom may consist of several groups, including children with disabilities or exceptional abilities, children from disadvantaged backgrounds such as street or working children, children from distant or nomadic communities, children belonging to religious or linguistic minorities, as

well as children from scheduled tribes, scheduled castes, or other socially and economically disadvantaged groups. The promotion of inclusion entails the reformation of the school system. Inclusive education demonstrates greater cost-effectiveness compared to a segregated system, encompassing both immediate operational expenses and enduring societal costs.

### **The need for inclusive education**

When discussing a progressive society, it is imperative to consider the concept of an inclusive society, which can be defined as follows: An inclusive society can be defined as a society that transcends disparities based on race, gender, class, generation, and geography. It strives to promote inclusion, equal opportunities, and the capacity for all individuals within society to collectively establish a mutually accepted framework of social institutions that govern social interactions. The Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Social Integration, which took place in Helsinki in July 2008, According to the 1995 World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen, an inclusive society can be defined as a societal framework that encompasses all individuals, each of whom possesses rights and obligations and is actively engaged in societal participation. Therefore, it is imperative that an inclusive society be established on the foundation of upholding the principles of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. This entails recognizing and valuing cultural and religious diversity, ensuring social justice, addressing the unique requirements of marginalized and disadvantaged groups, promoting democratic participation, and adhering to the principles of the rule of law. These objectives can be achieved through the implementation of social policies aimed at reducing inequality and fostering the development of adaptable and accepting societies that embrace individuals from all walks of life. According to legal principles, every citizen is entitled to equity, justice, and equal opportunities, regardless of other societal norms. Legal instruments play a crucial role in ensuring that these guiding principles are upheld, thereby ensuring that all citizens receive these rights. Additionally, it is imperative that individuals who violate human rights are held accountable through the legal system. In order to uphold the principles of justice within a community, it is imperative that the judiciary remain impartial, accountable, and inclusive. This ensures that the perspectives of individuals advocating for inclusivity at the local, regional, and national levels are duly considered and given appropriate significance. Ensuring the security of all individuals is of utmost importance in order to foster a sense of inclusivity and active involvement within society.

### **What is inclusion?**

Inclusion refers to the practice of ensuring that individuals of all backgrounds, abilities, and characteristics are provided with equal opportunities and access to participate fully in society, organizations, and the educational institution engages in a dynamic process, as opposed to a static state, wherein it endeavors to address the unique needs and characteristics of each student. In relation to the concepts of inclusion and exclusion, it is important to recognize that both processes are interconnected. Schools that aim to cultivate inclusive practices must take into account both inclusion and exclusion as integral components.

Places emphasis on the restructuring of curriculum provisions with the aim of catering to the unique needs of each student. The topic at hand holds significance across all stages and categories of educational institutions, potentially encompassing specialized schools. This is because teachers in any educational setting encounter student groups with varying requirements and are obligated to address this diversity.

### **New Education Policy**

The Right to Education Act of 2009 has effectively achieved the objective of augmenting enrollment rates at the upper primary level, encompassing classes 6 to 8. From 2009 to 2016, there was a notable 19.4 percent growth in the enrollment of pupils in the upper elementary level on a national scale. The NPE-2020 has endeavored to tackle the escalating disparity and imbalance that now afflict the education system of the nation. The NEP-2020 acknowledges the presence of significant dropout rates within socio-economic strata and disadvantaged minority groups, as evidenced by survey data. Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge the existence of obstacles that contribute to the ineffective distribution of resources, such as the limited size of educational institutions and factors that result in decreased involvement of girls in rural regions. The educational needs of a significant number of youngsters residing in challenging geographical regions are not adequately addressed. The NEP-2020 places significant emphasis on adopting a human rights approach, highlighting the fundamental principle that every individual possesses the inherent freedom to envision, prosper, and make meaningful contributions to the nation. To realize this vision, the policy intends to foster an inclusive culture that fosters the development of an inclusive society. The survey results revealed numerous gaps in the educational landscape, including limited access to learning resources and infrastructure, resulting in reduced engagement among certain student populations. Hence, the NEP-2020 proposes recommendations aimed at narrowing the educational disparity by ensuring comprehensive accessibility to all facets of learning, including infrastructure facilities. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of meaningful and age-appropriate engagement of learners through the implementation of a universal design of learning. This approach aims to enhance learning outcomes by adapting curriculum delivery and assessment methods accordingly. The proposed initiative is in line with the overarching goals of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act of 2016 and places particular emphasis on the establishment of Special Education Zones (SEZ).

### **Improving Academic Performance through Classroom Strategy Modifications**

#### **1. Observation and role-play technique**

The utilization of role-playing as an instructional strategy is advantageous in terms of fostering student engagement and facilitating opportunities for both skill practice and constructive feedback. One effective method for cultivating motivation and infusing levity into the educational experience is requesting students to engage in role-playing exercises that simulate scenarios where the targeted ability is deficient. Role-playing facilitates the opportunity for students to assume specific roles, engage in reciprocal feedback, and actively develop and refine novel skills. Role-playing allows students to engage in simulated interactions that encompass many school, community, and business

scenarios. Role-playing can serve as a valuable tool for students with intellectual disabilities, as it offers them a chance to engage in the practice of proper small talk. This social skill holds significant importance in fostering acceptance in an inclusive classroom setting.

## 2. Teaching as a team

Team teaching is an instructional strategy wherein multiple educators collaborate to jointly develop lesson plans, deliver instruction, and assess student performance. As educators, it is imperative to ascertain the extent to which therapists and doctors provide their insights and how these insights might be correlated with the educational and behavioral aspects of children within a school setting. Inclusive schools facilitate collaboration between regular education teachers and special education teachers to jointly deliver services to students with special needs inside the classroom setting. In the context of inclusive education, the collective responsibility for addressing the specific educational requirements of children lies with the regular teacher, the special teacher, and other professionals involved.

## 3. Collaborative and cooperative teaching

Cooperative learning is an instructional approach employed by a collective of students to collectively work towards a shared objective through collaborative efforts and mutual assistance. In an educational setting characterized by inclusivity, wherein a substantial cohort of students with and without disabilities are enrolled, pedagogical approaches such as cooperative learning can be employed to facilitate instruction. This method entails fostering collaborative environments whereby students collectively pursue shared objectives. In the context of educating a kid with special needs, it is advisable to consider placing them in an environment where their peers possess the requisite sensitivity and abilities to effectively engage with them.

## 4. Samagra Shiksha Scheme

The government has implemented the Samagra Shiksha Scheme as an additional measure. The Samagra Shiksha Scheme 2.0 for school education has been authorized by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, with its implementation extending until the financial year 2025–26. A comprehensive framework for educational provision in schools, encompassing the full range of educational levels from preschool to Class XII, with the aim of providing inclusive, egalitarian, and cost-effective school education. The integration encompasses the three initiatives of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Teacher Education (TE). This program encompasses a total of 1.16 million educational institutions, catering to a student population of approximately 156 million individuals. Additionally, it includes 5.7 million teachers employed in government and aided schools, spanning from pre-primary to senior secondary education levels. The aforementioned provision encompasses the allocation of financial resources amounting to Rs. 2000 per grade, with the aim of facilitating the education of individuals between the ages of 16 and 19 who are not already enrolled in formal educational institutions. This support is specifically intended to enable these individuals to pursue their education through open schooling programs. Additionally, there will be an increased emphasis on skills development and vocational education, catering to

both students currently enrolled in educational institutions and individuals who have discontinued their studies.

## Concluding remarks

The perspective of the National Education Policy 2020 on Inclusive Education has effectively acknowledged the difficulties encountered by individuals belonging to gendered categories, minority groups, and children with special needs. Furthermore, it has demonstrated commendable progress by suggesting a sequence of praiseworthy measures, such as the establishment of education Special Economic Zones (SEZs), to tackle the inherent obstacles faced by education in remote areas. By implementing adjustments, it is possible to enhance accessibility and provide equal opportunities for all individuals. Inclusion encompasses various components, including vision, placement, support, resources, leadership, and the 5As: acceptance, access, adapted curriculum, adapted assessment, and adapted teaching. Therefore, it may be argued that educational institutions that adopt an inclusive approach are the most efficacious method for addressing discriminatory mindsets, fostering inclusive communities, promoting societal inclusivity, and attaining universal education. Furthermore, educational institutions play a crucial role in delivering a high-quality education to a significant proportion of children, thereby enhancing the overall efficacy and cost-efficiency of the education system as a whole. This, in turn, has the potential to bring about good societal transformations.

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