

Bridging Global and Local: A Comparative Study of Inclusive Education Frameworks in UNESCO Guidelines and India's NEP 2020

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Abstract

This study examines the similarities and differences in implementation between India's NEP 2020 and UNESCO's worldwide frameworks. It also highlights how policies frequently don't fully translate into actual classroom instruction. Although India has made significant strides, the study comes to the conclusion that in order to make inclusive education a reality, it is imperative that the country embrace international best practices, such as Universal Design for Learning and successful teacher development initiatives. India can

Introduction

Creating learning environments where all children feel appreciated and respected is the goal of inclusive education, which goes beyond simply integrating students with disabilities into regular classrooms. It makes it difficult for schools to adjust to the many demands of students, whether those needs are linguistic, intellectual, social, emotional, or physical.

Because to the work of international organizations like UNESCO, inclusive education has become more important all around the world. UNESCO's 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report estimates that 258 million children and youth do not attend school, with many of them being prevented from doing so by obstacles related to gender, ethnicity, poverty, or disability. These numbers demonstrate how urgent inclusive strategies are.

The challenge is just as big in India. 2.68 crore persons with disabilities, including more than 7.8 million children under the age of 19, were counted in the 2011 Census. Compared to 71% of children without impairments, just 61% of children with disabilities aged 5 to 19 attend school, according to data from the National Sample Survey Office (2018). This disparity exposes structural flaws in awareness, support, and access.

This essay investigates the relationship between international inclusive education frameworks and India's NEP 2020. With the ultimate goal of offering avenues for change, it highlights the areas in which India's policies meet and fail to meet international norms.

Literature Review

Several important perspectives influence global conversations about inclusive education:

The Salamanca Statement (1994) was UNESCO's historic proclamation that all children have the right to an education and that all students must be accommodated in mainstream schools.

A legally binding agreement that upholds inclusive education as a fundamental human right is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Education 2030) – Committed to “inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

The notion that inclusive education is necessary for justice and equity is emphasized by several international frameworks.

NEP 2020 signifies a change in direction toward integrating inclusivity as a guiding concept in the Indian context. In order to address the needs of students with disabilities, the policy advocates for curriculum reform, barrier-free access, and improved teacher preparation. However, according to government data (UDISE+, 2021–22), just 12.3% of teachers say they have received training in inclusive education, and only 35.7% of schools now provide accommodations for students with special needs.

This shows that the vision of NEP 2020 has yet to be fully realized in practice.

Methodology

This study is based on qualitative analysis of international frameworks and Indian policy documents, with a comparative lens to highlight similarities and differences. Secondary data from UNESCO, NSSO, UDISE+, NCERT, and other published research has been used to support the findings. Since the study relies on document analysis and existing datasets, no ethical approval was required.

Comparative Analysis

Philosophical Foundations : Both UNESCO and NEP 2020 emphasize that education is a fundamental right. UNESCO highlights inclusion as a pathway to social justice, while NEP 2020 frames it as a way to achieve equity in India's diverse social and cultural context.

Goals of the Policy :

Global policies prioritize systemic change, equal participation, and universal access. These objectives are echoed by NEP 2020, which modifies them to fit Indian conditions by placing a stronger emphasis on early assistance, community involvement, and teacher preparation improvements.

Challenges in Indian Implementation:

- **Teacher Training** – Only 12.3% of teachers have received training in inclusive practices (UDISE+, 2021).
- **Infrastructure Gaps** – Just 29.4% of schools have ramps, and 22.4% have functional toilets for children with disabilities.
- **Social Stigma** – A 2019 NCERT study showed that over 40% of teachers feel unprepared or hesitant to work with children with disabilities.
- **Funding Issues** – Less than 1% of the education budget is allocated specifically to inclusive education programs, limiting reforms.

Recommendations

To bridge the gap between policy and practice, the following steps are advised:

1. Enhance Teacher Education: Incorporate global frameworks like UDL into DIET and university teacher training courses.
2. Promote Cross-National Cooperation: Form partnerships with international organizations to carry out research and exchange teachers.
3. Invest in assistive technology by establishing labs in public schools so that children with disabilities can learn.
4. Monitor and Evaluate Progress: Use UNESCO's Inclusion Index to perform regular assessments.
5. Community Awareness Campaigns: Stigma can be reduced by launching village-level initiatives and concentrating on parents.
6. Increase Budget Allocation: Increase funding for infrastructure and teacher preparation.

Conclusion

India's NEP 2020 offers a creative and forward-looking vision for inclusive education. In addition to solid statute, real inclusion at all levels of the educational system requires ongoing

asset, capacity-building, and a mindset change. International frameworks provide India with best practices and tried-and-true techniques that can speed up growth.

If India makes enhancements to its structure, reinforces teacher training, and actively fights social stigma, it may get closer to creating classrooms where all children, regardless of skill, can learn and grow together. Transporting national policies into compliance with international standards would not only improve fairness but also help create a humanity that is more concerned, inclusive, and just.

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