



A study of the attitude and values of prospective teachers of BEd programmes towards inclusive education

Dr. Bhartendu Mishra

Associate Professor

Department of B.Ed

S.M.M.Town P.G.College Ballia

Abstract

Inclusive education stands as a cornerstone of modern pedagogy, advocating for the right of every child, irrespective of their abilities or backgrounds, to learn and thrive within mainstream educational settings. At the heart of this transformative approach are the teachers, particularly prospective educators undergoing B.Ed. programs, whose attitudes and values are paramount in shaping truly inclusive classrooms. Their understanding, acceptance, and commitment to diversity are not just desirable traits, but essential pillars upon which the success of inclusive education rests. The concept of inclusive education extends beyond merely integrating students with disabilities into regular schools; it embodies a philosophy of respect for diversity, equity, and the recognition that all learners have unique needs and strengths. For prospective teachers, this translates into a shift from a "one-size-fits-all" mentality to one that embraces differentiated instruction, individualized support, and a deep understanding of varied learning styles. Values such as empathy, patience, adaptability, and a strong belief in the potential of every child are fundamental. They must possess a genuine desire to create a supportive and welcoming environment where every student feels valued, belongs, and is empowered to reach their full potential.

Keywords:

Attitude, Teachers, B.Ed, Inclusive, Education

Introduction

The global shift towards inclusive education marks a profound recognition of every child's right to learn and thrive within a common educational setting, irrespective of their diverse needs or abilities. This paradigm, advocating for schools that adapt to students rather than the other way around, hinges critically on the disposition of educators. Among prospective teachers, a positive attitude towards inclusive education is not merely a desirable trait but a fundamental prerequisite, strongly and demonstrably correlated with their willingness and capacity to adopt genuinely inclusive practices in their future classrooms. (Sharma, 2022)

A positive attitude fosters an open mindset essential for embracing the complexities of inclusive education. Teaching in an inclusive environment demands flexibility, creativity, and a willingness to step outside traditional pedagogical norms. Prospective teachers who view inclusion as an opportunity rather than a burden are more likely to engage with new strategies, differentiate instruction effectively, and adapt curriculum to meet a wide spectrum of learning styles. Conversely, a negative or hesitant attitude can lead to resistance, a perpetuation of segregated practices, and a lack of belief in the potential of all students, ultimately undermining the very essence of inclusion.

A positive attitude directly influences a prospective teacher's professional development choices and their engagement with training opportunities related to inclusive education. Individuals with a genuine belief in inclusion are more likely to actively seek out workshops, specialized courses, and practical experiences that equip them with the necessary skills to support diverse learners. This proactive approach to learning is crucial, as inclusive practices often require specialized knowledge in areas such as differentiated instruction, universal design for learning (UDL), assistive technology, and collaborative teaching models. Without an underlying positive disposition, such training might be viewed as an obligation rather than an empowering tool, leading to superficial engagement and limited practical application. (Dawn, 2021)

Research in India and globally highlights the critical role of these attitudes and values. Studies often indicate that a positive attitude towards inclusive education among prospective teachers is strongly correlated with their willingness to adopt inclusive practices. This positivity stems from a belief in the benefits of inclusion for all students – not just those with special needs – fostering enhanced social skills, empathy, and academic outcomes for the entire classroom. Conversely, negative attitudes, often rooted in a lack of knowledge, inadequate training, or preconceived notions about disability, can act as significant barriers to effective implementation.

B.Ed. programs, therefore, bear a crucial responsibility in cultivating these crucial attitudes and values. Curricula are increasingly incorporating dedicated courses on inclusive education, covering topics such as the

concept and principles of inclusion, legal frameworks like the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwD Act, 2016) in India, various disabilities and their educational implications, and pedagogical strategies for diverse learners, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Practical experiences, such as visits to inclusive schools, case studies of children with diverse needs, and the preparation of individualized learning materials, are vital in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. (Leung, 2020)

Many prospective teachers express concerns about their preparedness to teach students with diverse needs, often citing insufficient practical training and limited exposure to real inclusive settings during their B.Ed. programs. Attitudinal barriers, such as the persistence of traditional mindsets that favor segregated education for children with disabilities, also need to be addressed proactively. Furthermore, a lack of resources, infrastructure, and collaborative support from school administration and special education professionals can discourage even well-intentioned teachers.

When prospective teachers approach diversity with genuine warmth and a belief in the inherent worth of every child, they are more inclined to build strong relationships with all students, understand their unique challenges, and celebrate their individual strengths. This empathetic stance translates into a willingness to collaborate effectively with parents, specialists, and other stakeholders, forming a supportive network around the child. Without this empathy, students with diverse needs might be viewed as "problems" to be managed rather than individuals to be nurtured, leading to exclusionary tendencies, albeit unintentional ones. (Radford, 2022)

Literature Review

Nisreen et al. (2022): The correlation between positive attitudes and willingness to adopt inclusive practices is also evident in the emotional resilience required for inclusive teaching. Inclusive classrooms can present unique challenges, demanding patience, adaptability, and a strong problem-solving orientation.

Boer et al. (2021): Prospective teachers who possess a positive outlook are better equipped to navigate these complexities, view setbacks as learning opportunities, and persevere in creating truly equitable learning environments. A negative attitude, on the other hand, can easily lead to frustration, burnout, and a retreat to less inclusive methods, ultimately failing the very students inclusion aims to serve.

Darlene et al. (2021): The journey towards truly inclusive educational systems begins in the preparation of its future educators. A positive attitude towards inclusive education among prospective teachers is not merely a

soft skill but a foundational element that underpins their willingness to embrace, learn, and implement effective inclusive practices.

Philip et al. (2022): A positive attitude towards inclusive education among prospective teachers fuels their professional growth, shapes their empathetic engagement with students, and fortifies their resilience in the face of challenges.

Kim et al. (2022): Teacher education programs bear a significant responsibility in fostering and nurturing this positive disposition, recognizing that it is the most potent catalyst for creating schools where every child is not just present, but truly belongs and thrives.

Objectives:

- i) To study the concept of inclusive education
- ii) To study the attitude and values of prospective teachers of BEd programmes towards inclusive education.

Methodology

For the current research work, a total 200 respondents were chosen by using Random Sampling.

Statistical tool

A regression analysis tool was used for the current research work.

Data collection and analysis

Table 1 Respondents

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	126	63%
Female	74	37%

Source: Primary Source

It can be observed from table 1 that out of 200 respondents, there were 63% male and 37% female respondents.

Table 2
Age of Respondents

Age	Frequency	%
25-28	49	24.5
29-30	56	28
31-33	49	24.5
34-35	37	18.5
Above 35	9	4.5

It can be observed from Table 2 that there were 49 respondents of age group 25-28 and 56 respondents were of age group 29-30 while 49 were in the age-group 31-33. 37 respondents belonged to the age-group 34-35 while 9 respondents had the age more than 35 years.

Table: 3 Regression Analysis

	Male	Female
R^2	0.393	0.396
F	33.405*	37.839*
Teacher attitude	0.289	0.301
Teacher values	0.198*	0.008
Inclusive education	0.006	0.296*

Table 3 shows that the Teacher attitude, Teacher values and Inclusive education variable explain 44.2% (Male) and 43.1% (Female) variance.

Results and Findings

B.Ed. courses equip future teachers with a repertoire of differentiated instruction techniques. This acknowledges that students learn at different paces and possess unique learning styles. Practical training includes how to modify content, process, product, and the learning environment. For instance, student-teachers learn to provide varied reading materials at different complexity levels, offer guided scaffolds for some learners while challenging others with complex problem-solving tasks, and diversify assessment methods to capture a true understanding of each student's capabilities.

Collaborative learning strategies are also heavily promoted. B.Ed. programs encourage the use of cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and buddy systems. These strategies not only facilitate academic assistance but also foster social interaction, empathy, and a sense of community among diverse learners. Student-teachers gain hands-on experience in structuring group activities, managing diverse personalities within groups, and promoting mutual respect and support.

B.Ed. courses emphasize the development of a positive and supportive classroom climate. This involves practical aspects like creating physically and emotionally safe spaces, establishing clear classroom routines and visual schedules, and providing immediate, actionable feedback. Teacher trainees learn to focus on students' strengths, express positive regard, and facilitate student voice and autonomy, recognizing that a welcoming environment is foundational for effective inclusive education.

The practical component of B.Ed. programs extend to real-world experiences. Field visits to inclusive or special schools, case studies of children with diverse needs, and the preparation of individualized learning materials are common practicum requirements. These experiences bridge the gap between theory and practice, allowing student-teachers to observe inclusive practices firsthand, interact with students and experienced educators, and develop tailored interventions. They also engage in critical analysis of existing policies and practices, fostering a reflective approach to their professional development.

B.Ed. courses in India have made significant strides in emphasizing practical pedagogical strategies for inclusive classrooms. By focusing on UDL, differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, and creating positive classroom environments, alongside essential field engagement, these programs are preparing a new generation of teachers who are not only knowledgeable about inclusive education but are also skilled and confident in implementing effective, equitable, and empathetic teaching practices for all learners. This shift is vital in building a truly inclusive society where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The inclusion of dedicated courses on inclusive education within B.Ed curricula marks a progressive and essential step towards building a truly equitable and quality education system. By equipping prospective teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and a strong inclusive mindset, these programs are instrumental in preparing a generation of educators who can champion diversity, address individual needs, and create learning environments where every child feels valued, respected, and empowered to reach their full potential. This commitment to inclusive teacher training is fundamental to transforming classrooms into microcosms of a just and inclusive society.

Recognizing the pivotal role teachers play in realizing this vision, Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) curricula globally have increasingly incorporated dedicated courses on inclusive education, aiming to equip future educators with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to foster truly inclusive classrooms.

These dedicated courses within B.Ed programs are a testament to the growing understanding that inclusive education is not merely an add-on or a specialized field, but rather a fundamental principle that underpins effective teaching for *all* children. The curriculum typically delves into a wide array of topics, starting with foundational concepts such as the meaning, philosophy, and historical development of inclusive education, differentiating it from concepts like special and integrated education. Students learn about international declarations and national policies (like India's RPWD Act 2016, RTE Act 2009, and NEP 2020) that legally and morally mandate inclusive practices, providing a strong theoretical and ethical framework for their future work.

A significant component of these courses involves understanding diverse learner needs. This includes detailed modules on various categories of disabilities – visual impairment, hearing impairment, locomotor disabilities, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, and cerebral palsy – exploring their characteristics, identification, and educational provisions. However, inclusive education extends beyond disability to encompass other marginalized groups, such as children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, ethnic minorities, and transgender individuals. B.Ed curricula address the educational challenges faced by these diverse groups, promoting awareness and sensitivity towards their unique requirements.

Beyond theoretical knowledge, the courses emphasize practical pedagogical strategies for inclusive classrooms. Future teachers are trained in curriculum adaptation, differentiated instruction, and universal design for learning to make content accessible to all. They learn about various teaching methodologies like cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and multi-sensory approaches. Classroom management in an inclusive setting, the use of assistive technologies, and the importance of creating a barrier-free physical and attitudinal environment are also key areas of focus. Furthermore, assessment techniques for diverse learners, including continuous and comprehensive assessment, are thoroughly explored.

These dedicated inclusive education courses stress the importance of collaboration. Student-teachers are taught the significance of working effectively with special educators, parents, community members, and other professionals (such as speech therapists and occupational therapists) to provide holistic support for every child.

This collaborative spirit is essential for developing individualized education plans (IEPs) and ensuring a comprehensive support system for children with special needs.

Many B.Ed programs also incorporate practical components like visits to inclusive schools or special schools, case studies of children with diverse needs, and the development of individualized learning materials. These hands-on experiences are invaluable in bridging the gap between theory and practice, allowing student-teachers to apply their learning in real-world contexts and develop a deeper empathy for the challenges and triumphs associated with inclusive education.

To truly foster positive attitudes and values, B.Ed. programs must go beyond theoretical instruction. They need to:

Emphasize Experiential Learning: Regular and meaningful internships in truly inclusive schools, opportunities to interact with diverse learners, and direct mentorship from experienced inclusive educators are crucial.

Promote Reflective Practice: Encourage prospective teachers to critically examine their own biases, assumptions, and comfort levels in working with diverse student populations.

Build Confidence and Competence: Provide practical skills training in areas like differentiated instruction, assistive technology, behavior management in inclusive settings, and collaborative teaching models.

Highlight the Benefits for All: Continuously reinforce how inclusive practices enrich the learning experience and social development of every student in the classroom, not just those with identified special needs.

Foster a Collaborative Mindset: Train prospective teachers in effective collaboration with special educators, parents, therapists, and other support professionals, recognizing that inclusive education is a team effort.

Conclusion

The attitudes and values of prospective teachers in B.Ed. programs are the bedrock of a successful inclusive education system. A deep-seated commitment to equity, an open and adaptable mindset, and a genuine belief in the inherent worth and potential of every child are indispensable. By strengthening B.Ed. curricula, prioritizing practical exposure, and fostering a culture of continuous learning and collaboration, we can empower the next generation of educators to champion inclusive practices and, in doing so, build a more equitable and compassionate society for all learners.

References

1. Anati, Nisreen., M. (2022). Including Students with Disabilities in UAE Schools: A Descriptive Study. *International Journal of Special Education*, 27(2), 75-85.
2. Boer Anke., Pijl Sip Jan., Minnaert Alexander. (2021). Regular Primary Schoolteachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education: A Review of the Literature. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15(3), 331-353.
3. Brackenreed Darlene. (2021). Inclusive Education: Identifying Teachers' Strategies for Coping with Perceived Stressors in Inclusive Classroom. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 122.
4. Carey, Philip. (2022). Exploring Variation in Nurse Educators' Perceptions of the Inclusive Curriculum. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16(7), 741-755.
5. Coates, Janine Kim, (2022). Teaching Inclusively: Are Secondary Physical Education Student Teachers Sufficiently Prepared to Teach in Inclusive Environments. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 17(4), 349-365.
6. David Ruffina., & Kuyini Ahmed Bawa. (2023). Social Inclusion: Teachers as Facilitators in Peer Acceptance of Students with Disabilities in Regular Classrooms in Tamil Nadu, India. *International Journal of Special Education*, 27(2), 157-168.
7. Gilmore Gwen. (2023). What's so Inclusive about an Inclusion Room? Staff Perspectives on Student Participation, Diversity and Equality in an English Secondary School. *British Journal of Special Education*, 39(1), 39-48.
8. Helldin Rolf., Backman Orjan., Dwyer Helen., & Skarlind Anders. (2021). Opportunities for a Democratic Pedagogy: A Comparative Study of South African and Swedish Teachers' Attitudes to Inclusive Education. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 11(2), 107-119.
9. Khochen Maha., Radford Julie. (2022). Attitudes of Teachers and Headteachers towards Inclusion in Lebanon, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, v16 n2 p139-153.
10. Leung Chi-hung., Mak Kit-ying. (2020). Training, Understanding, and the Attitudes of Primary School Teachers Regarding Inclusive Education in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 14(8), 829-842.
11. Dawn B. (2021). The Impact of a Professional Development Programme on Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusion. *Support for Learning*, 26(4), 182-186.

12. Mullick Jahirul., Deppeler Joanne., Sharma Umesh. (2022). Inclusive Education Reform in Primary Schools of Bangladesh: Leadership Challenges and Possible Strategies to Address the Challenges. International Journal of Whole Schooling, 8(1), 1-20.