

# Transformation of Indian Education through Inclusive Practices Under NEP 2020

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## Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 proclaims a commitment to equitable, inclusive education, prioritizing learners from historically marginalized, disadvantaged, and underrepresented groups. This study critically examines NEP 2020's inclusive education mandates, assessing their transformative potential and implementation challenges. It focuses on key segments such as children with disabilities, girls, socio-economically disadvantaged groups, linguistic minorities, and rural learners, and highlights systemic factors like infrastructure, teacher training, digital access, and curriculum inclusivity influencing policy implementation. NEP 2020's proposals – from bridging language barriers through mother-tongue instruction, flexible curricula, and standardized Indian Sign Language to deploying additional special educators and aligning teacher training with disability inclusion needs – have substantial potential to advance inclusion. The analysis underscores that without robust multi-level strategies, NEP's inclusive vision risks falling short. It recommends coordinated interventions, including targeted funding (e.g., operationalizing the proposed Gender Inclusion Fund) and infrastructure upgrades, intensive teacher capacity-building, community engagement, and the creation of Special Education Zones in disadvantaged districts, to bridge the gap between policy and practice. In sum, while NEP 2020 lays a strong foundation for inclusive education, concerted efforts are required to translate policy into equitable learning outcomes for India's most marginalized learners.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Education, National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), Educational Reform, Teacher Training, Barrier-Free Infrastructure, Digital Divide, Marginalized Groups, Socio-Cultural Challenges, India, Stakeholder Engagement, Policy Implementation

## Introduction

Inclusive education has become a fundamental principle of educational reform, aiming to ensure **equitable access for all learners** regardless of socio-economic background, gender, ability, or language. Every child is entitled to get education in the mainstream education system. Globally, this vision is mentioned as Sustainable Development Goal 4, which calls for “*inclusive and equitable quality education*” by 2030. India's commitment to inclusion is evident in its constitutional guarantees of equality and the Right to Education Act of 2009, which mandate free and compulsory education for all children. Building on these foundations, the **National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020)** marks a paradigm shift in India's education system by embedding inclusivity at its core (Kalita, 2024; Mishra, 2023; Kaushik, 2024). The

NEP 2020 explicitly recognizes the educational rights of *Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups* (SEDGs), broadly including girls, **children with disabilities**, transgender children, Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), minority communities, as well as learners from rural, remote, and economically weaker backgrounds (Government of India, 2020). By acknowledging that factors like gender, caste, poverty, location, and language can all contribute to educational marginalization, NEP 2020 envisions systemic reforms to “ensure that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of circumstances of birth or background” (Government of India, 2020).

This is a comprehensive overview of NEP 2020’s inclusive education mandates and critically analyses the **challenges and prospects** of their implementation. It synthesizes insights from policy documents, government data, and recent research (2020–2025) through an integrative review approach (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). Recent studies indicate that while NEP 2020’s vision is laudable in principle, realizing its goals in practice requires overcoming deep-rooted **systemic, infrastructural, pedagogical, and socio-cultural barriers** (Sardar et al., 2024; Balasubramanian & Banerjee, 2024). This study particularly highlights the situation of marginalized learner groups – including children with disabilities, girls, socio-economically disadvantaged communities, linguistic minorities, and rural populations – with a contextual emphasis on challenges observed in implementation of these policies. The present study attempts to discuss the key inclusive provisions of NEP 2020, analyse multi-faceted challenges to inclusion, and suggest multi-level strategies (policy, institutional, and community-based) to transform India’s educational landscape in line with NEP 2020’s inclusive vision.

## Methodology

This theoretical study employs an integrative review approach synthesizing primary and secondary data sources, including policy documents, peer-reviewed journal articles, and official reports published between 2020 and 2025. Sources were selected based on their relevance to inclusive education practices, policy developments, infrastructural challenges, and pedagogical reforms in the Indian context.

## Key Provisions of NEP 2020 for Inclusive Education

NEP 2020 introduces several **groundbreaking provisions** to promote inclusion across all levels of education (Government of India, 2020). These provisions address the needs of marginalized learners and seek to reform the education system holistically. Some of the provisions related to inclusive education include:

- **Equitable Access and Outreach:** The policy emphasizes universal access to education for *all* children from early childhood through secondary level (Government of India, 2020). This includes *targeted interventions* for Children With Special Needs (CWSN) such as scholarship programs, conditional cash transfers, free transport (e.g. providing bicycles), and the expansion of alternative and non-formal education for hard-to-reach children (Government of India, 2020). NEP 2020 calls for a special focus on **girls and transgender students**, noting that closing the gender gap is critical since “SEDGs (Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups) face exclusion and inequity that is only

amplified for the women in these groups” (Government of India, 2020). It also proposes the creation of a *Gender-Inclusion Fund* to support initiatives for female and transgender students, and the identification of **Special Education Zones** in disadvantaged regions to channel extra resources (Ministry of Education, 2020).

- **Support for Marginalized Communities:** The NEP places strong emphasis on uplifting historically marginalized communities. For socially disadvantaged castes and tribes, it urges continued **affirmative action** and localized solutions. For example, it recognizes that children from tribal communities often find schooling alienating and recommends culturally relevant curriculum and local teachers in tribal areas (Government of India, 2020). The policy also highlights minority language communities and linguistic diversity – advocating **multilingual education** so that children whose mother tongue is not the school’s medium of instruction are not left behind. Primary education in the home/local language is encouraged to improve learning outcomes for linguistic minorities (Government of India, 2020). Overall, NEP 2020 aligns with a vision of *social justice*, aiming to reduce dropout rates and improve learning outcomes among SC, ST, OBC, minority, and rural learners (Mishra, 2023; Panda, 2024).
- **Inclusive Infrastructure:** A critical mandate of NEP 2020 is to develop **barrier-free physical infrastructure** in all educational institutions. Schools and colleges must become accessible to **children with disabilities (CwD)**, through the provision of ramps, handrails, wheelchair-friendly classrooms, and accessible toilets (Rasool, 2024; Halder, 2024). The policy explicitly endorses the *Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016* definition of inclusive education and commits to implementing its requirements (Government of India, 2020). This includes installing assistive devices and technologies, developing learning materials in accessible formats (e.g. Braille, Indian Sign Language), and establishing resource centers with special educators to support children with multiple or severe disabilities (Government of India, 2020). NEP 2020 thus envisions an environment where children with and without disabilities learn together with necessary accommodations in place (Radhika, 2025).
- **Teacher Training and Capacity Building:** Recognizing that teachers are the fulcrum of inclusive education, NEP 2020 calls for systematic reforms in teacher education and professional development (Adhikari, 2025; Sabar, 2024). Teachers and school leaders are to be sensitized and trained to **support diverse learners**, including pedagogical skills for special needs education, gender-sensitive teaching, and multilingual classroom strategies (Pradhan & Sardar, 2024). The policy prescribes that all teachers training programs include modules on inclusive pedagogy, and it advocates recruitment of adequate special educators for cross-disability training (Government of India, 2020). In-service training is to cover topics such as creating inclusive lesson plans, use of assistive technology, and managing inclusive classrooms (Shivam & P.K.S., 2025). The **National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education** is being revamped accordingly, and mentoring mechanisms (National Mission for Mentoring) are being set up to continuously build teacher capacity (Government of India, 2020).

- **Curriculum Adaptation and Assessment Flexibility:** To accommodate diverse learning needs, NEP 2020 promotes a **flexible and modular curriculum** (Kaushik, 2024; Halder, 2024). This involves development of **contextualized learning materials** (e.g., local language content, culturally relevant examples for tribal students), and flexibility in pacing for children who learn differently. Examination and assessment reforms are a key feature – moving towards competency-based assessments and formative evaluation that support learning for all students (Singh et al., 2025; Kalita, 2024). The policy calls for alternatives to high-stakes exams, accommodations like alternate modes of testing for CWSN (such as oral tests or project work in place of written exams when needed), and tracking of learning outcomes with a focus on individual progress (Singh et al., 2025). The introduction of a new National Assessment Centre (PARAKH) is aimed at aligning assessments with these inclusive, competency-based approaches (Government of India, 2020).
- **Technology Integration for Inclusion:** NEP 2020 acknowledges the power of technology in overcoming traditional barriers. It advocates for using EdTech to enhance access – for example, digital classrooms and online resources that can reach rural and remote learners, and specialized software for children with visual or hearing impairments (Panda, 2024; Kalita, 2024). Initiatives like DIKSHA (the national digital learning platform) are to be expanded with content in multiple languages and in accessible formats (audio books, sign-language videos). The policy envisages *virtual labs and assistive tech tools* to help individualised learning (especially useful for home-bound children or those in areas with teacher shortages). However, it stresses that technology use must be equitable, supplemented by efforts to ensure connectivity and device access for poor students – an issue tackled further under challenges.
- **Community and Stakeholder Engagement:** A hallmark of NEP 2020’s approach is its emphasis on involving the broader community in education (Sabar, 2024; Pradhan & Sardar, 2024). The policy encourages formation of **School Complexes/Clusters** to pool resources and foster cooperation among schools and local institutions (Government of India, 2020). It calls on parents, local leaders, and civil society organizations to participate in School Management Committees and inclusive education programs. By building “vibrant, caring, and inclusive communities of teachers, students, parents, and principals”, the policy aims to cultivate a supportive ecosystem where every child feels valued. Public awareness campaigns about the importance of educating girls, children with disabilities, and other marginalized groups are envisaged to change social attitudes (Balasubramanian & Banerjee, 2024). Overall, NEP 2020’s provisions reflect principles of **social equity, respect for diversity, and child-centric learning**, laying an ambitious framework to transform India’s education system into an inclusive one (Mishra, 2023; Rasool, 2024).

## Implementation Challenges

Despite the progressive mandates of NEP 2020, translating these ideals into on-the-ground reality faces **multifaceted challenges**. Recent evaluations highlight gaps between policy and

implementation that must be urgently addressed (Sardar et al., 2024; Balasubramanian & Banerjee, 2024). The key challenges are systemic in nature – encompassing infrastructure, human resources, socio-cultural factors, and governance. Below, we analyze these challenges in detail:

- **Infrastructural Deficits:** A fundamental barrier is the **lack of adequate infrastructure** to support inclusive education, especially in government schools and rural areas (Kalita, 2024; Mangat, 2024). Many schools still operate without basic facilities required for children with special needs. According to the latest UDISE+ statistics (2023–24), only **33.2% of government schools have disabled-friendly toilets, and of those, merely 30.6% are functional** (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2024). This indicates that less than one in ten government schools effectively provides an accessible toilet for students with disabilities – a critical shortcoming for inclusion and hygiene). Physical access within school buildings is another issue: about 77% of schools report having ramps at entrances, but only around **52% have ramps with handrails**, meaning nearly half of schools are not fully accessible to wheelchair users (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2024). Basic infrastructure gaps extend beyond disability-specific needs. Many schools lack electricity, potable water, or enough classrooms, disproportionately affecting rural and remote regions. Such infrastructural inadequacies directly undermine NEP’s goal of barrier-free access.
- **Insufficient Teacher Preparation:** Implementing inclusion in the classroom hinges on teacher preparedness, yet **teacher capacity remains a weak link**. A significant number of Indian educators have not received training in inclusive pedagogies or special education (Sabar, 2024; Halder, 2024). While NEP 2020 prescribes new teacher education curricula, the impact will take time to materialize among the existing teacher workforce. Currently, many teachers report feeling ill-equipped to modify lessons for diverse learners or handle children with disabilities in mainstream classes (Radhika, 2025). The availability of specialist support is also limited – **shortages of special educators** and counsellors are acute, especially in rural and government schools (Pradhan & Sardar, 2024). The dearth of training and support leads to a reliance on traditional one-size-fits-all teaching methods, which fail to engage children who need individualized approaches (Shivam & P.K.S., 2025). In practice, teachers often end up sidelining students with disabilities or those facing learning difficulties, contradicting the inclusive ethos of NEP 2020. Strengthening teacher capacity is thus a major implementation bottleneck.
- **Digital Divide and Technological Barriers:** NEP 2020’s vision of using technology for inclusion has run up against India’s persistent **digital divide**. Many students from marginalized groups lack access to devices or reliable internet, a disparity highlighted starkly during the COVID-19 pandemic school closures (Mishra, 2023; Singh et al., 2025). UDISE+ data indicate that as of 2023–24, only about **57% of schools have functional computers** for teaching-learning and just **54% have internet access** on campus (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2024). In other words, nearly

half of all schools – and a majority of government schools – are not digitally equipped. Rural schools and those serving poorer populations are the least likely to have ICT infrastructure, which means students in those areas cannot benefit from e-learning resources or assistive technologies that NEP envisages. This digital gap is especially detrimental for children with disabilities who might rely on specialized software or devices – if schools lack electricity or computers, those assistive tools become unusable. Even where infrastructure exists, teachers may not be trained in using technology for inclusive teaching, and curricula may not have adapted to integrate digital content. The result is a **technology-driven inclusion gap** where urban, affluent students leap ahead with new learning tools while rural and disadvantaged students are left further behind (Mangat, 2024; Kalita, 2024). Bridging this divide is imperative to ensure NEP 2020 does not inadvertently widen inequities.

- **Socio-Cultural Attitudes and Stigma:** Deep-seated societal biases present a less tangible but very real challenge to inclusive education. In many communities, especially in conservative rural regions, **attitudes toward disability, gender, and social status** can hinder the acceptance of inclusive practices (Balasubramanian & Banerjee, 2024). Stigma and misconceptions about children with disabilities – for instance, viewing them as incapable of learning or fearing they will detract from others’ learning – lead to resistance against their enrolment in mainstream schools. The deeply rooted gender biases result in lower priority for girls’ education in some families, leading to girls being pulled out of school early to help at home or marry young. Linguistic minorities and tribal children often face discrimination or a lack of cultural understanding in school, causing alienation. These socio-cultural barriers are evident in higher dropout rates for SEDGs: as NEP noted, *enrolment declines from primary to secondary level are significantly more pronounced for SC, ST, and differently abled children, especially girls among these groups* (Government of India, 2020). Changing mindsets is challenging and requires sustained advocacy. Without addressing community attitudes and prejudices, infrastructural and pedagogical reforms alone is not sufficient– true inclusion demands a shift in school culture and public perception (Sardar et al., 2024; Halder, 2024).
- **Policy Implementation Gaps and Resource Constraints:** Achieving NEP 2020’s inclusion goals will require substantial **financial investment and efficient governance** – areas that have historically been fraught with issues. Public expenditure on education in India (around 3% of GDP) remains below the NEP’s target of 6%, limiting the funds available for new inclusive initiatives (Rasool, 2024). Many states face budgetary constraints in hiring specialized staff or upgrading school infrastructure, leading to uneven implementation. For instance, provisions like the proposed Gender-Inclusion Fund and Special Education Zones require strong coordination between different government bodies and funding commitments that are still in initial stages. Without serious commitment the expansion in infrastructure, capacity building and digital upgradation required for inclusion of all will not be possible.

- There is a need for robust **monitoring and accountability mechanisms** to ensure policies translate into action at the school level (Pradhan & Sardar, 2024). At present, data systems like UDISE+ provide important annual overview of infrastructure and enrolment, but there is less real-time monitoring of how inclusive practices are being adopted in classrooms. The data of UDISE+ is provided by the institutions itself which do not provide real time monitoring of inclusive practices. Implementation also varies widely by state; in the absence of clear guidelines and incentives, **Coordination across multiple levels of government**, from central to panchayat (village council), is required but often lacking. The result is that well-intentioned policies can stall or get diluted during implementation. Without dedicated funding, capacity-building, and strict accountability, NEP 2020's transformative ideas may not be realised properly.

In summary, the **implementation gap** is significant. Infrastructure and resource shortages, unprepared teachers, digital inequalities and, deeply rooted social biases can hinder the progress. These challenges do not undermine the importance or validity of NEP 2020's inclusive mandates but recognizing these hurdles is the first step towards creating effective strategies to overcome them.

## Prospects and Strategies for Inclusive Education under NEP 2020

Despite the challenges, NEP 2020 provides a strong framework and guidance for positive change, and there are promising developments that can be leveraged. The period from 2020 to 2025 has seen growing awareness and numerous pilot initiatives focused on inclusion, suggesting that the **prospects for transformation** are real if challenges are addressed systematically. Achieving the NEP's vision will require coordinated action across multiple levels – from high-level policy reforms to grassroots community efforts. Below, we outline well-grounded strategies to overcome key barriers, aligned with policy, institutional, and community domains:

1. **Strengthening Infrastructure and Resources:** *Policy-Level:* **Significant public and private investment** must be channelled into upgrading educational infrastructure, particularly in rural and under-served areas (Kalita, 2024; Radhika, 2025). The government should prioritize funds for constructing **barrier-free schools** – adding ramps, handrails, accessible washrooms, proper lighting and flooring – to ensure every school meets basic accessibility standards. This could be facilitated by earmarking a portion of the education budget or utilizing the contingency of the Gender-Inclusion Fund for infrastructure in girls' schools, etc. *Institutional-Level:* School complexes can pool resources to set up shared **resource centers** equipped with assistive devices (Braille materials, hearing aids, adapted computers) that visiting special educators and therapists can use to support multiple schools (Government of India, 2020). *Community-Level:* Local communities and alumni networks can be mobilized to contribute to school improvement (e.g., through crowdfunding small projects like building a ramp or donating computers). Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are also a viable strategy – for instance, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives by companies can adopt schools to provide infrastructure like potable water, toilets, or

internet connectivity in remote regions. Addressing infrastructure gaps not only improves physical access but also sends a message that *every child is welcome* in school. Over time, as more schools become models of inclusion (with resource rooms, accessible design, and inclusive play/recreation facilities), it creates a proof of concept that can be replicated widely.

2. **Enhancing Teacher Capacity and Pedagogy:** *Policy-Level:* The mandate of inclusive training in all pre-service teacher education programs must be enforced and expedited (Adhikari, 2025; Sabar, 2024). Regulatory bodies like NCTE (National Council for Teacher Education) should ensure that new B.Ed. and D.Ed. curricula include robust modules on **inclusive pedagogy, disability education, and multicultural classrooms**. A national program for **in-service teacher training** on inclusion should be launched under the Samagra Shiksha scheme, with adequate funding. This could involve annual required workshops for all teachers on topics such as differentiated instruction, assistive technology use, and managing classroom diversity (Pradhan & Sardar, 2024). *Institutional-Level:* Schools and districts should establish **Professional Learning Communities** where teachers can share best practices and resources for inclusion. Appointment of **mentor teachers or master trainers** in inclusion at the block or district level can create go-to persons who guide others (Shivam & P.K.S., 2025). Recruiting more special educators and school counselors is essential; policies might incentivize these professionals to work in rural areas (perhaps via salary bonuses or service contracts), so that each cluster of schools has regular access to specialized expertise. *Community-Level:* Engaging parents of children with special needs as partners can also build teacher capacity – for instance, parents can provide insights on their child’s strengths and challenges, enabling teachers to tailor support better. NGOs and disability rights organizations can provide volunteer experts to train school staff periodically. It is crucial to move beyond theoretical training to **hands-on exposure**, so teachers gain confidence in using inclusive methods. Over time, a better-prepared cadre of educators will likely lead to improved learning outcomes and retention of marginalized students, validating the NEP’s approach (Radhika, 2025).
3. **Bridging the Digital Divide:** *Policy-Level:* Bridging the digital divide requires both infrastructure investment and innovative policy interventions. The government should expand programs that **provide devices and connectivity** to students – for example, distribution of free or subsidized tablets to students from low-income families, and installation of solar-powered ICT labs in off-grid schools (Mangat, 2024). Public Wi-Fi hotspots or community internet centers near schools could ensure students have after-school access to online resources. Partnerships with tech companies (through initiatives like Google’s Internet Saathi or Microsoft’s rural digital literacy programs) can help bring technology and training to remote villages. *Institutional-Level:* Schools with existing computer facilities should be encouraged to maximize their use for inclusive education, such as using multimedia content to support differently abled learners (Panda, 2024). Teacher training should also include **digital literacy and use of assistive tech**, so that educators can confidently integrate these tools (Singh et al., 2025).

*Community-Level:* Community involvement is key to sustaining digital inclusion – local youth volunteers or tech-savvy students could lead digital literacy camps for other students and even parents, ensuring that fear or unfamiliarity with technology does not hinder usage. Libraries and community centers can serve as points where students lacking devices at home can access digital content in a supervised setting. By creating local-language digital content (with community input for relevance and context) will benefit linguistic minorities. By closing the technology gap, these efforts will allow all students to benefit from e-learning and personalized educational software, making NEP 2020's tech-based interventions truly equitable (Kalita, 2024; Singh et al., 2025).

4. **Addressing Socio-Cultural Barriers:** *Policy-Level:* National and state governments should run sustained **awareness and sensitization campaigns** to change mindsets regarding inclusive education (Balasubramanian & Banerjee, 2024). Mass media and social media can be used to highlight success stories of children from marginalized groups thriving in inclusive schools, thereby challenging stereotypes. Incorporating messages about **gender equality, disability rights, and the value of education for all** into existing programs (such as the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign for girls' education) can widen their impact. *Institutional-Level:* Schools need to actively foster an **inclusive culture**: this can be done by celebrating diversity through events (e.g., disability awareness day, cultural festivals of different communities), enforcing anti-discrimination policies, and including value education in the curriculum that teaches empathy, tolerance, and respect (Government of India, 2020). Teachers and principals must model inclusive attitudes – for instance, by ensuring children with special needs participate in all class activities, assigning leadership roles to girls and marginalized students, and swiftly addressing any bullying or teasing incidents. *Community-Level:* Community leaders, religious heads, and local influencers can be roped in to advocate for inclusive education. Their endorsement can lend credibility and help overcome traditional resistance. **School Management Committees (SMCs)**, which include parent representatives, should be empowered to champion inclusion – by conducting door-to-door visits to persuade hesitant parents to send their daughters or disabled children to school, for example. In rural areas involving village panchayats and women's self-help groups in monitoring and supporting school attendance for girls and disadvantaged children has shown positive results (Borah, 2024). Over time, as communities witness the benefits – such as improved academic performance and confidence in their children – social norms are likely to shift in favour of inclusive schooling. Changing deep-rooted attitudes is slow, but these concerted efforts are crucial for the sustainability of NEP 2020's reforms (Pradhan & Sardar, 2024).

5. **Strengthening Policy Implementation and Accountability:**

Effective implementation demands **robust governance mechanisms**. There should be clear, time-bound action plans at national and state levels for each inclusion-related NEP recommendation. The Ministry of Education could establish a dedicated *Inclusive Education Monitoring Unit* to track progress on indicators like school accessibility, enrolment/retention of SEDGs, and teacher training completion rates. UDISE+ data

collection can be enhanced to capture more granular information on inclusion (e.g., number of teachers trained in inclusive education, availability of learning aids for CwD), and these data should inform policy tweaks annually (Department of School Education and Literacy, 2024). Moreover, there is a need for collaboration between departments, such as combining health services with educational institutions to offer therapies for children with disabilities or connecting social welfare programs (like allowances for disabled children) with school attendance.

Schools should be given clear **guidelines and support** to implement NEP mandates. This includes school development plans that incorporate inclusion targets, and perhaps an index to evaluate schools on inclusivity (beyond just academic results). Schools and principals that make notable progress in inclusive education could be publicly recognized or given incentives, fostering a healthy competition and motivation to implement changes. *Community-Level: Civil society and community monitoring* add an extra layer of accountability. NGOs, parents' associations, and student groups can act as watchdogs, reporting lapses such as lack of disability access or instances of discrimination. Social audits of schools, involving community members, can be conducted to verify that facilities and schemes are reaching the intended beneficiaries (Pradhan & Sardar, 2024). Ultimately, inclusive education should become a part of the school quality discourse. When inclusion is treated as a marker of excellence (alongside exam results), schools and officials will feel accountable to deliver on that front. Aligning policy intent with ground reality in this manner will be critical to realize the full **prospects of NEP 2020** – an education system where every child, irrespective of background or ability, not only attends school but is able to learn and thrive.

Importantly, these strategies are interdependent and must converge. For instance, providing a ramp (infrastructure) is futile if social stigma keeps a child at home, and sending a trained special educator to a school will have limited impact if basic accessibility or teaching aids are missing. Therefore, a **multi-stakeholder, multi-pronged approach** is needed. Policymakers must show sustained political will, educators must embrace new roles and continuous learning, communities must become supportive partners, and researchers should continue to evaluate and guide the process (Balasubramanian & Banerjee, 2024; Sardar et al., 2024). The years ahead represent a critical window of opportunity to operationalize NEP 2020's inclusive vision and thus transform Indian education in a manner that lives up to the constitutional ideals of equality and justice.

## **Policy Implications and Conclusion**

NEP 2020's focus on inclusion is a timely and necessary response to India's educational disparities. If its mandates are implemented earnestly, the long-term **policy implications** are profound. An inclusive education system can significantly improve educational outcomes for marginalized populations, leading to broader social benefits such as reduced inequality, greater workforce participation of under-represented groups, and social cohesion. In particular, ensuring quality education for girls, children with disabilities, and disadvantaged communities

contributes to inter-generational empowerment – educated individuals are more likely to be employed, healthy, and active citizens.

However, achieving these outcomes requires translating policy into practice through deliberate, sustained efforts. Policymakers should consider **bolstering the NEP 2020 framework with supplementary measures**: for example, instituting legal accountability (perhaps by strengthening the RTE Act’s provisions on inclusion or introducing penalties for non-compliance with accessibility standards), and allocating ring-fenced budgets for inclusive education initiatives. It is also crucial to periodically review and refine the policy measures. As implementation proceeds, data and research (Jana & Halder, 2023; Sardar et al., 2024) should inform adjustments – policies must be dynamic to respond to on-ground realities. For instance, if certain interventions (like providing tablets) are not yielding desired results due to maintenance issues or misuse, policy should pivot to alternative solutions (like community digital centers).

Another implication is the need for **convergence across sectors and ministries**. Inclusive education does not operate in isolation – it overlaps with child health (for screenings and interventions for disabilities), rural development (for infrastructure like roads to schools), and social justice (for addressing prejudices and ensuring representation). A holistic approach, possibly through an inter-ministerial task force on inclusive development, would reinforce education policy with complementary actions in these areas. Moreover, capacity building should extend to educational administration – district and block education officers, school inspectors, and policymakers themselves need training and orientation on inclusive education to drive the agenda forward effectively (Pradhan & Sardar, 2024).

In conclusion, while the challenges to inclusive education in India are undeniably complex, **the NEP 2020 offers a robust platform to address them**. The policy’s comprehensive coverage – from early childhood care to higher education, from curriculum changes to community involvement – indicates a recognition that inclusion must permeate every aspect of the education system (Kaushik, 2024; Rasool, 2024). The period since 2020 has already seen increased scholarly and practical focus on inclusion, and numerous case studies of success at local levels are emerging. These successes, however small or localized, provide proof that change is possible. Scaling these up will require dedication and innovation: **coordinated action from government, educational institutions, and communities** is the linchpin of progress. As studies suggest, NEP 2020 is a “breakthrough step in the right direction” but its true impact will be realized only if all stakeholders work in concert to implement its approaches (Jana & Halder, 2023).

Ultimately, transforming Indian education through inclusive practices is not just a policy mandate – it is a moral imperative and a social investment in the nation’s future. An education system that embraces *every* learner, regardless of their abilities or circumstances, is one that equips the country to harness the potential of all its citizens. The journey towards full inclusion is challenging and will take time, but with NEP 2020 as a guiding roadmap, India has the opportunity to create an educational landscape where **every child can learn, grow, and thrive** in a truly equitable environment.

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