

Inclusive Education: A Pathway of a Progressive Society

Sub Theme: Research and Success Stories

Parmar Nehali Kumari¹; Dr. Anil Kumar Varsat²

¹Student of (M.Sc.M.Ed), Indian Institute of Teachers Education, Gandhinagar, Gujarat 382016

²Assosiat Professor, Indian Institute of Teachers Education Gandhinagar Gujrat 382016

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Abstract: Inclusive education policies are the foundation of a fair and progressive society. Policies that promote inclusive education are critical to the development of a fair and progressive society. Inclusive education policies play a vital role in shaping a progressive society. They help build social unity, drive economic growth, and support good governance. Education is more than just a tool for personal development it is a driver of broader societal change. This study looks at how inclusive education impacts different aspects of society, which are social, economic, political, and cultural. In a progressive society, by breaking down barriers creates job opportunities, strengthens democracy, and embraces multiculturalism. Inclusive policies empower individuals, bridge social inequalities, and promote long-term sustainable development by creating varied learning environments. However, despite these advantages, some obstacles remain, including a lack of teacher training, limited resources, and gaps in policy implementation. To effect substantial change, these challenges must be addressed through enhanced teacher education, infrastructure, and greater policy enforcement. In a broader sense, inclusive education is a tremendous instrument for creating a more equitable and sustainable future. Making education more varied, accessible, and participatory promotes social peace, economic resilience, and equitable political representation. To make this goal a reality, governments and institutions must invest in well-structured, well-funded, and effectively managed policies that ensure equitable learning opportunities for all people, regardless of background or ability.

Keywords: Inclusion, Sustainable Development, Democracy, Multiculturalism, Teacher Training.

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I. INTRODUCTION

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

-Nelson Mandela. (Mandela., 2017)

Education serves as the foundation for national progress, and inclusive education ensures that individuals, regardless of their socio-economic background, gender, or abilities, have equitable access to learning opportunities. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 reaffirms India's commitment to inclusive education as a critical driver of social transformation. In alignment with this vision, Viksit Bharat@2047 aims to establish an equitable and sustainable society by expanding educational accessibility. Despite these initiatives, the effective implementation of inclusive education remains a challenge due to gaps in teacher training, financial constraints, and policy enforcement. Strengthening inclusive education requires a multi-dimensional approach, including well-trained educators, sufficient funding, and active stakeholder collaboration.

Moreover, fostering an adaptive learning environment is essential to meet the diverse needs of students. Schools must integrate student-centered teaching methodologies that cater to different learning abilities while promoting a culture of inclusivity. Incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) into curricula can further enhance students' ability to engage with diverse perspectives, fostering empathy and acceptance. Additionally, assessments should not only measure academic performance but also focus on students' overall development and well-being. This paper explores the impact of inclusive education policies, the challenges hindering their execution, and strategic solutions to enhance their effectiveness, ensuring a more equitable and progressive educational framework in India.

In this study, the researcher aims to uphold the principle of "Education for All" by ensuring comprehensive inclusivity. This includes gender inclusiveness, embracing LGBTQ+ individuals, children with special needs, religious and linguistic minorities, and socioeconomically disadvantaged groups across all castes and creeds. The study seeks to highlight the importance of equitable access to education for every individual, regardless of their background or identity.

“The beauty of the world lies in the diversity of its people. Inclusive education ensures that diversity is embraced and celebrated in classrooms.”

- Anonymous.

➤ *Statement of the Problem*

Despite policies promoting "Education for All," marginalized groups including gender LGBTQ+ individuals, children with special needs, and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. Still face barriers to quality education. Inclusive education has the potential to drive social, economic, political, and cultural progress, yet challenges such as inadequate teacher training, resource shortages, and weak policy enforcement hinder its effectiveness. This study examines these challenges and explores policy interventions to enhance inclusivity, ensuring equitable and sustainable education for all.

➤ *Research Objectives*

- To analyze the impact of inclusive education policies on societal transformation.
- To identify key barriers to inclusive education and propose strategic solutions.
- To evaluate policy interventions and their effectiveness in fostering inclusive learning environments.

➤ *Research Questions*

- How do inclusive education policies contribute to social, economic, political, and cultural development?
- What are the primary challenges in implementing inclusive education in India?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

➤ *For whom Inclusion is?*

- Gender identities (all gender (male, female, LGBTQ+))
- Socio-cultural identities (ST, SC, OBC ,Minorities in religion and Minorities in linguistics)
- Geographical identities (urban, rural, tribes)
- Disabilities (all)
- Socio Economically disadvantaged groups (orphans, migrants, low-income victims of trafficking, households, urban beggar, urban poor etc.)

• *Global Perspectives on Inclusive Education*

UNESCO (2021) underscores the role of inclusive education in achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which focuses on inclusive and equitable quality education. The OECD (2020) highlights the economic and social benefits of inclusive education, emphasizing that equitable learning environments lead to greater workforce participation and improved civic engagement.

➤ *Inclusive Education in India: Policies and Frameworks*

India has made significant strides in inclusive education through several key policies and legislative measures. The

Right to Education (RTE) Act (2009) marked a major milestone by making elementary education free and compulsory for children aged 6-14(RTE Act, 2009), ensuring that disadvantaged groups, including children with disabilities, had access to education. However, its implementation has faced challenges in ensuring full inclusivity for students with special needs.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 further advances inclusivity by emphasizing tailored curriculum designs, teacher training, and the integration of assistive technology (NEP, 2020). NEP 2020 calls for the development of barrier-free access to education, ensuring that schools have necessary infrastructure like ramps, accessible learning materials, and technological support for students with disabilities. Additionally, the policy encourages multilingual education, bridging gaps for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

To strengthen teacher capabilities, NEP 2020 proposes comprehensive training programs in inclusive pedagogy as part of pre-service and in-service teacher education. The policy also introduces Universal Design for Learning (UDL) frameworks to create adaptable and flexible curricula catering to students with varying learning needs. Despite these initiatives, disparities in policy execution remain a challenge. There are regional inconsistencies in implementation, with urban schools often being better equipped than their rural counterparts. Additionally, limited financial resources and a lack of awareness hinder the effective integration of inclusive education policies across all states. Strengthening governance, enhancing teacher preparedness, and increasing funding allocation are essential for achieving true educational inclusivity in India.

India has made significant strides in inclusive education through the Right to Education (RTE) Act (2009) and the NEP 2020. NEP 2020 prioritizes inclusivity by recommending tailored curriculum designs, teacher training, and the integration of assistive technology (NEP, 2020). Despite these initiatives, disparities in policy execution remain a challenge.

➤ *The Journey Towards Inclusive Education in Indian*

- **Historical Evolution:** Traces the transformation of inclusive education policies in India over the last three decades, highlighting key milestones and government interventions.
- **Systemic Barriers:** Examines deep-rooted challenges such as societal resistance, inadequate resources, and the lack of structured inclusive education frameworks.
- **Policy and Legislative Frameworks:** Provides an in-depth analysis of major policies and frameworks supporting inclusive education:
- **National Policy on Education (1968):** Marked the first attempt to reform education in independent India, emphasizing equal educational opportunities and the importance of regional languages in inclusive learning.

- National Policy on Education (1986): Focused on "Education for All," integrating children with disabilities into mainstream education and introducing the concept of special education programs.
- Right to Education (RTE) Act (2009): Ensures free and compulsory education for children, including those with disabilities.(RTE Act, 2009)
- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: Advocates for Universal Design for Learning (UDL), flexible curricula, and assistive technology to support diverse learners.(NEP, 2020)
- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA): Aims at universalizing elementary education, with provisions for children with special needs.(SSA, 2004)
- Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan: Integrates SSA, RMSA, and TE components to provide holistic support for inclusive education.
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD): Aligns India's commitments with global standards on inclusive education.(CRPD, 2018)
- Draft National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2021): Proposes improved accessibility measures and enhanced special education training for teachers.(DNPPD, 2022)
- National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 & 2022: Recommends inclusive pedagogical approaches in classrooms.

➤ *Inclusive Education in India: Progress*

- Identifies challenges at the grassroots level, particularly in rural and underdeveloped areas.
- Emphasizes the urgent need for teacher training programs tailored to diverse learning requirements, including sensory disabilities and neurodivergence.
- Explores the role of technology in building inclusive learning environments by integrating assistive tools like screen readers, braille software, and AI-driven educational platforms.
- Discusses how digital platforms such as DIKSHA and SWAYAM enhance inclusive learning through multilingual and customized educational content.
- Recommends virtual classrooms and e-learning solutions to bridge accessibility gaps for students with disabilities, ensuring equal learning opportunities.

➤ *Inclusive Education: Need and Challenges*

Ainscow identifies insufficient teacher training, lack of infrastructure, and policy fragmentation as primary obstacles to inclusive education. Moreover, social stigmas and economic barriers hinder the enrollment and retention of marginalized students in mainstream schools.(Ainscow, 2020)

• *Universal Design for Learning (UDL)*

UDL advocates for flexible teaching strategies that accommodate students with different learning needs. This approach encourages the use of multiple means of

representation, engagement, and expression to ensure personalized and effective learning experiences.

• *Challenges in Implementation*

Despite strong policies and frameworks, several barriers hinder the effective implementation of inclusive education:

- ✓ Rigid Curricula: Traditional curriculum structures do not always allow for necessary modifications to accommodate diverse learners
- ✓ Lack of Teacher Preparedness: Many educators lack specialized training in inclusive pedagogy, making it difficult to cater to the diverse needs of students.
- ✓ Insufficient Financial Support: Budgetary constraints limit the availability of resources, assistive technologies, and infrastructure improvements needed for inclusive education

III. METHODS OF TEACHING

In most of the institution use only a few specific teaching methods, preventing students of varying abilities from taking full advantage of the teaching and learning process.(Lakshmi, 2018).

- Limited Teaching Strategies: Many educational institutions rely on a narrow set of teaching methods, restricting students with different abilities from fully benefiting from the learning process(Lakshmi, 2018)
- Adaptive Instructional Methods: The use of differentiated instruction, multi-sensory learning, and student-centered approaches can enhance accessibility and engagement in the classroom (Peter Westwood, 2024)

➤ *Peer Coaching*

This challenge deals with the Peer Coaching. Improving teaching and learning in an integrated learning environment requires Peer Coaching.(Lakshmi, 2018)

- Collaborative Learning Approach: The success of inclusive education depends on peer coaching, where teachers support each other to improve instructional methods in an integrated learning environment (Lakshmi, 2018)
- Professional Development: Regular training sessions and mentoring programs can help educators develop skills necessary for inclusive teaching

➤ *Policy and Infrastructure Improvements*

- Government Initiatives: There is a need for stronger policy enforcement to enhance accessibility in schools (NEP, 2020)
- Increased Budget Allocation: Additional funding should be directed toward improving infrastructure, training educators, and providing assistive technologies (OECD, 2020).
- Targeted Financial Support: Special grants and subsidies should be made available for schools to implement

inclusive education policies effectively (UNESCO, 2021).

- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaboration with private entities and NGOs can help generate additional financial resources and expand access to inclusive education
- **Infrastructure Development:** Investment in accessible classrooms, assistive technologies, and special education resources can create a more inclusive learning environment (NEP, 2020)

➤ *Technology Integration*

- **Assistive Technologies:** Digital tools such as speech-to-text software, braille devices, and AI-driven learning applications can support students with disabilities
- **Online Learning Platforms:** Virtual classrooms and digital resources can bridge educational gaps and provide customized learning experiences for diverse learners.
- **Adaptive Learning Systems:** AI-powered educational software can personalize learning paths based on individual student needs and abilities.
- **Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR/VR):** These technologies can create immersive learning experiences, making content more accessible for students with disabilities.
- **Accessible Digital Content:** Ensuring that e-books, online courses, and educational videos include captions, transcripts, and alternative text for visually impaired students.
- **Internet and Device Accessibility:** Expanding access to affordable internet and providing digital devices to underprivileged students to reduce the digital divide in inclusive education.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to assess the impact of inclusive education in India. It critically examines government reports, policy documents, and academic literature to evaluate the effectiveness of inclusive education initiatives. Key legislative frameworks, including the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the Right to Education (RTE) Act (2009), are analyzed to determine their role in enhancing educational accessibility and equity.

Furthermore, a review of scholarly research articles from established academic sources provides insights into challenges related to implementation, teacher preparedness, infrastructural deficiencies, and policy execution. By integrating findings from multiple sources, this study offers a comprehensive assessment of current inclusive education practices, highlights existing gaps, and proposes strategic recommendations for their improvement.

V. FINDINGS

➤ *Current Status of Inclusive Education in India*

- **Illiteracy Among Disabled Individuals:** reforms and laws have been formulated to ensure equal education to all,

over 45% of disabled people in India are still illiterate.(Biswas, 2024). While many individuals with disabilities attain literacy and challenges persist beyond education. According to the Union Ministry for Persons with Disabilities has stated that 64% of them still end up unemployed.((Biswas, 2024)(Sarkar, 2020))

- **School Attendance:** Only about 62.9% of individuals with disabilities aged 3 to 35 have ever attended regular schools(Sarkar, 2020). This indicates a significant gap in educational access for this demographic.
- **Special Schools:** data from(UDISE+, 2023)

Enrolment of students by gender ,school management and level of school education in India is boys 128744591, girls 119301237 in total 248045828.

Enrolment of Children With Special Need (CWSN) by gender, school management and level of school education in India is boys 1210672, girls 903438 in total 2114110.

Number of schools by management and availability of children with special needs (CWSN) in India 1471891 schools in total number in that gov.1017660, gov.aided. 80313, pvt.331108 and other then that 42810.

Percentage of schools having functional CWSN friendly toilets by Management, 2023-24 is for all over India is 32.2%.

➤ *Barrier-Free Schools:*

- **Assistive Devices Provided:** Approximately 575,000 children with special needs have been provided with required assistive devices.

VI. DISCUSSION

➤ *Social Impact*

Inclusive education is social justice for every child and social justice is everyone's job.(Swain & Dibakar, 2024) Inclusive education fosters social cohesion by promoting diversity and reducing discrimination. When students from different backgrounds learn together, it nurtures mutual respect and understanding, contributing to a more harmonious society (Das & Sharma, 2015) By implementation of integration and intercultural strategies may result in greater harmony among diverse groups of students studying in an academic environment and living together in a larger society(Gilani et al., 2020).

➤ *Economic Impact*

The quality of education plays a crucial role in economic growth. A high-quality education system not only cultivates a workforce with specialized knowledge and skills but also stimulates innovative thinking, drives technological progress, and fosters social change.(Wößmann & Hanushek, 2007) Inclusive education enhances economic resilience by ensuring marginalized communities have access to skill development and employment, leading to higher workforce productivity and national growth. Countries with strong inclusive policies report improved economic mobility and innovation-driven development. By bridging socio-

economic gaps and equipping individuals with entrepreneurial and technical skills, inclusive education contributes to sustainable economic progress.

➤ Political Impact

Inclusive education has significant political impacts by promoting social equity, strengthening democratic values, and reducing social tensions. It empowers marginalized communities, enhances political participation, and drives policy reforms that ensure equal opportunities for all. By fostering inclusivity, it cultivates a sense of belonging and national unity, reducing conflicts and social unrest. Aligning with global commitments like SDG 4, inclusive education improves a country's international image, attracts global support, and strengthens diplomatic relations. Educated and inclusive societies foster transparency, accountability, and long-term governance stability, contributing to sustainable political and social development.

➤ Cultural Impact

Inclusive education fosters cultural diversity, social cohesion, and mutual respect by bringing together students from different backgrounds. It reduces discrimination, challenges stereotypes, and empowers marginalized communities by preserving their cultural and linguistic heritage. By promoting tolerance and inclusivity, it shapes societal values and bridges traditional knowledge with modern education, contributing to a more harmonious and culturally rich society. Inclusive classrooms promote multiculturalism and acceptance. Exposure to diverse perspectives enriches learning experiences and helps students develop global competencies (Singh, 2023). The implementation of integration and intercultural strategies may result in greater harmony among diverse groups of students studying in an academic environment and living together in a larger society.

VII. CONCLUSION

A good inclusive education is one that allows all the students to participate in all aspects of classroom equally or close to equal (Singh, 2023). Inclusive education serves as a transformative force in fostering social equity, economic resilience, political engagement, and cultural integration. By ensuring equal educational opportunities for all, regardless of socio-economic background, gender, or ability, inclusive education strengthens democratic values and reduces disparities within society.

Despite the strong policy frameworks like the Right to Education Act (2009) and NEP 2020, challenges such as inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and policy execution gaps persist. Addressing these issues requires a collaborative approach involving government initiatives, public-private partnerships, and active community participation.

Moving forward, strategic investments in teacher training, infrastructure, assistive technology, and curriculum adaptation will be crucial for achieving true inclusivity in education. Policymakers must prioritize effective

implementation and monitoring mechanisms to bridge existing gaps. By doing so, inclusive education can contribute to long-term national development, fostering an equitable, democratic, and culturally diverse society that aligns with India's vision of Viksit Bharat@2047.

Inclusive education is pivotal for India's long-term developmental vision under NEP 2020 and Viksit Bharat@2047. While challenges exist, strategic investments in teacher training, infrastructure, and policy monitoring can ensure that education remains accessible and equitable. Strengthening inclusive education policies will not only empower marginalized communities but also contribute to national progress by fostering social unity, economic resilience, and democratic participation.

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