

Inclusive Education: a Keystone for Building A Developed and Equitable India by 2047

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Abstract

Inclusive education has emerged as a critical element in India's journey toward achieving the vision of a developed and equitable nation by 2047. Rooted in the principles of access, equity, and participation, it seeks to ensure that every learner regardless of ability, gender, socioeconomic status, or background as the opportunity to learn and contribute meaningfully to national progress. This paper explores the interconnections between educational policy, teacher preparation, and classroom practices as the three essential pillars supporting the effective realization of inclusive education. It examines existing policy frameworks, such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, and their role in promoting inclusive values, teacher competencies, and institutional reforms. The discussion also highlights future directions, emphasizing innovation, technology integration, and community participation as enablers of inclusive transformation. By aligning inclusive education with national developmental goals, the study underscores its potential to build a just, innovative, and resilient education system for a truly developed India by 2047.

Keywords: Inclusive transformation, Vikshit Bharat, NEP 2020, equity, technology integration

Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping the social, economic, and moral fabric of a nation. As India envisions becoming a developed country by 2047, inclusive education emerges as a fundamental pathway to achieving this goal. Inclusive education goes beyond mere access; it embodies equity, participation, and respect for diversity, ensuring that every learner irrespective of ability, gender, caste, or socioeconomic background has equal opportunities to learn and succeed. Inclusive Education is complete inclusion of children with various abilities in all aspects of schooling that other children are able to access and enjoy. Inclusion is a concept that can be characterized as an attitude or a dedication to appreciating differences and accepting that all children can achieve their full potential in a common school, (Malaviya, Tulika, 2008, 52, p). The transformation toward Viksit Bharat 2047 requires education systems that are not only efficient but also inclusive and responsive to the varied needs of learners. By integrating inclusive pedagogy, innovation, and collaboration, India can establish a resilient and equitable education system that contributes meaningfully to national development and social justice by 2047. It is grounded in the belief that all learners, regardless of their abilities, gender, socioeconomic background, or cultural identity, have the right to participate meaningfully in the learning process (UNESCO, 2020). The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report (UNESCO, 2023) emphasizes that inclusive education is not only an ethical imperative but also an economic one, contributing to sustainable human development and social cohesion.

In the Indian context, inclusive education is central to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which envisions equitable and quality education for all learners. The NEP underscores the need to reform teacher education, strengthen institutional frameworks, and create flexible curricula to meet diverse learner needs (Ministry of Education, 2020). Dutta (2023) argues that policy-level inclusion must be matched by teacher preparedness, as the implementation gap often arises from insufficient professional training and lack of inclusive pedagogy in practice. Similarly, Das and Paltasingh (2024) found that although inclusive

education policies exist, many schools lack adequate infrastructure, assistive technology, and specialized staff to support children with disabilities effectively.

Teacher efficacy has been identified as a critical component in achieving inclusive education. Sharma and Salend (2022) observed that teachers' attitudes, self-efficacy, and professional development significantly influence inclusive classroom practices. Studies also highlight the importance of reflective teaching and continuous professional learning for sustaining inclusion in diverse classrooms (Singh & Yadav, 2021).

Overall, inclusive education in India is at a critical juncture supported by progressive policies but challenged by gaps in implementation. Strengthening teacher education, promoting inclusive pedagogical practices, and integrating technology and community participation are essential for achieving the vision of a developed and equitable India by 2047.

Rationale of the Study

Inclusive education lies at the heart of India's developmental vision, ensuring that every learner irrespective of ability, gender, caste, or socioeconomic background has equitable access to quality education. Despite progressive frameworks such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the implementation of inclusive practices across Indian schools remains uneven. Structural barriers, insufficient teacher preparedness, limited infrastructure, and inadequate awareness continue to restrict the full realization of inclusive education (Das & Palta Singh, 2024; Dutta, 2023). In the context of India's aspiration to become a Developed India by 2047, addressing these gaps is not only a moral and social responsibility but also an economic and national necessity.

The rationale for this study stems from the understanding that policy alone cannot transform education systems; effective change depends on the synergy between well-designed policies, competent teachers, and inclusive classroom practices. This paper seeks to explore how the alignment of these three dimensions policy, practice, and professional preparation can advance India's inclusive education agenda and contribute to equitable national development. The study also recognizes the growing influence of technology, community engagement, and teacher self-efficacy as enabling factors for achieving inclusivity in schools.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine the role of educational policies, particularly NEP 2020, in promoting inclusive education in India.
2. To analyse teachers' preparedness, attitudes, and self-efficacy toward implementing inclusive classroom practices.
3. To identify the key challenges and barriers hindering effective inclusion at the school level.
4. To propose future directions for strengthening policy, teacher education, and school practices to achieve the vision of a developed and equitable India by 2047.

1. Nep 2020 And Inclusive Education In India:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a transformative step toward creating an equitable and inclusive education system in India. The policy aligns with the global agenda of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4) ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all. By emphasizing inclusion across school and higher education levels, NEP 2020 seeks to bridge disparities caused by socioeconomic, linguistic, gender, and disability-related factors (Ministry of Education, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). NEP 2020 introduces several provisions that institutionalize inclusion as a core principle:

- **Universal Access and Equity:** The policy commits to universal access from early childhood to secondary education, ensuring that every child regardless of gender, disability, caste, or geography has equal learning opportunities.
- **Focus on Children with Disabilities (CwDs):** It mandates appropriate infrastructure, assistive technologies, and trained teachers to support diverse learning needs in line with the Right of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwD), 2016.
- **Teacher Education and Capacity Building:** NEP 2020 underscores continuous professional development for teachers and recommends integrating inclusive pedagogy, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and special education strategies in teacher-education curricula (Sharma & Salend, 2022).
- **Curricular Flexibility and Multilingualism:** The policy promotes flexible curricula, competency-based learning, and the use of mother tongues in early education essential tools for reducing exclusion and enhancing participation among marginalized learners.
- **Technology for Inclusion:** NEP 2020 emphasizes digital inclusion through open-access learning platforms and assistive technologies to ensure accessibility for learners with disabilities (Kaur & Pathak, 2023).

Thus it could be concluded that Inclusive education is widely acknowledged as a transformative mechanism for social equity and sustainable national development.

2. Teachers' Preparedness, Toward Implementing Inclusive Classroom Practices:

Teachers play a pivotal role in translating the ideals of inclusive education into classroom reality. Their beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and pedagogical competence directly determine the success or failure of inclusive initiatives (Sharma, U. 2022). *Teachers' preparedness* refers to their readiness both in terms of professional knowledge and personal disposition to respond effectively to learner diversity, implement inclusive strategies, and ensure equitable participation for all students. In the context of *Viksit Bharat 2047* and the *National Education Policy (NEP) 2020*, enhancing teacher preparedness for inclusive classrooms is critical for achieving social justice and educational equity.

Teachers must possess adequate understanding of inclusive education principles, disability laws such as the Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and differentiated instruction. Research highlights that gaps in knowledge about diverse learning needs often lead to ineffective implementation of inclusive practices (Singh & Yadav, 2021). Similarly positive attitudes toward inclusion are essential for fostering acceptance and empathy. Studies show that teachers with inclusive beliefs demonstrate greater willingness to adapt instruction and collaborate with special educators (Sharma & Salend, 2022). Conversely, negative perceptions or fear of inadequacy can hinder inclusive efforts (Das & PaltaSingh, 2024). For classroom practices a teachers' competence in adapting teaching methods, using assistive technologies, and managing heterogeneous classrooms reflects behavioral preparedness. Teachers who engage in continuous reflection and professional learning are better equipped to respond to diverse classroom needs (Dutta, 2023; Kaur & Pathak, 2023).

3. Challenges And Barriers Hindering Effective Inclusion At The School Level:

The reviewed literature and policy frameworks collectively indicate that while India has made significant progress in legislative and policy commitments, practical implementation continues to face systemic and structural barriers. Some strong barriers are as following:

Lack of Infrastructure and Resources

Many schools in India lack the physical and learning resources needed for inclusion. Basic facilities like ramps, accessible toilets, or resource rooms are missing, especially in rural areas (UNESCO, 2020). Assistive devices such as hearing aids or Braille materials are also limited. Poor internet access and lack of devices make it difficult for many students to benefit from them.

Inadequate Teacher Preparation

Teachers play a key role in inclusion, but most do not receive proper training to handle diverse classrooms. Inclusive education is often taught as a single subject instead of being part of all teaching methods (Sharma & Salend, 2022). Many teachers are unsure how to adapt lessons for students with different needs and feel unprepared or overworked.

Rigid Curriculum and Assessments

The school system still focuses on fixed syllabi and exam results. This leaves little space for teachers to use flexible teaching methods. Although NEP 2020 talks about activity-based and competency-based learning, the change is slow (Dutta, 2023). Standard exams often disadvantage children who learn differently or need extra time and support.

Negative Attitudes and Social Stigma

Social beliefs and stereotypes about disability remain strong. Some teachers, parents, and students see disability as a weakness instead of part of human diversity (Singh & Yadav, 2021). Such negative attitudes can lead to isolation, low participation, and bullying. Sensitization and awareness programs are needed to promote acceptance and empathy.

Limited Parental and Community Support

Parents and communities play an important role in inclusion, but many are unaware of children's educational rights. Some families still feel social pressure and keep children with disabilities at home. Schools need to involve parents and local groups through awareness campaigns and partnerships.

Inclusive education cannot succeed through policies alone. Schools need proper infrastructure, trained teachers, flexible curricula, and supportive attitudes. A strong partnership between government, teachers, parents, and communities is essential. As India moves toward *Developed India @ 2047*, inclusion should become a shared goal to build a fair and equitable education system for all learners.

4. Towards A Future Vision: Viksit Bharat 2047, A Developed And Equitable India

By 2047, India aims to be not only economically advanced but socially equitable and educationally empowered. Inclusive education serves as a foundation for this transformation strengthening human capital, fostering empathy, and nurturing responsible citizenship. Inclusive education represents both a moral imperative and a strategic necessity for achieving the vision of a developed and equitable India by 2047. It lays the foundation for a society where diversity is valued, barriers to learning are removed, and every learner is empowered to reach their potential.

Teachers emerge as the most critical agents of change in translating inclusive ideals into classroom realities. Their training, self-efficacy, and professional motivation directly influence the quality of inclusion. Moreover, the integration of technology and community partnerships presents new opportunities for innovation, flexibility, and access in inclusive education. Thus, achieving Viksit Bharat 2047 demands a shift from policy bombast to transformative practice where inclusivity becomes embedded in every aspect of education governance and pedagogy. So some recommendations may be as following:

- Strengthen Policy implementation mechanisms to ensure the effective translation of NEP 2020's inclusive provisions into action.
- Reform teacher education and professional development through Integrate inclusive pedagogy, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and disability awareness into pre-service and in-service teacher education programs
- Enhance infrastructure and resource support by Investing in inclusive infrastructure—such as accessible classrooms, assistive technologies, and resource centers—to create equitable learning environments across both urban and rural contexts
- Promote technological inclusion by bridging the digital divide by ensuring affordable access to ICT tools, assistive software, and adaptive technologies for all learners.
- Foster community and multi-stakeholder collaboration by strengthen partnerships among schools, communities, NGOs, and higher education institutions to build awareness, share best practices, and sustain inclusive initiatives.
- Encourage research and innovation through supporting academic research and pilot projects focusing on inclusive pedagogy, teacher self-efficacy, and policy innovation to inform future reforms and evidence-based practices.

Conclusion:

A truly developed India will not be measured solely by economic growth but by the inclusiveness of its human development. Strengthening inclusive education is therefore not just an educational reform it is a national transformation that will shape the moral, intellectual, and social foundations of Viksit Bharat 2047.

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