



# Promoting Inclusive Learning among Minority Students in Indian Schools

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**ABSTRACT:** This chapter analyses inclusive studies of minority students in Indian schools. It attempts to ascertain the purpose and value of inclusive education. This article examines the minority learners' educational challenges and status, and clarify the teachers' and teaching methods' roles in fostering inclusion. This chapter relies on literature, policy documentation, and national report reviews. Findings suggest that despite inclusive education advocated by Indian law and policy, there is evidence of poor implementation. Numerous challenges remain, most commonly experienced by minority students from poor, socio-linguistically and culturally diverse families. This study found teachers' benefits from inclusive pedagogy the most, especially, differentiated instruction, culturally responsive teaching, and collaborative learning, in overcoming challenges. This chapter advocates for more robust teacher education, inclusive multilingual initiatives, equitable technological access, and community involvement. The chapter argues inclusive learning fosters educational equity and social justice, advocated by the need for inclusive learning at the policy, institutional, and classroom levels.

**KEYWORDS:** Inclusive Education, Minority Students, Equity, Multicultural Education, Pedagogy, Indian Schools

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most desired goals in our society today is education. With education we have the ability to grow and advance in society in an equitable manner. Education is also crucial for social and economic development. Especially in the context of developing multicultural societies like India which is divided along various social and cultural lines like religion, language education provides the necessary cohesion and social stability. There is still a considerable amount of educational inequality among Muslims in India and other disadvantaged socio-economic educational groups (Sachar Committee, 2006). These inequalities can be attributed to a number of social factors such as poverty, social exclusion, and linguistic barriers, and the absence of culturally relevant educational materials. The response to the need to address such disparities is the idea of inclusive learning, which advocates for the development of educational activities and practices that provide opportunities for all learners, irrespective of their cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Education is a social determinant of health yet inclusive education is more than just access to education, it is also about the positive and equitable learning outcomes. Restructuring of the school culture, policies and practices is critical to the success of the school and the success of all learners.

There have also been numerous legal and policy frameworks that demonstrate the commitment towards inclusive education in India. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009) is a legal framework in India that makes education a right for all children aged 6 to 14 years. There is persistent inequality in educational access and attainment for minority students. Studies show that minority students have higher rates of school desertion, lower levels of educational success, and fewer educational opportunities (Ainscow, 2005; Banks, 2015). There is the need to address the challenges and barriers to schooling that go beyond access. Inclusion is critical in these classrooms, and teachers can make significant adjustments in their own practice to be more inclusive. Inclusive pedagogy can include differentiated instruction, culturally relevant pedagogy, collaborative learning, and other strategies that respond to a range of learning needs. Additionally, the NCERT through the National Curriculum Framework (2005) promotes the right to an inclusive education that values diversity and provides equitable education. Additionally, international documents such as the Sustainable Development Goal 4 also emphasize the right to inclusive and equitable quality education for all (United Nations, 2015).

### Objectives of the Study

The present chapter is guided by the following objectives:

1. To understand the concept and significance of inclusive learning in the context of school education.

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2. To assess the educational condition and the problems faced by minority students in the country of India.
3. To analyses the policy framework related to inclusive education, particularly in the Indian context.
4. To explore the role of teachers in promoting inclusive learning in classrooms.
5. To suggest effective pedagogical strategies for enhancing inclusion among minority learners in Indian schools.

**II. CONCEPT AND MEANING OF INCLUSIVE LEARNING**

Inclusive learning entails opportunities in education being afforded to learners regardless of socioeconomic status, cultural identity, language, gender, or disabilities. It is based on the appreciation that all learners must be active stakeholders in the educational process and the attainment of significant learning opportunities. Unlike the traditional methods that predominantly utilized exclusion or marginalization of some sets of learners, inclusive learning emphasizes the establishment of adjustable and supportive learning experiences to cater for varied learner diversities. Education is presented as a fundamental driver of human development and social equality, shaping individuals' abilities and societal participation. The article highlights inclusive education as a framework that ensures equal learning opportunities for all learners, fostering tolerance, equity, and social cohesion despite existing structural challenges (Islam, 2025). UNESCO (2005) describes inclusive learning as the act of resolving and attending to the extremes of the learner continuum, by widening the scope of participation in the host learning culture and community, and minimizing exclusion in all its dimensions. This definition recognizes that in the concept of inclusion, the concern is not centered on the mere accessibility of school facilities, but rather the necessity of all learners being fully involved and appreciated for their effort. Inclusive education refers to a learning environment where all students, regardless of differences such as ethnicity, gender, or disability, are given equal opportunities to participate and feel valued. It emphasizes the use of diverse teaching strategies to address varied learning needs and promote an equitable and supportive educational setting (Islam, 2018). In much the same vein, Mel Ainscow (2005) regards inclusive education as a process that is never-ending in the quest to identify and eliminate barriers and obstacles that hinder learning and participation. In the quest for inclusion, equity and social justice in education is paramount. The contribution of multicultural education in fostering appreciation of cultural diversity and encouraging inclusion is noted by scholars such as James A. Banks (2015). In addition, inclusive learning is about adopting learner-centred, flexible pedagogies that take into account, and are responsive, to differences among learners. This can be in the form of instruction and facilitation styles, such as differentiated instruction, cooperative learning, and culturally responsive teaching. From a learning environment perspective, these practices ensure that minority learners are learning in a setting that is respectful and encouraging to them. The NCERT in the National Curriculum Framework (2005), also supports inclusive education by arguing learning should be linked to the learners' immediate environments and that there should be equal participation in the teaching learning process. Given the global focus on equal education, inclusive learning has gained additional significance in the last few years. For example, UNESCO (2017) is one of many global education frameworks, which highlights inclusion and equity as defining characteristics of good quality education. Such frameworks urge countries to build education systems that are inclusive of all learners, especially the minority and marginalized. Inclusive learning should be perceived as one of many dynamic approaches that will evolve as the context, focus, and curricular goals changes. In the context of minority education in India, it is especially important as it helps bridge the gap in educational inequalities

**III. MINORITY EDUCATION IN INDIA**

In order to understand minority education in India, we first need to understand the country that is the second most populous on the globe and the most culturally diverse. There are minorities here that are both religious and ethnically based. The Sachar Committee report is the most important report and should be referenced by anyone who plans to deal with Muslim education in India. It is even more imperative that they understand the community as a whole. The report clearly stated that the Muslim community in India is less educated than the rest of the community. The Committee noted that the main reason for this educational, social and economic backwardness was communities that were under educated, unconnected to the community, and a lack of affordable education. It's a little bit surprising, however, that the statistics that the Ministry of Statistics and the National Sample Surveillance Office reports are leading to the opposite conclusion. What is even more surprising is that the report shows Muslim students to be dropping out less than their average behind status. There is a substantial part of the Muslim, particularly the poor, minority communities that are located in the poor and economically backward countries that are poor, and do not come to the educational institutions. There is a considerable socio-cultural pressure to abandon these educational institutions. Linguistic minority students often struggle with understanding classroom instruction, impacting their academic performance and classroom

engagement. Education in colonial India among Muslims was largely imparted through traditional institutions like makhtabs and madrasas, which focused on religious as well as basic learning. The study also highlights that the press in Bihar played a significant role in spreading awareness and advocating for educational development among Muslims (Islam, 2019). According to NCERT (2005), the focus during the formative years should be on mother tongue-based education to enhance understanding and the quality of learning. Not having enough multilingual education resources and trained teachers hinders progress to multilingual education. Inadequate infrastructure and qualified teachers and the underrepresentation of minority cultures in the curriculum lead to the further marginalization of minority students in the education system. Amartya Sen (1999) states there are system inequalities from educational disparities, specifically in socio-economic status, that decrease the opportunities of individuals. Because of these barriers, the state has developed initiatives to increase education in minority communities. Some positive results have come from implementing minority student scholarships, minority education institutions, and other initiatives. The National Education Policy of the Ministry of Education India (2020) also emphasizes the need for socially and economically disadvantaged to have equitable access to quality education as part of the education focus for economically disadvantaged and minority groups. In summary, India has developed several strategies for minority education in its constitution and policies, but access, equity, and quality remain significant gaps. Solving these problems will require marginalised students to be engaged and active in their education and building a complimentary system of inclusive learning strategies.

#### **IV. CHALLENGES FACED BY MINORITY STUDENTS IN INDIAN SCHOOLS**

Accessing quality education and engaging in relevant learning activities in Indian educational institutions are some challenges that minority students face. These challenges are varied and complex and include socio-economic, cultural, linguistic, and institutional barriers. Identifying and understanding these challenges remains imperative in devising appropriate interventions for inclusive education.

##### ***Socio-Economic Barriers***

Many students from minority backgrounds often experience socio-economic challenges. A large percentage of minority groups, particularly Muslims, are from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. As a result, they are unable to access educational opportunities such as private schooling, extra tutoring, and educational technologies. The Sachar Committee (2006) reported that poverty and low-income level households, adversely affect the enrollment and retention of minority group children in schools. Because of financial constraints, children are often forced to work and, in most cases, drop out of school.

##### ***Language Barriers***

Language is an important element of the learning process. Students from linguistically minority groups face challenges as a result of not being able to effectively communicate and understand the language of instruction in the classroom, which is different from their native language. This further complicates their understanding and participation in the classroom. In its report, the NCERT (2005) pointed out that education outcomes in the first few years of schooling improve significantly when education is provided in the learners' native language. The psychological barrier of language anxiety weakens students' confidence, and negatively affects their language learning ability. (Rajak & Rahman, 2025). On the other hand, the educational needs of minority groups continue to be neglected due to poor implementation of multilingual education.

##### ***Cultural and Social Exclusion***

A feeling of social and cultural alienation, especially among minority students, is sometimes caused by absence of diversity and cultural representation in the curriculum and school environment. Students often feel excluded when their educational systems and materials do not reflect their culture, language, and identity. James A. Banks (2015) states that multicultural education is one key to fostering inclusivity and less cultural prejudice in schools. Unfortunately, many classrooms across India continue to neglect this approach.

##### ***Institutional and Systemic Barriers***

There are many contributing factors, especially institutional barriers, such as poor educational infrastructure, a shortage of qualified teachers, and an absence of inclusive policies at the operational level that are barriers to minority students. Most schools do not have the necessary support systems to respond to diverse learning needs. In addition, implicit biases and low expectations from teachers can negatively affect the performance of minority learners, Ainscow (2005)

argues that to achieve inclusive education in schools, systemic barriers to educational participation must be identified and addressed.

### ***Digital Divide and Limited Access to Technology***

In the current educational environment, access to digital resources and tools is crucial. Yet, many minority students from poorer backgrounds lack devices and internet access, as well as digital skills. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the digital divide when many students, especially the most disadvantaged learners, were unable to partake in online learning. UNESCO (2017) points out that all forms of technology are an educational multiplier but when disadvantaged learners lack such resources it opens and widens educational gaps.

The obstacles minority pupils encounter in Indian education systems are multifaceted and interconnected. Solutions must tackle the broad spectrum of problems present in education policy and other issues, such as teacher trainings and inclusive practices. Removing these barriers is necessary to ensure every student has access to an equitable, valuable educational experience.

### **Policy Framework for Inclusive Education in India**

India has made substantial progress in constructing inclusive education policies and ensuring equitable access to quality education for students from all communities, including minorities. These policies stem from the country's commitment to equality, social justice, and educational inclusion via the Constitution. The policies' impact is largely driven by how well they are executed.

### ***Constitutional Provisions***

India's Constitution guarantees equality and prohibits any form of discrimination based on religion, language, caste, or sex, providing an indispensable framework to support inclusive education. Articles 29 and 30 give legal protection for minorities to exercise their cultural and educational rights, and, particularly, the right to establish and manage their own schools. These legal instruments provide minorities the right to education while safeguarding their identity (Government of India, 1950).

### ***Right to Education Act (2009)***

In 2009, the Government of India enacted the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, making phenomenal strides in legislation and guaranteeing every child aged 6-14 years a right to free and compulsory education. To support inclusive education, the Act compels schools to adopt non-discriminatory admission policies and promotes inclusion of children from disadvantaged groups. Also, the Act encourages the establishment of neighbourhood schools, and aims at improving access to school for students from marginalised and minority groups.

### ***National Curriculum Framework (2005)***

As outlined in the document from NCERT (2005), there is a clear intention for Child Centered Inclusive education. This includes a focus on the respect of diversity, the promotion of equity, and the development of an adequate response to the needs of the students in the system. In addition, the document advocates for the inclusion of local knowledge, cultural framing, and experiential learning for teaching, especially for the minority students.

### ***National Education Policy 2020***

With the National Education Policy of 2020, the Ministry of Education India has the goal of promoting equity and inclusion in education. This Policy identifies the participation of the Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), which include the minority group, and has proposed certain measures to ameliorate their participation in education. It advocates for universal access, early childhood education, multi-lingual approaches, and the use of technology to eliminate barriers to education. Furthermore, NEP 2020 emphasizes the need for teacher education and training, as well as inclusive approaches to teaching and learning, in order to attend to the needs of all learners.

### ***Government Schemes and Initiatives***

In addition to the above, numerous schemes have been initiated to specifically target minority students. Scholarships, residential schools, and financial assistance schemes have been introduced to decrease and ultimately eliminate dropout rates and increase participation in schools. These schemes, which include pre-matric and post-matric scholarships for minority students, have been beneficial to an extent. However, there continues to be a lack of implementation and awareness of the initiatives.

India's policy systems are designed to complement the framework for inclusion in education. Nonetheless, policy execution is stalled. Well-integrated systems of implementation, control, and teacher readiness are required to make these policies result in positive learning outcomes for minority students.

### **Role of Teachers in Promoting Inclusive Learning**

Classroom practices of inclusive education begin with the teachers. Each educator is instrumental in the identification and setting of the class' micro culture. They guide the motivational levels and commitment of the class to the learning process and ensure that every student feels appreciated and supported. This is especially the case in Indian classrooms with massive diversity in terms of language, culture, and the socio-economic spectrum.

### ***Creating an Inclusive Classroom Environment***

Classrooms learn diversity and feel included when an atmosphere is created that is highly respectful of differences. This starts with the teacher and the quality of respect, empathy, and cooperation they inspire in the class. Teachers should tactfully alleviate negative stereotypes, proactively contain discrimination, and diffusers hostile behaviours in collision group interactions of students of dissimilar backgrounds. UNESCO (2017) acknowledges that an inclusive learning environment promotes an atmosphere of positive relationships and acceptance.

### ***Adopting Inclusive Pedagogical Approaches***

Teachers are required to have and apply the construct of inclusive education in their lesson planning. This may be in terms of varying the and being more flexible with materials and instruction based on the students and their backgrounds and their level of study. In addition, in order to more effectively engage the learners from the minority groups, the use of student centered approaches that involve the learners such as project, group, or pattern learning is necessary. Inclusive education is the practice of Mel Ainscow (2005) where teachers remove impediments to learning, and is no more exclusive to a particular group.

### ***Culturally Responsive Teaching***

Culturally responsive teaching promotes inclusion for minority students. Teachers should use students' culture, background, language, and experiences in the teaching-learning process. This will enhance students' connection to teaching materials and increase participation. According to James A. Banks (2015), the recognition of cultural diversity in education equates and lessens bias in the classroom.

### ***Addressing Language Diversity***

Classroom pluralism demands sensitivity to language differences. Teachers should use teaching strategies that cater to linguistic minorities. Some linguistic minority students may benefit from classroom situations in which the teacher uses a second language, simpler language, or a combination of visual and verbal methods. NCERT (2005) proposes the use of the mother tongue of the learners as the means of instruction, especially during the formative or early years, as it enhances the learning of the child.

### ***Continuous Assessment and Feedback***

Inclusiveness of learning hinges on the type of assessments and feedback provided. Teaching should focus on learning gaps rather than the gaps and learning of students' and provide feedback. As a result, minority students residing in the outer fringes of the world may receive additional academic support. Inclusive assessments allow all students to demonstrate their capabilities.

### ***Teacher Attitude and Professional Development***

Professional Development or in-service training support the attitudes and beliefs of teachers and inclusive education. Schools and classes that are inclusive will have teachers that support and advocate for classroom diversity and inclusion. Teacher professional development improves their teaching style, classroom management, and student engagement skills. However, the outcomes of these improvements are still limited due to the lack of resources and ongoing support available. (Rahman et al. 2025). Teachers, who are trained in Professional Development, will likely conduct inclusive classes. The Ministry of Education India (2020) has made clear the expectations of teacher training to support and advocate for inclusive pedagogy.

In conclusion, teachers play a key role in inclusive education. The effectiveness of inclusive learning is determined by how teachers construct a supportive learning space, implement adaptive teaching, and cater to the diverse needs of

students. With regard to developing inclusion in Indian schools, the training and resources made available to teachers are of paramount importance.

### **Inclusive Pedagogical Practices in Classroom**

Meaningful inclusive education goes beyond policies to improving diversity and equity in classroom practices. Pedagogy matters if it recognizes and meets the diverse learning needs of minority students to involve them. To accommodate different learning needs, teachers should apply flexible, responsive, and inclusive teaching strategies+//.

### ***Differentiated Instruction***

Differentiated instruction is modifying teaching styles, learning activities and assessment strategies based on students' different learning abilities, interests and socio-cultural backgrounds. This approach provides multiple routes and pathways to learning. Tomlinson, C. (2014) states that differentiated instruction focuses on students and promotes active engagement of all the learners in the classroom.

### ***Use of Culturally Relevant Teaching Materials***

Teaching includes culturally relevant materials, which positively influences minority students in teaching to connect their personal stories and experiences to academic learning. This is done by integrating examples/case studies and stories of different cultural backgrounds. Gay, G. (2010) argues that culturally responsive teaching enhances the academic performance of learners and promotes inclusive practices in the classroom.

### ***Collaborative Learning Strategies***

Inclusion in a classroom culture focuses on encouraging group work and peer learning. Collaborative learning motivates social contact and interaction of students from diverse backgrounds and, therefore, provides a good opportunity for learning and improving social skills of students. Vygotsky, L. (1978) in his studies proved the significant place of social interaction in cognitive development and this is a basic reason for the use of collaborative learning approaches in inclusive classrooms.

### ***Use of Technology in Inclusive Classrooms***

Technology assists in creating an inclusive classroom, especially for minority students who might have obstacles in a conventional classroom. Digital tools, in particular, support learning. Technology helps close the educational gap and improve the learning for disadvantaged groups (The World Bank, 2020).

### ***Multilingual Teaching Strategies***

Using multiple languages in the classroom helps students understand the lesson better. This is particularly the case for teachers who come from minority language groups. In Jim Cummins (2001), he advocates for the use of the first language of the students in the classroom as a way to develop and promote the thinking of the students.

### ***Flexible Assessment Practices***

Inclusive pedagogy goes beyond the traditional exam's norms. Assessment methods must align with the different learners. Rather than relying on traditional exams, teachers can use portfolios, project, and presentation. Dylan Wiliam (2011) states that formative assessment, inclusive pedagogy, and improves learning.

In conclusion, inclusive pedagogical practices are valuable to the instructor. For the minority learners, it is important to have assessment methods that are flexible, culturally relevant, and inclusive. The benefits of these methods are high academic achievement, social inclusion, and respect in the learning environment.

## **V. DISCUSSION**

It is a necessity and a challenge to promote inclusive learning for minority students in Indian schools, and this chapter brings that to your attention first. There has been recognition of the diversity and educational accessibility of the Indian school system; however, it is clear from the analysis of conceptualizations, policy documents, and classroom practices that the movement from policy to practice is inconsistent. Inclusive education is not just about physically accessing schools; it is also about whether students can participate and achieve learning outcomes equitably, and this is where the foremost entry-point lies. Adaptive Artificial Intelligence can offer tailored learning for students, and personalized teaching can improve students' learning outcomes. However, the effectiveness of these learning outcomes depends on

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the adaptive skills and preparedness of the teachers using them. (Rahman et al. 2026). Teachers. Teachers that practice some principles of inclusion such as differentiated instruction, responses to students' cultures, and cooperative learning, are more likely to attend to the diverse needs of minority students. Booth and Ainscow Posit that inclusion is identifying and removing barriers to learning and participation, and they posit that this remains a constant struggle. Cultural and linguistic diversity also affects students' learning. Geneva Gay (2010) argues that culturally responsive teaching is one of the ways to close such a gap. Although the NEP 2020 is a supportive policy, it still faces challenges in implementing teacher education, resources, and awareness of inclusive practices. Geetha B. Nambissan (2006) shows that the poor and the minority communities are marginalized and experience systems of educational exclusion as a result of socio-economic systems. Furthermore, while promising, the intersection of technology and education is not available to all students. The digital divide remains a major challenge to equity, especially for rural and economically marginalized minority learners. UNICEF (2021) stress that education cannot be truly inclusive without ensuring all students have access to the requisite digital technologies. This also confirms that inclusive education is a multi-faceted challenge that requires comprehensive policies, trained teachers, community support, and a strong commitment to follow-up and evaluation.

**VI. CONCLUSION**

This study shows how important institutional training and social justice advocacy are for creating inclusive educational environments and practices for marginalized populations in education, and in this case, students in Indian schools. For inclusive education to be effective, it should not be limited to students' mere presence in classrooms, but rather facilitate students' meaningful participation in educational activities, notwithstanding their cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic differentials. Teachers are the key actors in this challenge and are able to use inclusive pedagogy in their classrooms and create the necessary conditions for inclusion. Their positive beliefs and dedication to inclusion are the most influential contributors to the inclusion of students. This study also highlights the need for the integration of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, multilingual education, and technology to address the educational needs of the minority students. This study also reveals, however, that inclusive education remains elusive due to socio-economic inequities, inadequate resources, and lack of training for teachers. In the pursuit of inclusive educational practices and policies, educational programs for teachers, the provision of educational resources, and the construction of educational facilities must, without a doubt, be improved. Finally, to create educational systems that respect the rights of individuals to equality and diversity, teachers, educational planners, and members of the community must work collaboratively. Inclusion in education is a goal that reflects the commitment of the whole of society to equality and social justice.

**VII. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given the analysis and conclusions outlined in this chapter, recommendations for advancing inclusive learning for minority Indian school children can be outlined. To address the various gaps in the policy, institutional, and classroom operational frameworks, the following recommendations are provided.

***Strengthening Teacher Training and Capacity Building***

Teachers must receive training in inclusive teaching and culturally responsive pedagogy. Teacher training and ongoing professional development must include components that address teaching for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Training for differentiated instruction in multilingual settings should be included.

***Promoting Multilingual Education***

Mother tongue and multilingual education, particularly in the early grades, should be implemented. This will enhance the ability of minority students to comprehend the academic content of the classroom and facilitate their active learning. This will require qualified teachers and appropriate teaching-learning materials.

***Enhancing Access to Technology***

A digital learning environment can improve equitable learning for all students. Every school must have up-to-date digital tools. Students in economically disadvantaged families must have technology and internet access. Teach Digital Literacy to ensure responsible use of technology..

### ***Strengthening School Infrastructure and Resources***

Improving classroom and library infrastructure in buildings is vital for equitable learning. Schools must provide additional academic support services and remedial tutoring for students needing more assistance.

### ***Community and Parental Engagement***

Parents and local community members must be active participants in inclusive education. Targeted community awareness programs for girls and other marginalized groups, especially in education, are necessary. Community engagement to collaborate with the school system is crucial for increasing school attendance and lowering drop-out rates.

### ***Effective Implementation and Monitoring of Policies***

In principle, India has excellent inclusive education system policies, but in practice, they are poorly implemented. More accountability and monitoring systems must be in place focused on underprivileged community areas to ensure policies are consistently used. The above suggestions point to the collaboration of a range of stakeholders including communities, educators, policy makers, and the research community. Inclusive, equitable education is focused on marginalized groups, but aims to improve the system for all.

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