



## Examining Inclusive Education Policies of Nepal: A Comprehensive Review Analysis

Bisna Acharya<sup>1</sup> and Surya Sigdel<sup>2</sup>

### Article History

Received: August 18, 2023  
Accepted: September 20, 2023  
Published: December 22, 2023

### How to Cite

Acharya, B., & Sigdel, S. (2023). Examining inclusive education policies of Nepal: A comprehensive review analysis. *Nepalese Journal of Development and Rural Studies*, 20(1), 8-15. <https://doi.org/10.3126/njdrs.v20i01.64135>

### Online Access

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/njdrs.v20i01.64135>  
Website: <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/njdrs>  
Email: [info@cdrd.tu.edu.np](mailto:info@cdrd.tu.edu.np)

Copyright © 2023 by author and Central Department of Rural Development. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

### Abstract

*This study seeks to interpret inclusive education policies in Nepal to ensure they align with constitutional rights, particularly for individuals with diverse learning needs. Nepal has conducted a thorough evaluation of its inclusive education policies. An analytical research approach has been used to analyze the policy provisions that protect constitutional education rights. Every child in Nepal is entitled to receive a fundamental education according to the constitution established in 2015. This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the acts, policies, and educational documents that were relevant to the study. The findings highlight the successes and challenges of Nepal's inclusive education policy. The study also explores the connection between constitutional rights and practical scenarios, while highlighting the importance of considering cultural and socio-economic factors for fostering inclusivity. Improving inclusive education policies involves recognizing and building upon strengths while also addressing areas for improvement. This study intends to harmonize constitutional ideals and educational practices to provide insights for policy changes and foster inclusive and equitable education in Nepal and beyond.*

**Keywords:** Inclusive education, educational policies, constitutional rights, non-discrimination, Nepalese education system



Open Access

<sup>1</sup>Faculty Member of Education, Tribhuvan University, Mahendra Ratna Campus, Kathmandu, Nepal.  
Email: [acharyabisna@gmail.com](mailto:acharyabisna@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor of Education, Tribhuvan University, Mahendra Ratna Campus, Kathmandu, Nepal.  
Email: [suryasigde41@gmail.com](mailto:suryasigde41@gmail.com)

Correspondence should be addressed to **Surya Sigdel**; Email: [suryasigde41@gmail.com](mailto:suryasigde41@gmail.com)

## 1. Introduction

The global inclusive education is guided by the principle of providing education to everyone, irrespective of their abilities, backgrounds, or circumstances. Nepal has made significant strides in enhancing education to foster social justice and equality. Inclusive education plays a crucial role in fostering equity and driving economic growth. Analyzing educational policies is crucial for building a progressive and inclusive Nepal. This study investigates the relationship between constitutional rights and real-world scenarios to offer valuable insights for potential policy adjustments and improvements in the field of education. Specifically, it thoroughly assesses Nepal's inclusive education policies, evaluating their strengths and identifying areas that could benefit from enhancement.

The study puts forward thoughtful recommendations to promote a more equitable and inclusive education system in the country. Subsequently, it delves into an exploration of Nepal's inclusive education policies about constitutional rights. According to the Nepalese Constitution of 2015, provisions are made for education, equality, and non-discrimination (Nepal Law Commission, 2015). The study then examines the alignment of Nepal's education policies with the constitution and scrutinizes the strategies employed for their implementation. The Ministry of Education has directed the National Education Commission (NEC) to assess the education sector and propose necessary adjustments in line with societal expectations (Ministry of Education, 1992).

The non-formal education policy has recognized as a forward-thinking and comprehensive approach (Department of Education, 2006). This comprehensive paper delves into Nepal's policies and the execution of inclusive and special education, with a particular emphasis on the recently devised national education policy that integrates inclusive education principles. The Constitution of Nepal, as outlined by the Nepal Law Commission (2015) recognizes the right to education for individuals facing challenges such as low income, conflict, disabilities, or disadvantages.

Notably, Nepal's policies, programs, and initiatives are carefully crafted in alignment with global standards, ensuring that education is accessible to all, including students with disabilities (Department of Education, 2015). The study emphasizes the fundamental importance of ensuring equal access to education for all children, regardless of their abilities, disabilities, or cultural backgrounds, emphasizing the pivotal role of inclusive education in achieving a well-rounded and equitable educational system.

The ongoing efforts to promote inclusive education are acknowledged, emphasizing the need for continual work in eliminating barriers and transforming the prevailing culture, rules, and practices within schools (Department of Education, 2016). The research also critically examines policy changes and implementation challenges in the realm of special and inclusive education, with a specific focus on the unique policy challenges and significance in developing countries like Nepal.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

The inclusive education in Nepal has been an evolving process with efforts to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities or special needs. The government of Nepal, along with various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international agencies, has been working towards creating a more inclusive education system. One of the key aspects of inclusive education is the legal framework. The Inclusive Education Policy (2017) outlines strategies for making education more accessible and accommodating for students with diverse needs.

Besides, the government has implemented policies to integrate students with disabilities into mainstream schools and promote a barrier-free learning environment. The third one is training and capacity building. Efforts have been made to train teachers and other education professionals to better understand and address the needs of students with diverse abilities (Nepal Law Commission, 2017).

In addition to this, special education training programs and workshops have been conducted to enhance the capacity of educators. The fourth aspect is infrastructure and resources.

Some steps have been taken to make school infrastructure more accessible for students with disabilities, including the construction of ramps and accessible restrooms. Moreover, some initiatives aim to provide assistive devices and materials to support the learning of students with special needs. The last one is partnerships and collaboration. Collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and international organizations has played a crucial role in promoting inclusive education. Additionally, NGOs and community-based organizations have been actively involved in advocating for the rights of children with disabilities and supporting inclusive education initiatives.

As every plus has a minus, it has some challenges as well. Despite progress, challenges remain, including a shortage of trained professionals, inadequate infrastructure, and societal attitudes towards disability. Correspondingly, limited awareness and understanding of inclusive education concepts among stakeholders can also be a barrier. UNESCO (1993) has focused that every child must get a basic education and inequality reduction under Education for All Article 3.1. The positive action-based transformational special education was included in the Education Act of 1971 (MOE, 1971). The Nepal Disabled Protection and Welfare Act (1982) and the Special Education Council expanded special education (Department of Education 1982). Education for all thwarted Nepal's Special Education Policy (1996), which the Education Commission (1992) strongly endorsed (Ministry of Education, 1996). Department of Education (2006) states that the Non-Formal Education Policy includes special education plus.

The policies safeguard national integration and non-formal special education quality and access. Upgrade learner and system inputs, processes, and environments (UNESCO, 2009 b). Education for All advocates teaching

all children via inclusive programs. Nepal signed the 1989 and 2006 Conventions on Child and Disability Rights. The Inclusive Education Policy (2017) promotes worldwide education for all efforts, for persons with Disabilities and guarantees disability-inclusive education. That policy covers special education that impaired students' enrollment in basic to higher education and develop their scientific and functional assessment abilities (Nepal Law Commission, 2017).

The Inclusive Special Plan (2019–2023) was Nepal's largest master education plan (Ministry of Education, 2017). Oprisan et al. (2021) have examined how inclusive education abroad could benefit Romania. Goldberg et al. (2019) examined institutional factors, trans-inclusive policies and services, trans-student groups' important assessments, campus atmosphere, and belonging. The social workers, psychologists, counselors, and support staff should promote inclusive education (Bentum et al., 2020).

Massouti (2021) analyzed inclusive education policies using documents and semi-structured interviews. The study found that pre-service teachers view inclusion as a policy that requires cooperation, positivism, respect for all children, and material availability. Platash et al. (2021) have examined inclusive education in Ukraine and Romania from two angles. The study examined how inclusive education in Romania and Ukraine promotes democracy and humanity. Ober et al. (2015) assessed Poland's special education system after the late 1980s political reform.

Kurth et al. (2018) remarked that all children deserve education and most Polish special needs students improved. Chhetri et al. (2023) assessed educators' inclusive pedagogy training. Public education policy has to be inclusive, democratic, and equitable due to curriculum diversity. Tanzania's inclusive education policy was studied whereas the understanding of policy actors' perspectives and contextual factors' complex effects may influence policy (Braun, 2020). Opoku et al. (2017) studied Ghanaian inclusive education successes.

Rademaker et al. (2020) considered inclusive education's contact theory for disabled students' socialization. Qu (2020) promoted inclusion through challenging education. Every child, regardless of their background or circumstances, deserves equal access to a top-notch education through an inclusive curriculum policy. All children require a flexible and relevant core curriculum and individualized instruction that makes sure the common core curriculum benefits handicapped kids.

### 3. The Study Design

This paper complies with the necessary methodological design to make more scientific (Khatri, 2022). This study is based on the analytical research approach where the researchers interpreted qualitative findings using sociocultural and pedagogical theories. The researchers sought subjective, comprehensive document analysis in Nepal and worldwide special and inclusive education policy information. In this qualitative study, specifically, thematic analysis, policy documents, and previous studies were thematically interpreted. Data were collected by secondary sources through document analysis. The researchers examined the Inclusive Education Policy (2017), 2019-2023 Special Needs/Inclusive Education Master Plan (2019-2023), and National Disability Policy and Plan.

### 4. Results

Nepal's inclusive education plan facts and opinions having philosophy practice, and the future of Nepal's inclusive education have been interpreted and analyzed. The Education Act (1971) established Nepal's general and special education policies. It had a significant impact on the objectives, attitudes, and concepts of special education in Nepal. The special education policy implemented in 1996 made significant improvements to the field of special education. However, it failed to fully address the diverse range of impairments and social needs of children with disabilities. The researchers have reviewed the inclusive education policies and acts in three categories:

#### 4.1. Special education policy before 1996

Before 1971, formal education for disabled children in Nepal was uncommon. As part of the National Education System Plan 1971, Nepal took the initiative to provide specialized education to individuals facing disadvantages. That plan provided education for children with hearing, cognitive, and visual impairments. The Nepalese government has made significant revisions to textbooks, teacher training, curriculum structure, and other resources. Those changes have been implemented with a focus on connecting the social construction of problems, social reality, and the development of the education system.

The Education Act (1971) ensures equal access to education for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, prioritizing inclusivity and addressing diverse needs. Nepal's special education underwent significant development from 1971 to 1996, garnering recognition on an international level. The National Education System Plan (1971) proposed the creation of the Special Education Council to enhance special education in Nepal. The Special Education Council (1973) offered primary education to students with disabilities. The council was unable to advocate for the rights of disabled children in Nepal.

The council has given its approval for special schools and has also allocated a budget for disabled student scholarships. The Social Welfare Council provided support to disabled children in accessing specialized education. Nepal's Special Education Council has made a significant change by focusing on providing special education to disadvantaged pupils for the first time. The specialists also advised Nepal to implement a special education policy at an earlier stage. Inadequate, inaccurate, and overlooked education policy has been a persistent issue in our nation for years.

The Education Act (1971) in Nepal failed to address the specific needs of children with impairments. That act ignored developed-country special education patterns compared to poor countries. Nepal established Bal Mandir Naxal to educate deaf children in 1996. Nepal established the Social Welfare National Council

(SWNC, 1977) to support special education councils and disabled children. After that, SWNC ran all Nepalese special education programs. In Nepal, special education council and social welfare national council planned and implemented special education programs. Special education council and social welfare national council wanted to bring foreign special education to Nepal. Nepal had to prioritize disabled children's social welfare.

#### **4.2. Special education policy from 1996 to 2016**

Nepal has adopted a comprehensive inclusive education policy for disabled kids, inspired by the Special Education Policy (1996). This policy replaced Nepal's 1996 special education policy, which had been in existence for 21 years. The federal, provincial, and local administrations of Nepal have not implemented the new inclusive education policy for impaired children. The foundation of Nepal's Special Education Policy (1996) can be traced back to the Education Act (1971) and the establishment of the Special Education Council (1973).

This was the initial statutory special education act. That strategy proved to be highly effective in improving special education for disabled children in Nepal. The strategy sought to highlight the valuable contributions made by disabled individuals to national and social progress. The policy facilitated the growth and development of disabled individuals. Nepal has established specialized schools and a diagnostic center to cater to the needs of disabled children.

The policy was implemented to establish resource classes for disabled children in mainstream schools. Nepal made efforts to adapt its ideology to better support the needs of the disabled population. This policy ensured that individuals with disabilities were granted their rightful access to education. Teachers in integrated schools, special schools, and resource courses underwent specialized training in education as per the policy.

It is found that Nepal's 1996 Special Education Policy was a significant achievement based on their interviews. For years, the policy has been in place to govern special education in

Nepal. The Special Education Council in Nepal faced challenges in establishing a comprehensive special education system due to the prevailing political instability. The policy design and execution in Nepal were significantly impacted by the political instability that occurred before 1996 (Ministry of Education, 1996).

#### **4.3. Inclusive education policy 2017**

Nepal's Inclusive School Policy 2017 includes disabled students in mainstream schools. Nepal promoted inclusive education globally. The policy promoted respect, independence, and admiration for disabled children. Handicapped children receive equal assessment, need-based, life skill-based, employment-based, and lifelong education under the policy. The policy taught parents that Nepalese values disabled child enrollment and school awareness.

The policy has legally established Nepal's inclusive education model. The Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP) in Nepal incorporated a specialized program for individuals with special needs, which received support from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). The primary objective of the BPEP initiative in the field of special education was to facilitate the provision of inclusive education within mainstream schools, specifically targeting children with disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Under this framework, the government has implemented integrated schools to provide specialized education. The inclusive education policy has been expanded. The strategy promotes inclusive education at national and global levels to meet varied interests and commitments. The policy promotes equality via affirmative action in education. Disability needs are not met by the policy. Inclusion safeguards impaired students' constitutional rights in school. The Disabled Protection and Welfare Act stressed protecting and helping disabled children nationwide. The act ensures free education in Nepalese schools for disabled people.

The Special Education Council now recognizes that special needs educators need training to improve disability education. This

program guarantees education for blind, deaf, and mentally retarded children. Throughout the entire process, this policy effectively identified and evaluated children with disabilities. Nepal's education system could benefit from more inclusive policies and activities. However, there is a positive aspect to note the integrated model policy that provides disabled students with resource courses. A panel from the Ministry of Education is currently evaluating the Inclusive Education Policy from 2017.

The Inclusive Education Council emphasizes the need for infrastructure and culture that is inclusive and accommodating to individuals with disabilities in all Nepalese integrated and conventional schools. This policy is funded by a combination of Nepali funds, international loans, and local agencies. This strategy requires the support of national and international NGOs and businesses. The multiple sources have provided support for the misclassification of disabilities under Nepal's previous special education policy.

This comprehensive education curriculum classifies various impairments. In line with the practices of developed nations, this strategy failed to take into account the significant classifications outlined in Nepal (IDEA, 2004). This investigation and interpretation utilize the comprehensive and sophisticated policy theory framework. The inclusive education policy (2017) emphasizes the importance of maintaining high quality and standards.

Highly regarded and inclusive schools provided education for both disabled and non-disabled students through the program. To ensure inclusivity in education, it is crucial to implement specific and comprehensive approaches, aside from just focusing on disability-friendly infrastructure. Specialized education is necessary for children with hearing impairments.

## 5. Discussions

Regarding the review of inclusive education policy, the Nepal Special Education Council was established in 1973 to promote special education. The Elderly and Disabled Social Welfare Council has taken over the

role of Nepal's Special Education Council. Throughout the implementation process, there may be adjustments to policy goals, provisions, and designs. Actor identification is crucial for conducting a thorough analysis of an implementation study. The policy before 1996 does not provide sufficient technical details.

The educators possess the capacity to maintain regulations despite significant resistance from members of the community. Knowledge of policy implementation is resistant to localization. The philosophy and integral schools of Nepal are influenced by normative policy theory. Concerns were raised by Birkland (2001) regarding the social justice and ethical implications of the new method. It has been determined that Nepal's policy regarding disabled children violates international agreements, social justice, ethics, and United Nations rules for impoverished nations.

As per the study conducted by researchers, Nepal Special Education Policy (1996) violates conventions regarding disabilities. The cultural dimensions of Nepalese schools and the significance of inclusive global democracy are not addressed. The ambiguity, complexity, iteration, and effects of Nepal's policy players were of a political nature (Honing, 2006). Effective policymaking necessitates expert training, as government stakeholders face challenges in policy implementation.

Nepal needs additional resources and experts in the field of special education. Special schools cater to children with mental, physical, and hearing disabilities. The researchers discovered that the classification of disabilities was not suitable for Nepalese culture, despite the presence of similar concepts in existing literature. The new diversity policy requires inclusive education for children with disabilities where the experts recommend evaluating the disability infrastructure before implementation.

## 6. Conclusion

While analyzing Nepal's inclusive education policies, it reveals that the country has made remarkable strides in establishing an academic environment that promotes inclusivity. Nepal's education policies and acts prioritize the

inclusive education and uphold the constitution. These efforts showcase the nation's dedication to providing equal education opportunities for all, without any form of discrimination.

This study highlights the significance of adopting a conscientious approach that acknowledges constitutional rights and concerns while implementing policies that cater to the diverse needs of students. Applying constitutional rights in education is of utmost importance. As Nepal progresses, inclusive education must evolve. Policy reviews and changes are necessary to address evolving social needs and ensure a high-quality inclusive education. Nepal has the potential to enhance its inclusive education policies and make a valuable contribution to global education for all through the adoption of this approach.

The policy included coverage for resource, integrated, and special schools with no specified deadlines. Nepal's education system has encountered various challenges, including financial constraints, insufficient support for individuals with disabilities, and a lack of coordination between the Ministry of Education and other relevant ministries. It is crucial for policy in Nepal to be reformed thoroughly and for the adoption of best practices. The government should promptly incorporate the provisions outlined in the new inclusive education plan.

### Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

### References

- Bentum, H., Abdullah, A., Amponsah, E. B., & Cudjoe, E. (2020). Becoming professionals in inclusive education settings: Perspectives from Ghanaian social work students on their motivations. *Practice*, 32(2), 129-143.
- Birkland, T. A. (2001). *An introduction to the policy process*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe
- Braun, A. M. (2022). Barriers to inclusive education in Tanzania's policy environment: National policy actors' perspectives. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 52(1), 110-128.
- Chhetri, K., Spina, N., & Carrington, S. (2023). Teacher education for inclusive education in Bhutan: perspectives of pre-service and beginning teachers. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 27(3), 303-318.
- Department of Education (1982). *Disable protection and welfare act 1982*. Ministry of Education, Bhaktapur: Government of Nepal.
- Department of Education (2006). *Non-formal education policy*. Ministry of Education, Bhaktapur: Government of Nepal.
- Department of Education (2015). *A study on the status of teacher management in community schools in Nepal*. Bhaktapur: Ministry of Education.
- Department of Education (2016). *School level educational statistics of Nepal: At a glance*. Educational Information Management Section, Bhaktapur: Ministry of Education.
- Goldberg, A. E., Beemyn, G., & Smith, J. Z. (2019). What is needed, what is valued: Trans students' perspectives on trans-inclusive policies and practices in higher education. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 29(1), 27-67.
- Honing, M. I. (2006). *New direction in education policy implementation*. USA, Albany: State University of New York Press.
- IDEA (2004). *A comprehensive guide to your rights and responsibilities under the 'Individuals with Disabilities Education Act-2004'*. National Center for Learning Disabilities, Inc. 381 Park Avenue South Suite 1410, NY, 10016.
- Khatri, B. B. (2022). Writing an effective abstract for a scientific paper. *Nepalese Journal of Development and Rural Studies*, 19(01), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.3126/njdrs.v19i01.51910>
- Kurth, J. A., Miller, A. L., Toews, S. G., Thompson, J. R., Cortés, M., Dahal, M. H., & Wangare, F. (2018). Inclusive education: Perspectives on implementation and practice from international experts. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 56(6), 471-485.

- Massouti, A. (2021). Pre-service teachers' perspectives on their preparation for inclusive teaching: implications for organizational change in teacher Education. *Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 12(1), 1-15.
- Ministry of Education (2009). *School sector reform plan 2009-2015*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.
- Ministry of Education (1996). *Special education policy*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.
- Ministry of Education (1971). *National education system plan*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.
- Ministry of Education. (2017). *Special needs education /inclusive education master plan 2019-2023*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.
- Ministry of Education (1992). *National education commission report-1992*. Nepal Education Commission, Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.
- Nepal Law Commission (2017). *Inclusive education policy for disabled people*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.
- Nepal Law Commission. (2015). *Constitution of Nepal 2015*. Nepal Gazette, Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.
- Ober, K. M., Twardowski, A., & Pierson, M. R. (2015). Inclusive education in Poland: Policies, practices, and perspectives. In *Including Learners with Low-Incidence Disabilities* (Vol. 5, pp. 315-339). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Opoku, M. P., Mprah, W. K., Badu, E., McKenzie, J., & Agbenyega, J. (2017). Decade of inclusive education in Ghana: perspectives of special educators. *Journal of Social Inclusion*, 8(1), 4-20.
- Oprisan, E., Vartic, V., Veselu, G., & Ionita, C. A. (2021). *Education policies for students with disabilities-analysis and perspectives*. Review of Psychopedagogy. ISSN 2704-1097, 128-143.
- Platash, L., Vykhreshch, A., & Myronova, S. (2021). Inclusive Education in Ukraine and Romania: is it a Reflexive Spirituality or a Sign of Humanity of a Democratic Society? *Revista Romaneasca Pentru Educatie Multi-dimensională*, 13(3), 479-507.
- Qu, X. (2020). A critical realist model of inclusive education for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 26(10), 1008-1022.
- Rademaker, F., de Boer, A., Kupers, E., & Minnaert, A. (2020, November). Applying the contact theory in inclusive education: a systematic review on the impact of contact and information on the social participation of students with disabilities. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 5, p. 602414). Frontiers Media SA.
- UNESCO (1993). *The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education*. World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality. Salamanca, Spain, 7-10, June 1994.
- UNESCO. (2009b). *Policy guidelines on inclusion in education*. Paris, France.