



# New National Education Policy 2020 and Inclusive Education in India

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**Abstract:** Education is the biggest tool for achieving social justice and equality. The New Education Policy is a revolutionary and unprecedented step in the field of education and will be the foundation for inclusive development of children. The new education policy is the vision of developing an equitable and vibrantly educated society by providing quality education to all. This policy reaffirms that bridging social category gaps in school education, access, participation and learning outcomes, will remain one of the key goals of all education sector development programmes. The policy recognizes the importance of interventions to promote education of all minority communities and children in particular from those communities

## INTRODUCTION

The cornerstone of inclusive education is all children, regardless of their differences, are educated together, everyone benefits. Inclusive education is educating all students in age-appropriate general education classes in their neighborhood schools, with high quality instruction, interventions and supports so all students can be successful in the core curriculum.

Inclusive education has grown from the belief that education is a basic human right and that it provides the foundation for a more just society. All learners have a right to education, regardless of their individual characteristics or difficulties. Inclusive education initiatives often have a particular focus on those groups, which, in the past, have been excluded from educational opportunities. These groups include children living in poverty, those from ethnic and linguistic minorities, girls (in some societies), children from remote areas and those with disabilities or other special educational needs. The latter are often the most marginalized both within education and in society in general. Inclusive education means different and diverse students learning side by side in the same classroom. In inclusive education children can attend their neighborhood school and Schools and districts have a 'zero-rejection' policy when it comes to registering and teaching children in their region.

## Factors affecting Inclusion

There are many factors that affect inclusive education, some of them are

**Expense:** Funding is a major constraint to the practice of inclusion. Teaching students with disabilities in general education classrooms takes specialists and additional staff to support students' needs.

**Accessibility:** Some schools are still inaccessible to students in wheelchairs or to those other mobility aides and need elevators, ramps, paved pathways and lifts to get in and around buildings.

**Educational Modifications:** General educators must be willing to work with inclusion specialists to make modifications and accommodations in both teaching methods and classroom and homework assignments.

**Cooperation:** lack of communication among administrators, teachers, specialists, staff, parents, and students. Open communication and coordinated planning between general education teachers and special education staff are essential for inclusion to work. Time is needed for teachers and

specialists to meet and create well-constructed plans to identify and implement modifications the, accommodations, and specific goals for individual students.

## National Education Policy 2020 and Inclusive Education

Disability often stands as a heightened wall between the children and education; in fact, it hampers the access of children to education. The newly introduced Indian National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 has been extolled for its barrier-free access to education for all children across the country. Mainly it dispels darkness and dawns into a new era of inclusivity in the education system, as claimed by the government.

NEP 2020 focuses on providing equitable and inclusive education especially for the socially and economically disadvantaged sections of society. Addressing about National education policy The Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said that” it is the duty of every citizen of the country to do what is best for their children to provide them with the fundamental right to education, and guide them to their full potential, thereby making India and the world a better and more inclusive place.”

The New policy also advocates for the standardization of the Indian Sign Language for teaching deaf children. The speech therapy and lip-reading are preferred to sign language while teaching them. NEP mentions the urgent requirement for the additional number of special educators for children with disabilities. The NEP 2020 has moved away from the traditional sites of exclusion and has broadened the categories of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) by including individuals , migrant communities, transgender individuals, students of villages, and aspiration districts. The clubbing of categories has potential risks of preferential treatment not being put forward during the implementation more so for refugee children, students of LGBTQTI communities, internally displaced communities who did not find recognition in any of the National Educational Policies including NEP 2020.

NEP has cleared confusion with regards to the medium of attaining education for disabled children. The earlier two acts i.e. (Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (“RPWD Act”) and Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (“RTE Act”) which equivocally provided for three mediums to the children for receiving their education oscillated between these three choices mentioned herein below. i. Special Schools (RPWD Act) ii. Neighborhood Schools (RPWD Act & RTE Act) iii. Home-based Education (RTE Act) The NEP rectifies this issue by recognizing all three options for their education. Nevertheless, certain concerns remain unaddressed.

### Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)

The NEP 2020 recognises that certain groups are grossly underrepresented in the existing educational systems. To specially address their educational needs, the NEP has clubbed gender identities, socio-cultural identities, geographical identities, disabilities, and socio-economic conditions to create a new social group called SEDGs. The policy bases most of its objectives on creating inclusivity around these groups. As mentioned earlier, these groups have higher dropout rates due to a plethora of reasons, ranging from lack of accessibility for tribal communities (geographic) to historical exclusion of communities from systems of education for the socio-cultural identities categorization. Recognising their special needs, the NEP 2020 recommends a series of policies and schemes such as targeted scholarships, conditional cash transfers to incentivize parents to send their children to school, providing bicycles for transport that have worked in the past to increase enrollment, to create more representation.

The policy recognizes children with special needs and believes in incorporating them into the mainstream education systems. It broadly aligns with the objectives of The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016. The policy also aims to recruit special educators in all school complexes to make sure that teaching is more inclusive and cognizant of the needs of children. Children with benchmark disabilities will be allowed to opt for homeschooling and would be provided with skilled homeschooling educators so that they can still learn and acquire the best educational facilities. Further, teachers will be trained to identify learning disabilities in children early on and to help children with learning disabilities succeed in education and take care of their mental health. National Assessment Centre, PARAKH will be formulated to create equitable systems of assessment for children with learning disabilities. Alternate models for schooling are proposed to advance this objective.

### Schemes included in National Education Policy for inclusive students

There are many schemes included in National Education Policy for inclusive students . Some of them are

- The ‘Gender Inclusion Fund’ which supports female and transgender students by driving state-level inclusion activities, developing sufficient infrastructure for safety, and targeted boarding.

- NEP proposes the establishment of ‘special education zones’ for the ‘Socio-Economically Disadvantaged’ group, which comprises children with disabilities along with other socially deprived and minority groups.
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## Conclusion

The use of different terminology like ‘inclusion, integration, children with special needs, differently-abled’ gives the most eloquent expression to the understanding of disability in society. To create an inclusive and equitable society, the government and other authorities should focus more on budgetary allocation on disability education, improving working conditions for the teachers and special educators, removing attitudinal barriers and stereotype regarding the disability, and taking steps in bringing more persons with disabilities in the mainstream of the society. Only then the goal of an inclusive and equitable society would be realized. The NEP 2020 has done well by loudly recognizing the challenges faced by gendered categories, minorities and children with special needs. It has also done well in terms of proposing a series of laudable steps including education SEZs to address the structural challenges of education in inaccessible regions.

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