

Reimagining Learner-Centred Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Critical Review of Child Development, Inclusive Pedagogy, Curriculum Reform, Assessment Practices, and Employability under NEP 2020

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence in education has reopened a fundamental question: whether educational systems are designed around the learner or around institutional routines of teaching, testing, and certification. In India, the National Education Policy 2020 provides a major policy opportunity to move from content-heavy, examination-oriented education toward holistic, competency-based, inclusive, multidisciplinary, and skill-linked learning. However, policy transformation cannot be reduced to digitalization or the adoption of AI tools. A genuinely learner-centred education system must be grounded in child growth and development, cognitive diversity, social-emotional learning, inclusive pedagogy, curriculum flexibility, ethical assessment, multilingual education, and employability-oriented learning pathways. This review critically examines the

intersection of AI-enabled teaching and learning, NEP 2020 reforms, inclusive education, assessment transformation, and future employability. It argues that AI can strengthen learner-centred education only when it is embedded within sound pedagogical philosophy, teacher agency, equity safeguards, data privacy, and contextual sensitivity. The paper synthesizes evidence from educational policy, child development research, inclusive education frameworks, global AI guidance, and comparative education systems. It proposes a multidimensional framework in which AI functions not as a replacement for teachers, but as an adaptive support system for diagnosis, personalization, feedback, accessibility, curriculum enrichment, and employability mapping. The review concludes that India's educational transformation will depend not merely on introducing AI tools, but on designing humane, equitable, developmentally appropriate, and future-ready learning ecosystems aligned with the deeper spirit of NEP 2020.

Keywords: artificial intelligence in education; NEP 2020; learner-centred education; inclusive pedagogy; child development; curriculum reform; assessment; employability; equity; educational philosophy

1. Introduction

Education systems across the world are experiencing a deep structural transition. The older model of schooling, where the teacher transmits knowledge, the textbook defines curriculum, and the examination measures success, is increasingly inadequate for contemporary learners [1]. Children and young adults today grow within complex social, digital, emotional, linguistic, and economic environments. Their learning is shaped not only by classroom instruction but also by neurodevelopment, family background, peer culture, digital exposure, language, nutrition, emotional security, disability, socio-economic status, and future labour-market uncertainty. Therefore, any meaningful discussion of education reform must begin with the learner rather than the institution[2].

The Indian National Education Policy 2020 represents one of the most ambitious attempts to reorient education toward holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, and competency-based learning. NEP 2020 gives priority to foundational literacy and numeracy, reduction of curricular load, experiential learning, flexibility of subject choice, vocational exposure, multilingual education, inclusive education, and assessment reform. It also advocates moving away from rote learning toward critical thinking, creativity, communication, and problem-solving skills. These directions are highly relevant because they shift the centre of education from content delivery to learner development [3].

At the same time, artificial intelligence has emerged as a powerful but controversial force in education. AI-enabled systems can personalize learning pathways, identify learning gaps, support adaptive assessment, provide automated feedback, assist teachers in lesson planning, translate content, generate learning resources, and support students with disabilities [4]. Generative AI has intensified these possibilities by making conversational tutoring, content generation, formative feedback, and simulation-based learning more accessible. UNESCO's guidance on generative AI in education emphasizes that AI must be implemented through a human-centred vision, supported by policy, capacity-building, ethical safeguards, and long-term planning rather than uncontrolled technological enthusiasm [5].

However, the presence of AI does not automatically make education learner-centred. A poorly designed AI system can reproduce bias, deepen inequality, encourage superficial learning, weaken teacher judgment, invade student privacy, and promote dependency. Similarly, policy reform can remain symbolic if curriculum, teacher preparation, assessment, infrastructure, and institutional culture do not change together. The real challenge is therefore not whether AI should be used in education, but how AI can be aligned with developmental

psychology, educational philosophy, inclusive pedagogy, curricular reform, assessment justice, and employability [6].

This review critically examines that challenge through the Indian context of NEP 2020 while also drawing from global debates on AI, inclusion, equity, and learning outcomes. It argues that the future of education should not be AI-centred but learner-centred, where AI becomes a pedagogical instrument serving human development.

2. Methodological Orientation of the Review

This paper follows a critical narrative review design. Unlike a purely bibliometric or systematic review, a critical narrative review allows conceptual integration across educational philosophy, child development, policy studies, AI in education, inclusive education, assessment reform, and employability. This is suitable for the present topic because the relationship between learner-centred education, AI, NEP 2020, inclusion, and employability is interdisciplinary and cannot be understood through one narrow evidence stream [7].

The review draws from four categories of literature. First, it examines policy literature, especially NEP 2020 and international education reports. Second, it uses conceptual and theoretical literature on child development, constructivism, humanistic education, inclusive education, and Universal Design for Learning. Third, it considers recent global guidance and emerging scholarship on AI and generative AI in education. Fourth, it integrates comparative insights from international education systems, especially those known for equity, teacher professionalism, digital learning, curriculum design, and labour-market alignment [8].

3. Conceptual Foundation: From Teacher-Centred Instruction to Learner-Centred Education

Learner-centred education is often misunderstood as simply using activity-based methods, digital tools, or flexible classrooms. In reality, it is a deeper philosophical and pedagogical shift. A learner-centred system recognizes that students are not passive recipients of information but active constructors of knowledge. Their learning depends on prior knowledge, developmental stage, motivation, language, social interaction, emotional safety, identity, and opportunity. Therefore, teaching must not merely cover the syllabus; it must create conditions in which learners can understand, question, apply, reflect, and transfer knowledge [9].

Teacher-centred systems are usually built around uniformity. The same content is delivered to all students at the same pace, the same examination measures all learners in the same way, and success is defined through marks. Such systems may appear administratively efficient, but they often ignore learner diversity [10]. A child who learns slowly may be labelled weak, a gifted learner may become disengaged, a first-generation learner may remain silent, a disabled student may face structural barriers, and a linguistically different child may be mistaken as academically poor. Learner-centred education challenges this deficit view. It asks not what is wrong with the student, but what barriers in curriculum, pedagogy, language, assessment, or institutional design are preventing learning [11].

A strong learner-centred model has developmental, pedagogical, inclusive, ethical, and employability-oriented dimensions. AI can support these dimensions only when it is subordinated to educational purpose. AI should not decide what education is for; it should help educators better achieve humane educational goals.

Table 1. Dimensions of learner-centred education and their implications

Dimension	Core Meaning	Educational Implication
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Developmental	Learning must match cognitive, emotional, linguistic, and social development	Age-appropriate pedagogy, play-based learning, scaffolding
Pedagogical	Students actively construct knowledge	Inquiry, dialogue, projects, collaboration, reflection
Inclusive	Learners differ in ability, language, background, pace, and need	Differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning, assistive technologies
Ethical	Education must promote dignity, autonomy, equity, and justice	Fair assessment, data privacy, non-discrimination
Employability-oriented	Learning should prepare students for life, citizenship, and work	Skills, internships, digital literacy, problem-solving

4. Child Growth and Development as the Basis of Learning

Any learner-centred education system must begin with child development. Learning is not merely the accumulation of information; it is a developmental process shaped by brain maturation, sensory experience, language, emotion, social interaction, nutrition, security, and culture. UNICEF describes early childhood as a critical window for holistic development and emphasizes that children require health, nutrition, protection, early learning opportunities, responsive caregiving, and emotional security to reach their potential. This developmental perspective has direct implications for schooling [12].

A child who enters school without adequate language exposure, nutrition, emotional security, or early stimulation may struggle not because of low intelligence but because foundational developmental conditions were weak. Similarly, a child experiencing fear, punishment, humiliation, or exclusion may show poor attention and memory because emotional stress disrupts learning. Therefore, learner-centred education must integrate cognitive development with emotional and social development [13].

NEP 2020’s emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy is important in this regard. However, foundational literacy should not be interpreted narrowly as mechanical reading and arithmetic. It must include oral language, comprehension, curiosity, symbolic thinking, social communication, early reasoning, and confidence. If foundational learning is implemented through pressure and testing alone, it may reproduce the same rote system at an earlier stage. If implemented through play, storytelling, mother tongue, interaction, local context, and diagnostic support, it can become a true developmental foundation [14].

Table 2. Developmental domains and implications for learner-centred pedagogy

Developmental Domain	Learning Relevance	Pedagogical Strategy	AI-Supported Possibility
Cognitive development	Attention, memory, reasoning, problem-solving	Concept mapping, inquiry tasks, scaffolding	Adaptive practice, misconception detection
Language development	Reading, expression, comprehension, classroom participation	Storytelling, multilingual support, discussion	Translation, speech-to-text, vocabulary support
Social development	Cooperation, empathy, peer learning	Group work, peer tutoring, collaborative projects	Collaborative platforms, participation analytics
Emotional development	Motivation, confidence,	Safe classroom, feedback	Emotion-sensitive

	self-regulation	without humiliation	feedback and reflective prompts
Physical development	Motor skills, health, attendance, participation	Activity-based learning, play, movement	Assistive interfaces and accessible learning tools
Moral development	Values, responsibility, citizenship	Dialogue, ethical dilemmas, community engagement	Scenario-based simulations

5. Educational Philosophy for the AI Age

The introduction of AI into education requires philosophical clarity. Without philosophy, technology tends to dominate pedagogy. Educational philosophy answers deeper questions: What is the purpose of education? What kind of learner should education cultivate? What is the role of the teacher? What counts as knowledge? What is the relationship between learning, society, work, and human dignity?

Constructivism emphasizes that learners construct knowledge through experience, interaction, and reflection. AI can support constructivist learning when it provides simulations, exploratory environments, feedback, and adaptive challenges. However, AI becomes anti-constructivist when it simply gives ready-made answers and prevents students from struggling productively with ideas [15].

Pragmatism views education as preparation for democratic life and problem-solving. Under this view, learning should connect with real-world issues, projects, experimentation, and social usefulness. AI can support pragmatic education through data analysis, design projects, virtual labs, community problem-solving, and employability-oriented simulations [16].

Humanism emphasizes the dignity, agency, creativity, and emotional growth of the learner. This is essential in the AI age because education must not become a process of algorithmic optimization. Humanistic education reminds us that learners are not data points. Their curiosity, identity, emotions, values, and aspirations matter [17].

Critical pedagogy highlights power, inequality, language, culture, and social justice. This is important because AI systems can reproduce social bias if trained on unequal data or implemented in unequal contexts. Critical pedagogy asks whether AI expands educational justice or simply benefits already privileged learners.

The philosophical foundation of AI-integrated education should therefore be clear: AI must serve constructivist, humanistic, pragmatic, inclusive, and ethical learning. It should not reduce education to automation [18].

6. Artificial Intelligence in Teaching and Learning: Possibilities and Boundaries

AI in education is not a single technology. It includes intelligent tutoring systems, adaptive learning platforms, automated grading, learning analytics, natural language processing, recommendation engines, AI chatbots, generative AI, speech recognition, translation systems, plagiarism detection, accessibility tools, and predictive analytics. These technologies can support both teachers and learners, but their educational value depends on design and context [19].

One of the strongest promises of AI is personalization. In a traditional classroom, a teacher may have many learners with different levels of preparation, language ability, motivation, and pace. AI-enabled systems can

provide differentiated practice, detect repeated errors, suggest remedial content, and allow learners to progress at different speeds. This can be especially useful for slow learners, first-generation learners, and students needing additional practice [20].

Personalization must not become isolation. Learning is social. A student working alone with an AI tutor may receive targeted practice but may miss dialogue, peer learning, emotional encouragement, and moral development. Therefore, AI personalization should be blended with collaborative learning, teacher feedback, classroom discussion, and project work [21].

AI can reduce teacher workload by helping generate lesson plans, quizzes, rubrics, differentiated worksheets, feedback templates, and learning materials. It can also assist in identifying students who require intervention. But it cannot replace teacher judgment, care, ethical responsibility, classroom management, cultural sensitivity, and emotional connection [22].

AI can support formative assessment by giving immediate feedback, identifying misconceptions, tracking progress, and generating practice tasks. Generative AI may also support feedback on writing, explanation, argument quality, and conceptual clarity. However, assessment is not merely technical measurement. It involves fairness, validity, context, and consequences. Automated systems may misjudge students from different linguistic, cultural, or socio-economic backgrounds. AI-based assessment must therefore be transparent, auditable, and teacher-mediated [23].

Generative AI has made academic integrity more complex. Students can generate essays, solve assignments, summarize readings, and produce code using AI tools. A purely punitive approach is insufficient. Institutions must redesign assessment so that it values process, oral defense, reflective writing, local context, project work, portfolios, and authentic problem-solving [24].

7. NEP 2020 and Curriculum Reform: From Content Load to Competency

Curriculum is the heart of educational transformation. A learner-centred curriculum does not merely list topics; it defines what kinds of understanding, skills, values, attitudes, and capabilities learners should develop. NEP 2020 proposes reducing curricular content to core essentials and encouraging critical thinking, holistic learning, experiential pedagogy, flexibility, and multidisciplinary education [25].

The policy also seeks to remove rigid separations between arts and sciences, curricular and extracurricular activities, and vocational and academic streams. This is highly significant because traditional education systems often force students into narrow identities too early. A learner may be science, arts, or commerce, with limited opportunity to explore interdisciplinary interests. NEP 2020's flexibility can support diverse talents and future employability if implemented seriously [26].

Table 3. NEP 2020 curriculum reform and learner-centred implications

NEP 2020 Direction	Traditional Problem Addressed	Learner-Centred Possibility	Implementation Risk
Foundational literacy and numeracy	Weak early learning base	Early diagnostic support and developmentally appropriate pedagogy	Over-testing at early grades
Reduced content load	Rote memorization	Conceptual understanding and deeper learning	Superficial textbook reduction
Experiential learning	Passive classroom	Projects, fieldwork,	Poor teacher preparation

	instruction	inquiry, real-life application	
Multidisciplinary education	Rigid subject boundaries	Flexible learning pathways	Institutional resistance
Vocational exposure	Academic-vocational divide	Employability and dignity of work	Low-quality token activities
Multilingual education	Language-based exclusion	Better comprehension and participation	Lack of trained multilingual teachers
Assessment reform	High-stakes examination pressure	Formative and competency-based evaluation	Cosmetic changes without system reform

8. Innovative Teaching Methodologies for Learner-Centred Education

Innovative pedagogy does not mean using fashionable techniques without purpose. Teaching methodology becomes innovative only when it improves understanding, participation, inquiry, creativity, and transfer of learning. In the context of AI and NEP 2020, the most relevant teaching methodologies include project-based learning, problem-based learning, flipped classrooms, blended learning, inquiry-based learning, experiential learning, peer learning, and gamification [27].

Project-based learning supports collaboration, critical thinking, communication, and applied knowledge. Problem-based learning develops reasoning, research ability, and self-directed learning. Flipped classrooms can shift classroom time from passive listening to active discussion and problem-solving. Blended learning integrates online and offline learning, allowing AI-supported practice while retaining teacher-led interpretation and discussion [28].

These methods are most effective when they are connected to curriculum goals rather than used as decorative activities. For example, a project should not merely produce a chart or presentation; it should require inquiry, evidence, field observation, reflection, and application. Similarly, AI-generated teaching resources should be reviewed by teachers for accuracy, bias, language, grade appropriateness, and local relevance [29].

Table 4. Innovative teaching methodologies and AI integration

Methodology	Learner-Centred Value	AI Integration	Caution
Project-based learning	Real-world application	AI-assisted research, design, and presentation support	Avoid copy-paste project outputs
Problem-based learning	Critical reasoning	AI-generated scenarios and hints	Ensure human verification
Flipped classroom	Active classroom engagement	AI-created pre-class resources	Digital divide may exclude students
Inquiry learning	Curiosity and evidence-based thinking	AI as questioning partner	AI may provide inaccurate information
Peer learning	Collaboration and communication	Digital collaboration analytics	Do not reduce peer work to metrics
Experiential learning	Learning through action	Simulations and virtual labs	Physical and community experience still needed
Differentiated instruction	Learner diversity	Adaptive content and	Avoid labelling students

		remediation	algorithmically
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9. Inclusive Education, Equity, and Equality

Inclusion is not charity; it is a justice-based educational principle. A learner-centred education system must identify and remove barriers rather than expecting every learner to adapt to a single standard model. Equity and equality are often confused [30]. Equality means giving the same resources or treatment to everyone. Equity means giving learners what they need to achieve fair opportunity. In education, equality may mean the same textbook for all; equity may mean accessible formats, language support, assistive technology, scholarships, remedial teaching, advanced enrichment, and flexible assessment [31].

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 remains central to educational justice in India because it legally recognizes education as a right for children in the 6-14 age group and includes obligations related to access and schooling. The broader challenge is to ensure that legal access becomes meaningful learning participation [32].

Gifted learners may show high curiosity, rapid learning, creativity, advanced reasoning, intense interests, or exceptional talent in specific domains. Traditional classrooms often neglect them because the system assumes that students performing well do not need support. Learner-centred education should provide enrichment, acceleration where appropriate, mentorship, independent projects, research exposure, competitions, and interdisciplinary challenges [33].

Slow learners are often misunderstood and stigmatized. Many require more time, repetition, concrete examples, emotional encouragement, and diagnostic support. They may not have intellectual disability but may struggle with pace, language, memory, attention, or prior learning gaps. AI can help by providing adaptive practice, step-by-step explanations, audio-visual content, and immediate feedback. However, algorithmic labelling must be avoided [34].

Inclusive education also requires accessible infrastructure, assistive technologies, trained teachers, flexible assessment, and peer sensitivity. AI can support text-to-speech, speech-to-text, image description, translation, captioning, personalized interfaces, and communication assistance. But accessibility must be built into design from the beginning [35].

10. Evaluation and Assessment Reform

Assessment is one of the most powerful drivers of educational practice. If examinations reward memorization, teachers will teach for memorization, students will study for reproduction, and parents will value marks over learning. Therefore, learner-centred education requires assessment reform [36].

NEP 2020 supports movement toward competency-based learning and reduced examination stress. The deeper challenge is to design assessments that measure understanding, application, creativity, collaboration, communication, ethical reasoning, and problem-solving. AI can help with assessment through rapid feedback, rubric-based evaluation, progress dashboards, question generation, plagiarism detection, adaptive quizzes, and learner analytics. But AI assessment must be critically controlled [37].

A more robust assessment system should include formative assessment during learning, diagnostic assessment to identify learning gaps, portfolio assessment to document growth over time, performance

assessment through practical tasks, peer and self-assessment to develop reflection, AI-assisted feedback under teacher supervision, and authentic assessment connected to real-world problems [38].

Table 5. From examination-centred to learner-centred assessment

Traditional Assessment	Learner-Centred Assessment
One-time high-stakes examination	Continuous and formative assessment
Memory-focused questions	Application, analysis, and creation
Same test for all learners	Flexible modes of demonstration
Marks as final judgment	Feedback for improvement
Teacher as examiner only	Teacher as mentor and evaluator
Failure as label	Error as diagnostic evidence
Isolated written exam	Portfolio, project, oral, practical, reflective tasks
Assessment of learning	Assessment for learning and as learning

11. Comparative Education Perspective: India, Finland, and Singapore

International comparison should not be used for blind imitation. Education systems are shaped by culture, governance, teacher preparation, funding, inequality, and social trust. However, comparison can help identify principles [39]. Finland is often discussed for equity, teacher professionalism, trust-based schooling, low-stakes assessment, and child-centred pedagogy. Singapore is known for systematic curriculum planning, teacher development, technology integration, skill formation, and strong educational governance. India, under NEP 2020, is attempting a large-scale transformation in a much more socially, linguistically, and economically diverse context [40].

The comparative lesson for India is not to copy another system but to combine equity with systematic implementation. Policy vision must be supported by teacher education, assessment redesign, institutional capacity, public investment, digital access, and local adaptability [41].

Table 6. Comparative lessons for learner-centred reform

Dimension	India under NEP 2020	Finland	Singapore	Lesson for India
Core policy direction	Holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary, competency-based education	Equity and child-centred schooling	High-quality curriculum and future-ready skills	Combine equity with systematic implementation
Assessment	Reform toward competency and formative assessment	Lower exam pressure in early years	Structured assessment with reforms	Reduce rote learning while preserving standards
Teacher role	Teacher as facilitator and mentor	Highly trusted professional	Highly trained instructional expert	Invest deeply in teacher education
Curriculum	Flexibility and reduced content load	Broad-based integrated learning	Carefully sequenced national curriculum	Avoid superficial curriculum reduction

Technology and AI	Emerging policy and practice area	Digital support with pedagogical caution	Strong technology-enabled planning	AI must be pedagogically governed
Equity challenge	Large rural-urban, socio-economic, linguistic diversity	Strong welfare support	Strong state capacity	Digital and social equity must be central

12. Employability and Future-Ready Learning

Employability should not be understood narrowly as job placement. A truly employable graduate or school leaver must have conceptual knowledge, communication ability, digital literacy, ethical awareness, problem-solving skills, teamwork, adaptability, creativity, and the capacity to learn continuously. Certificates without learning do not create capability [42].

India's employability challenge begins early. If students pass through school without foundational literacy, numeracy, communication ability, confidence, digital access, and problem-solving skills, higher education cannot fully compensate. Employability must therefore be built across the education continuum [43].

AI can contribute to employability by mapping student skills, recommending learning pathways, supporting career guidance, simulating interviews, improving language proficiency, helping build portfolios, and connecting curriculum with labour-market trends. However, employability must not reduce education to market training. Education must also cultivate citizenship, ethics, empathy, creativity, democratic values, and social responsibility [44].

Table 7. Educational stages and employability-oriented competencies

Stage	Core Educational Priority	Employability Link
Early childhood and primary	Foundational literacy, numeracy, curiosity, confidence	Base for lifelong learning
Middle school	Conceptual understanding, language, collaboration, digital exposure	Development of learning habits
Secondary school	Career awareness, vocational exposure, problem-solving	Early career orientation
Higher education	Disciplinary depth, internships, research, communication	Professional readiness
Lifelong learning	Reskilling, upskilling, adaptability	Workforce sustainability

13. Proposed Conceptual Framework

The proposed framework places learner development at the centre and positions AI as a support layer rather than the controlling logic of education. It can be represented as a circular or layered model in which developmental needs, pedagogical philosophy, NEP 2020 reform domains, AI support systems, and equity safeguards interact to produce deep learning, inclusion, employability, creativity, lifelong learning, and democratic citizenship [45].

Figure 1. Learner-centred AI-enabled education framework under NEP 2020

CENTRE: Learner Development Cognitive growth Emotional well-being Social participation Language development Identity Capability
Layer 1: Pedagogical Foundations Constructivism Humanism Pragmatism Critical pedagogy Inclusive education
Layer 2: NEP 2020 Reform Domains Foundational literacy Curriculum flexibility Multidisciplinary learning Assessment reform Vocational exposure Multilingual education
Layer 3: AI Support Systems Adaptive learning Learning analytics Automated feedback Accessibility tools Translation Career guidance Teacher support
Layer 4: Equity Safeguards and Outcomes Data privacy Bias prevention Teacher mediation Digital access Universal Design for Learning Public accountability Deep learning Employability

14. Critical Challenges

Despite its promise, learner-centred AI-enabled education faces several serious challenges. Teacher preparation remains the most important issue. Teachers cannot implement learner-centred pedagogy, AI tools, inclusive education, and competency-based assessment without sustained professional development [46].

Digital inequality may deepen existing educational inequalities. Students without devices, connectivity, English proficiency, or digitally literate teachers may be excluded from AI benefits. Assessment systems also remain resistant to change. As long as high-stakes examinations dominate public imagination, schools will struggle to prioritize creativity, inclusion, and deep learning [47].

AI ethics is still underdeveloped in many institutions. Data privacy, consent, bias, surveillance, and accountability must be addressed before large-scale deployment. Curriculum reform may also become symbolic if textbook reduction is not accompanied by pedagogical transformation. Inclusive education requires structural support, not only policy language. Infrastructure, assistive technology, trained special educators, flexible assessment, and social attitudes must change [48].

15. Future Directions

Future educational reform should move toward an integrated model where AI, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, inclusion, and employability are treated as interconnected domains. India requires national and institutional frameworks for ethical AI in education; teacher training that prepares educators as AI-literate pedagogical designers; AI tools aligned with Indian languages and local contexts; assessment boards oriented toward competency-based and formative evaluation; and public digital infrastructure to prevent commercialization-driven inequality.

AI-supported early warning systems may help identify learning gaps, but they must not stigmatize learners. Gifted learners and slow learners require differentiated pathways, while disabled and linguistically diverse

learners require accessible and multilingual learning environments. Employability should be integrated through internships, community projects, digital portfolios, vocational exposure, entrepreneurship, communication skills, and interdisciplinary problem-solving.

16. Conclusion

The future of education cannot be built by adding AI tools to outdated systems. A genuinely transformative education system must begin with the learner: the child's development, language, curiosity, social context, emotional safety, identity, ability, aspiration, and future possibilities. NEP 2020 provides an important policy framework for this transformation by emphasizing holistic development, foundational learning, curriculum flexibility, multidisciplinary education, assessment reform, inclusion, and employability.

Artificial intelligence can strengthen this vision, but only if it is used ethically, inclusively, and pedagogically. The central argument of this review is that AI should not be treated as the driver of education but as an enabling layer within a broader learner-centred ecosystem. The teacher remains essential as mentor, designer, interpreter, evaluator, and ethical guide. Curriculum must become flexible and meaningful. Assessment must become formative and fair. Inclusion must move from policy rhetoric to classroom reality. Employability must be connected with deep learning, not merely job training.

If implemented thoughtfully, the convergence of NEP 2020 and AI can help India move toward an education system that is not only technologically modern but also humane, equitable, developmentally sensitive, and future-ready. The real measure of success will not be how many AI tools enter classrooms, but whether every learner—gifted, slow, disabled, rural, urban, multilingual, marginalized, or advanced—receives the opportunity to learn with dignity, depth, and purpose.

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