

EDITOR'S NOTE

As we embark on the fifth year since the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the educational transformation it envisioned continues to gain momentum across India's diverse learning landscapes. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 (NCF-SE 2023) has provided a crucial blueprint for translating NEP 2020's ambitious vision into tangible classroom realities, emphasising holistic development, multidisciplinary learning, and the cultivation of critical 21st-century skills.

The journey from policy formulation to pedagogical practice has revealed both remarkable achievements and persistent challenges in building an equitable, inclusive, and future-ready educational ecosystem. This February 2025 issue of the *Journal of Indian Education* reflects on this ongoing evolution, presenting research that examines the intersection of innovative teaching methodologies, technological integration, cultural sensitivity, and sustainable development within India's educational renaissance.

This issue presents a comprehensive collection of fifteen research studies addressing some of the most pressing challenges and opportunities in contemporary education. The articles span the entire educational spectrum—from early childhood development to higher education—and reflect the dynamic evolution of teaching and learning in the 21st century.

Raman and Ravichandran's study examines teachers' practices and perceptions regarding ICT integration in vocational education, highlighting the critical need for technological literacy to prepare students for modern workplaces. This theme of digital transformation continues through Augustine, Patil, and Rao's comparative analysis of gamified versus traditional pedagogical approaches, demonstrating how innovative methods can enhance learner engagement and outcomes.

Several contributions focus on the crucial early years of education. Vishwakarma and Pal's investigation into foundational literacy and numeracy programmes in government schools provides valuable insights into grassroots-level policy implementation. The specialised work by Gulab Jan, Yadav, and Venkatesh on enhancing numeracy skills among preschool children with hearing impairments exemplifies the field's commitment to inclusive education. Additionally, Meitei, Singh, and Singh's exploration of art and play-based pedagogies in Manipur demonstrates how regional contexts can shape innovative practices aligned with NCF-SE 2023.

The connection between educational philosophy and policy implementation emerges as a significant theme. Sucharita's examination of Sri Aurobindo's integral education philosophy in relation to NEP 2020 provides a philosophical

grounding for contemporary reforms. This is complemented by Sharma's textbook analysis and Sahoo's investigation of parental perspectives on holistic assessment, both illuminating how policy translates into classroom practice.

A strong focus on educational equity permeates this collection. Singh, Kumar, and Tigga's study of first-generation learners from socio-economically disadvantaged groups, along with Kumar and Gupta's case study of Musahar children in Bihar, reveals persistent challenges in educational access and participation. Gupta and Gangwar's analysis of NGO interventions in slum education demonstrates how community-based approaches can help address systemic inequities.

This issue also addresses the intersection of academic performance and student well-being. Kashung and Shimrei's study on depression, stress, and anxiety among higher secondary students in Manipur provides critical insights into the mental health challenges contemporary learners face. Rout and Sarkar's investigation of spiritual intelligence among trainee teachers suggests holistic approaches to educator development.

The collection demonstrates methodological diversity, from Chaurasia and Singh's quasi-experimental study on algebraic reasoning to Misra and Trivedi's meta-analysis of the effects of private tutoring. This range—including case studies, comparative analyses, and large-scale quantitative investigations—reflects the field's methodological maturity and its commitment to evidence-based practice.

Together, these studies illustrate education's responsiveness to societal needs while highlighting persistent challenges. The integration of technology, emphasis on foundational skills, commitment to inclusive practices, and attention to learner well-being represent key elements of India's educational transformation. As we work toward more equitable and effective systems, the research presented here provides valuable guidance for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers alike.

The diversity of contexts—from urban centers to rural communities, from mainstream classrooms to specialised populations—underscores education's universal importance while emphasising the need for contextually appropriate solutions. Each contribution adds to our understanding of how educational systems can better serve all learners in an increasingly complex world.

We express our gratitude to all contributors for their dedication to advancing educational knowledge and practice through rigorous research and thoughtful analysis.

Academic Editor