



# National Education Policy 2020 Making Education more Inclusive for Children with Special Needs

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## Abstract

As the first comprehensive programme under the Modi government in 34 years, the New Education Policy (2020) is a historic undertaking. The NEP acts as a framework to guide the expansion of education throughout the country. India's third policy is taking the role of the NEP from 1986. The National Education Policy 2020, according to the government, was developed after more than 2 lakh recommendations from different local self-government units, including 2.5 lakh gram panchayats, 6,600 blocks, 6,000 ULBs, and 676 districts, were considered. The NEP combines these many viewpoints on how to teach kids with disabilities. On the one hand, the policy treats disability as if it were a personal issue that needed to be "rehabilitated" and "mitigated" in order to promote inclusion for kids with impairments. However, it also promotes the development of an educational system that enables kids with and without disabilities to attend classes together, tackles the issue of barrier-free access, and lays out a strategy for including kids with disabilities in the curriculum and evaluation. These don't seem to be critical analyses of contemporary norms and how they encourage ableism, but rather tacked-on, retrofitting solutions to the "problem of disability." As a result, the policy undermines the concept of inclusive education, which views the challenges that people with disabilities confront as the result of institutional constraints rather than inherent defects that need to be fixed.

Keywords: NEP 2020, Inclusive, Special Children, Barrier-free, Children with special needs

## Introduction

**By 2030, the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) aims to "provide inclusive and equitable quality education and encourage lifelong learning opportunities for everyone."** This idealistic objective continues to stand in sharp contrast to India's chronically poor learning results. The subject of inclusive and equitable education has received a great deal of attention.

The New Education Policy (2020) is a historic initiative and the first comprehensive policy under the Modi administration in 34 years. NEP serves as a framework to direct the growth of education in the nation. The 1986 NEP is being replaced by India's third policy. According to the government, the National Education Policy 2020 was created after taking into account more than 2 lakh suggestions from various local self-government entities, including 2.5 lakh gramme panchayats, 6,600 blocks, 6,000 ULBs, and 676 districts. This was done in an effort to foster citizens who are productive across the board and who will contribute to the creation of a just, inclusive, and plural society by 2035, when the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) will have increased to 50%.

The National Education Policy, 2020, which intends to make India a worldwide knowledge powerhouse while maintaining fairness and inclusion, has communicated the fundamental shift in the educational system.

## Equity and Inclusion

The new National Education Policy 2020 is now focused on achieving equality and inclusion. In the context of higher education or schooling, inclusion entails reorganising the whole system with the goal of assuring a broad array of educational options, including curriculum, pedagogy, recreational activities, etc. The goal of the policy is to prevent the segregation and isolation of racial and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and those who have language-related learning challenges and run the danger of being left out of educational opportunities. By using language to make sense of the world, we may establish and destroy power, authority, and legitimacy. The objective of National Education Policy 2020 is for all people to be competent in many languages at various educational levels.

## Inclusion of Community Participation

In an effort to reduce the exclusion of pupils on the basis of language and disability, conscious understanding of roles and responsibilities as well as community engagement have been developed. This would encourage students to understand more about India's rich cultural variety, its educational system, and its traditions. It will also make them more aware of human qualities such as empathy, tolerance, and respect for others' viewpoints.

Above all, National Education Policy 2020 has placed a strong emphasis on fostering or reviving creative human activity, which is essential for the 21st-century educational system.

## **Gender Equality and Inclusion**

By addressing disparity, vulnerability, and inequality in educational access, participation, retention, and completion as well as in learning outcomes, NEP seeks to achieve equity and inclusion in and through education.

In order to accomplish these goals and leave no one behind, gender equality and inclusion are essential. More emphasis must be placed on quality, equality, and accessibility in education. In the last several years, remarkable advancements in female involvement up to the secondary level have been seen. Such development may be attributable to government initiatives and programmes for girls, like "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao," "Sukanya and Balika Samridhi Yojana," and many more.

However, fewer females enroll in upper secondary school than boys do. Gross Education Ratio in higher education during 2015–2016 is just 23.4 percent compared to 25.4 percent for boys, and the difference is seen across all socioeconomic groups.

NEP's current focus is on integrating gender sensitivity into the curriculum and raising money for gender inclusion programmes up to the 12th grade, which will benefit all socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and transgender people.

The state of elementary education in public schools and the high number of female dropouts have placed the nation's educational system on the back foot. But with a new approach to multidisciplinary programming and an emphasis on 21st-century skills in teaching, learning, and evaluation, the new NEP has devoted greater attention to classroom learning.

Alternative and creative educational institutions will open up a variety of effective learning routes and encourage broad engagement among students from all backgrounds.

### **Inclusion of new Pedagogical system for Early Child Care Education**

For the majority of young children, especially those from economically poor households, Early Child Care Education (ECCE) is not an option. Prior to the age of six, a child's cumulative brain development and growth take place in around 85% of cases. The implementation of this system will aid young children in achieving their full potential in terms of their physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional-ethical development, cultural/artistic development, and the acquisition of early language, literacy, and numeracy skills. The divide of the pedagogical system was done with the intention of bringing young learners in the age range of 3-5 into formal education as well as to bring this stage of education into the school curriculum in accordance with Global Standard, which was not done before. In order to compete with industrialised nations, early education must include a coding system, and using mother language as the primary instructional medium will help students better grasp them, just as it does in Europe. The flashy storybooks with pictures and signs, toys, and activity-based learning in private nursery and LKG classes

always excluded the poor family who could not afford all this, but now new pedagogical and curriculum structure of school's education has been developed with flexible, multi-level, play-based, activity-based, and inquiry-based learning for everyone.

### **Inclusion of Skill Courses**

Another emphasis has been placed on teaching students' life skills so that they would be independent by the time they finish school. Vocational courses and extracurricular activities from the school level will draw back kids to their schools by incorporating modern topics. Bal Bhavans, a unique daytime boarding school, will be created to provide students with support systems catered to their requirements and encourage them to engage in play, career, and art-related activities.

### **Inclusion of Graduation Research and Exclusion of M.Phil**

The addition of a four-year undergraduate programme will aid those students who were unable to finish their education because of several abnormalities. There are many ways to leave and enter. Students are allowed to take a year off from school.

They may put a stop to their graduation and save their credits in the academic bank so they can resume it later. Depending on how many Graduation years the student successfully completes, post-graduation may last one or two years.

Those who graduated with a research degree will need to finish one year of PG. MPhil is still a less popular degree to choose and get, although PhDs are given out all over the globe. Therefore, eliminating two years of the M.Phil. degree will provide students more time to relocate and make future decisions. Yes, it will have an impact on those centres and institutions where the M.Phil. and PhD are the primary degree programmes and where students are admitted directly into the M.Phil. programme after receiving their M.A. M Phil will be eliminated, leaving just PhD as an option at the centres.

However, more time will undoubtedly be allotted for research, and this will encourage students to develop their critical thinking and creativity via ongoing study and frequent evaluation by educational authorities. Promoting high-quality research will advance society, and a new knowledge system will be used to exclude people from inclusion.

Included in NEP 2020 are research output and skills from several areas. Only high-quality interdisciplinary research across disciplines might solve society's problems, and the world's finest research has only ever taken place in multidisciplinary university environments. The right to education, which was included in the Constitution under Article 32 A, was the last innovative development in India. The Indian Constitution guarantees all children up to the age of 14 years with free and compulsory education, yet the promise of educating everyone remains a vague ideal to this day. Since anybody who has reached the age of 18 and is literate or illiterate is eligible to vote, education has never been a criterion for voting rights.

The new National Education Policy, 2020, which speaks about sustainable human development and universal education learning with fairness and learning outcomes with a research oriented attitude, has provided a ray of hope as the cornerstone of all educational choices. India has long prioritised education as a key component of its development goal, and by closing gender, socioeconomic, and regional inequalities via community involvement, it would inspire everyone to pursue equal chances, assuring the fairness of this programme. It will be a stunning synthesis of both traditional and contemporary knowledge systems that will not only encourage you to learn but also aid in the integration of Indian culture and ethos.

**Provisions of NEP, 2020 inclined towards the provision of better education for students with disabilities:**

- All teacher education programmes now include instruction on how to educate students with certain challenges.
- Neighborhood schools, special schools, and home-based education as possibilities for the education of kids with disabilities, as a start toward addressing misunderstandings over educational options that surfaced during the Right to Education Act, 2009, the RTE Act's 2012 revision, and the RPwD Act, 2016.
- If a student chooses to receive their education at home, the instruction they receive will be reviewed in accordance with the standards in the RPwD Act of 2016. Due to concerns expressed about the availability and quality of the education given to the pupils, this option was implemented.
- Schools within a radius of 5-10 km will be combined into one school complex to guarantee the provision of necessary services for children with disabilities, including resource centres and instructors. The goal of this clause is to address the escalating issue of the scarcity of special educators. (NEP SJ E minister: "Barrier-free access to education for all children with disabilities")
- To supplement the current framework for teaching children with impairments, NEP, 2020 has created short-term specialty courses. According to the wants and needs of the pupils, the instructors will be allowed to choose any number of teaching instruments.
- The establishment of PARAKH, a national assessment centre. For kids with learning difficulties, PARAKH will provide accessible evaluation procedures (see "NEP 2020: Making education more inclusive").
- Broadly corresponds with the 2016 RPwD Act's aims. The RPwD Act, 2016, which clarifies several issues about the kind of schools for children with special needs, has been mentioned many times throughout the document.
- Instructors will be equipped to detect and identify disabilities, particularly specific learning disabilities, since there won't be enough qualified instructors without such thorough training. As a result, children with

impairments wouldn't get attention, and even if they did, it would cause other students in the class to waste time. (A Critique of the National Education Policy 2020's 'Equitable and Inclusive Vision')

- A greater level of alignment between the NCTE and the RCI has been made to close the gap that both teachers and special educators have recognised about the lack of pedagogical and subject understanding among special educators.
- In line with NEP 2020, a flexible curriculum will be implemented. The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities will contact national institutions before making any curriculum adjustments ("Examining disability inclusion in India's new national education strategy").
- NIOS will provide top-notch courses to teach Indian Sign Language and other fundamental disciplines.
- Resource centres and special educators will work together to address the educational and rehabilitative needs of students with severe or multiple impairments. ("NEP 2020")
- The NEP 2020 also includes measures for monitoring, non-discrimination in schools, accessible infrastructure, reasonable accommodations, tailored assistance, and the use of Braille and Indian Sign Language in the classroom.
- Options for hiring special educators who have received cross-disability training that combines disability understanding into teacher preparation.
- Resources for integrating children with disabilities with regular pupils will be available in NEP schools and school complexes.

## Conclusion

The policy largely views children with disabilities as beneficiaries of welfare and care in the form of peer tutoring, open schooling, and one-on-one instruction. A better approach would have been to advocate for the standardisation of Indian Sign Language as a useful language system for all students, not only for "kids with hearing impairments," in order to accept disability as an identity and a kind of variety rather than merely a deficiency. Children with disabilities have educational problems because of restrictive curricula, inaccessible classrooms and schools, a lack of customised evaluations, and deficit mindsets that impose restrictions on what impaired children may do.

These different perspectives on how to educate children with impairments are combined in the NEP. On the one hand, the policy views disability as an individual problem that must be treated via "rehabilitation" and "mitigation" in order to facilitate inclusion for children with disabilities. On the other hand, it advocates for creating a system of education that allows children with and without disabilities to attend classes together, addresses barrier-free access, and outlines a plan for involving children with disabilities in the curriculum and assessment. These appear to be tacked-on, retrofitting answers to the "problem of disability," rather than a critical analysis of current norms and how they support ableism. Therefore, the policy further undercuts

the idea of inclusive education, which sees the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities as the product of institutional limitations rather than personal flaws that need to be rectified.

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