

Pre-Service Teachers' Perception, Knowledge and Understanding of Inclusive Education in light of NEP 2020

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Abstract

This study highlights the growing awareness and preparedness of pre-service teacher trainees and stakeholders regarding inclusive education light of NEP 2020. Emphasizing principles of social justice and equal opportunity, inclusive education fosters mutual respect among students and enhances overall educational outcomes. A qualitative approach was adopted for the study. The sample consisted of 150 pre-service teachers studying in the Birla Campus of H.N.B. Garhwal University, Srinagar Garhwal. This study explores perception, knowledge and understanding of inclusive education. A discussion and statement schedule tool were used for data collection. Research findings indicate that teacher education programs successfully cultivate an understanding of inclusive practices, with particular emphasis on experiential learning and ICT integration. Pre-service teachers are increasingly capable of developing inclusive lesson plans and adapting teaching strategies to accommodate diverse learners. The study's key finding the pre-service teachers training programs are laying a strong foundation for inclusive education, though ongoing professional development. 87% of pre-service teachers have gained insights into inclusive practices through their teaching internships. Pre service teaching practice experience helps to understand an inclusive classroom. Practical experiences during internships significantly enhance their readiness. 91% pre-service teachers feel that their curriculum effectively combines theory and practice regarding inclusive education and NEP 2020, showcasing the curriculum's comprehensiveness, and a significant majority recognize that inclusive education promotes equal opportunities for all students.

Keywords: Pre-Service Teacher, Internships, Professional Development and Experiential Learning.

Introduction

Inclusive education, a key goal of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, aims to provide equal learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. However, many pre-service teachers feel unprepared to handle diverse classrooms due to factors such as personal experiences with individuals with disabilities, exposure to inclusive practices during teacher training, and cultural attitudes towards disability. With an emphasis on inclusive education methods, this study investigates how India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is being implemented. It examines the tenets, difficulties, and solutions of the policy. The results show that although NEP 2020 prioritizes diversity, equity, and tailored support, its effectiveness is hampered by a lack of funding, attitudes, and training. The challenges may be addressed, and inclusive learning environments can be promoted with the aid of advocacy, creativity, teamwork, and professional development opportunities. (Rakshit et al., 2025). The depth and breadth of inclusive education content in teacher training curricula significantly impact pre-service teachers' knowledge, and hands-on experience in inclusive settings enhances understanding. Challenges include insufficient training, limited access to assistive technologies, and societal biases. To better equip pre-service teachers, strategies such as integrating inclusive education modules into the curriculum, facilitating internships, organizing training sessions, and pairing them with experienced educators are recommended. In the framework of inclusive education, pre-service teachers' attitudes become crucial when it comes to embracing students with special needs. (Todorovic et al., 2011). The views of pre service teachers regarding inclusive education are compared in this study according to their experiences working with children who have special needs. There were notable disparities in the perspectives of Jakartan college students majoring in special education, early childhood education, and teacher training. Their attitudes toward inclusive education were influenced differently by their training and teaching experiences, underscoring the significance of human resources in putting inclusive education into practice. (Qandhi et al., 2019). The National Education Policy in India aims to promote inclusive education, ensuring equitable access to quality education for all students, particularly those from socioeconomically disadvantaged

backgrounds, through teacher preparation, ECCE, technological integration, and multilingual education. (Gitesh 2024)

Teaching experience and the experience of engaging with friends or family members with learning disabilities or behavioral issues also shape pre service teachers' implicit and explicit views (Markova et al., 2015). The knowledge and opinions of pre service science teachers regarding inclusive education in Nigeria are examined in this study. The findings indicated that respondents had a moderate level of understanding about inclusive education and a favorable opinion of its efficacy. Teachers nevertheless expressed favorable opinions regarding the efficacy of inclusive education. The study emphasizes the necessity of curriculum adaptation and adaptive education to better serve underprivileged and struggling pupils in Nigerian schools. (Olateju et al., 2020) Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive practices can hinder the adoption and long-term application of inclusive education reform, making understanding their attitudes crucial for effective implementation. (Fox et al., 2021) .Many teachers' preexisting ideas may be in opposition to the inclusive education philosophy (Wilson et al., 2016) Inclusive education for students with special educational needs (SEN) is a significant global reform, requiring a thorough understanding of its contributors and barriers. (Savolainen et al., 2020). The National Education Policy 2020 prepares new aspects of inclusive education and teacher education to make a stronger contribution to nation building, even as it reinforces the idea of creating an India with a strong educational foundation. Although there has been a global paradigm shift in inclusive education, teachers continue to encounter difficulties in putting it into practice. To determine successful tasks, teachers must engage with disability experts. To become an inclusive educator, teacher preparation is essential. Research indicates that instructors' educational background influences their preparedness and willingness to provide accommodations for kids with special education needs. Training courses emphasize abilities, skills, and attitude. (Ozel, et.al., 2018). The goal of inclusive education is to provide equal access to education and additional attention for students with impairments and learning problems. In order to fulfill the 2010 Education for All (EFA) target, the Indian government accelerated the Inclusive Education program. Regardless of caste, gender, race, religion, disability, or language, children aged 6 to 14 are guaranteed free and compulsory education under the RTE Act of 2009. Every child receives love, acceptance, and a sense of belonging through inclusive education, which also offers a fresh viewpoint on navigating diversity and fending against negative attitudes. (Suja et al., 2024).

Research Question

- What are the perceptions pre service pupil teachers towards inclusive education?
- What are the perceptions pre service pupil teachers' knowledge towards inclusive education in light of NEP 2020?
- What is the understanding pre service pupil teachers towards inclusive education?

Research Methodology

A survey and qualitative method have been adopted for the present study. For Qualitative data has been collected through discussion and interview schedule. The preceding section's discussion highlights the inclusive education perception, knowledge and understanding light of NEP 2020. The three research questions that follow have been formulated. The present study has been conducted on pupil teachers of Birla campus, Srinagar Garhwal, session 2022-24 and 2023-25. The present study has been conducted on 150 pupil teachers of Birla campus, Srinagar Garhwal. For collecting the data of the presented research, discussion was conducted in the B.Ed. classroom and after that a schedule was prepared on the basis of Perception, knowledge and understanding to inclusive education. A 29-statement schedule was prepared and filled by students. Percentage is used for statistics.

Results and Discussion

Table No.1: Perception of Inclusive Education

S.NO.	Statement	Response of Number N=150	% of response
1	Inclusive education ensures equal opportunities for all learners of their abilities	115	77
2.	Inclusive education is essential for building an equitable society	105	70
3.	Inclusive education increases all students to respect among students	110	73

4.	Inclusive education will improve the overall quality of education.	130	87
5.	NEP 2020 encourages collaboration among stakeholders for inclusive education.	101	67
6.	Inclusive education makes the classroom environment more collaborative and respectful for each other	123	82
7.	sufficient resources to support inclusive education: different needs	97	65

Table no. 1 explained the Inclusive education is an educational approach that seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth, and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. This includes learners with disabilities, learning difficulties, or any other disadvantages. At its core, inclusive education means that all students, regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions, are welcomed and supported in mainstream schools and classrooms. A significant majority (77%) recognize that inclusive education promotes equal opportunities for all students, irrespective of their abilities. This aligns with the principles of inclusive education, which emphasize equal access and participation for every learner. (70%) respondents believe that inclusive education is crucial for fostering equity in society. By accommodating diverse learners, inclusive education can contribute to reducing social disparities. (73%) participants feel that inclusive settings enhance mutual respect among students. Exposure to diverse peers can foster understanding and acceptance. (87%) majority believe that inclusive education enhances educational quality. Inclusive practices can lead to more effective teaching strategies that benefit all students. agreed (67%) pre service teacher trainer recognize that NEP 2020 promotes stakeholder collaboration. The policy emphasizes collective efforts to achieve educational goals. (82%) respondents feel that inclusive classrooms foster collaboration and respect, creating a positive learning environment. (65%) pupil teachers believe resources are sufficient, a notable minority may perceive gaps. Effective inclusive education requires adequate resources, including trained staff and accessible materials.

Table No.2: Knowledge of Inclusive Education & NEP 2020

S.NO.	Statement	Response of Number N=150	% of response
1	Aware for the Inclusive Education	121	81
2.	Knowledge about Identify different types of learning disabilities.	103	67
3.	I understand how to use ICT to support inclusive learning	99	66
4.	Understand inclusion education concept	123	82
5.	Knowledge about NEP 2020 supports the inclusion of children with diverse learning needs	116	77
6.	Knowledge about Government schemes for inclusive education	130	87
7.	Develop lesson plans to diverse learning needs	109	73
8	Modify teaching methods to support students with diverse learning needs	113	75
9	aware of national and international policies that support inclusive education (e.g., RTE Act, UNCRPD, NEP 2020	135	90
10	Familiar with assessment strategies to inclusive classrooms.	111	74
11	Classroom learning and teaching practice help for understand inclusive concept	127	85
12	Pre service Training period enhances sufficient knowledge Inclusive Education	130	87
13	Pre service teaching practice experience helps to understand inclusive classroom	122	81
14	Teaching practice increases my knowledge about different types of learning disabilities in classroom	131	87
15	Pre service Training period curriculum increases theoretical and	137	91

	practical knowledge inclusive classroom & NEP 2020		
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Table no 2 indicate significant majority (81%) of pre-service teachers are aware of inclusive education, indicating that the concept is well-introduced in teacher training programs. 67% feel confident in identifying various learning disabilities, suggesting a need for enhanced training in this area to better support diverse learners. 66% pre-service teachers understanding the use of ICT in inclusive settings, there's room for improvement in integrating technology effectively to accommodate all learners. encouraging 82% comprehend the inclusive education concept, reflecting successful theoretical instruction in teacher education programs. 77% pre-service teachers are aware of how the National Education Policy 2020 promotes inclusion, indicating effective dissemination of policy information. 87% pre-service teachers' awareness suggests that pre-service teachers are well-informed about governmental initiatives supporting inclusive education. 73% pre-service teachers capable of creating inclusive lesson plans, there's a solid foundation, though further practice could enhance this skill. 75% pre-service teachers can adapt teaching methods, demonstrating flexibility in addressing varied student requirements. 90% are knowledgeable about policies like the RTE Act and UNCRPD, highlighting strong policy literacy among pre-service teachers. 74%, pre-service teachers good understanding of inclusive assessment methods, though ongoing training could further solidify this competence. 85% find that practical experiences enhance their grasp of inclusion, underscoring the value of experiential learning. 87% affirming the effectiveness of their training, it's evident that current programs are successfully imparting inclusive education knowledge. 81% pre-service teachers' agreement indicates that hands-on teaching experiences are instrumental in understanding inclusive classroom dynamics. 87% report that teaching practice has deepened their understanding of learning disabilities, emphasizing the importance of practical exposure. 91% pre-service teachers feel that their curriculum effectively combines theory and practice regarding inclusive education and NEP 2020, showcasing the curriculum's comprehensiveness. The data indicates that pre-service teacher training programs are effectively fostering awareness and understanding of inclusive education principles and policies. However, areas like identifying learning disabilities and integrating ICT tools require further emphasis. Enhancing practical training components could bridge these gaps, ensuring that future educators are well-equipped to support diverse learners.

Table No.03: Understanding of Inclusive Education

S.NO.	Statement	Response of Number N=150	% of response
1	Successfully modify teaching materials for inclusive classrooms	120	80
2.	Understand inclusive teaching strategies for inclusive classroom	117	78
3.	Understand individual difference in learning	114	76
4	capable of managing behavior in a diverse classroom setting	109	73
5	Understand inclusive practices during teaching internship	131	87
6	Understand different assessment and evaluation with learning disabilities	123	82
7	Understand diverse needs of the learners	129	86

Table no 3 show that significant majority (80%) of pre-service teachers feel confident in adapting teaching materials to cater to diverse learning needs. This indicates a strong foundation in creating accessible and inclusive content, which is essential for accommodating students with varying abilities. 78% pre-service teachers are familiar with strategies that promote inclusivity. This includes differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, and the use of assistive technologies to support all learners. 76% pre-service teachers recognize the importance of acknowledging individual learning differences. This awareness is crucial for implementing personalized teaching approaches that address the unique needs of each student. 73% pre-service teacher feel equipped to handle behavioral challenges in diverse classrooms. Effective behavior management is vital for maintaining learning environment and ensuring that all students feel supported and respected. 87% pre-service teachers have gained insights into inclusive practices through their teaching internships. This hands-on experience reinforces theoretical knowledge and prepares pre-service teachers for real-world classroom dynamics. 82% pre-service teachers are aware of various assessment

techniques tailored for students with learning disabilities. This includes formative assessments, performance-based evaluations, and the use of alternative assessment tools to accurately measure student progress. 86% pre-service teachers recognize the diverse needs of learners, emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity, language considerations, and socio-economic factors in teaching. This holistic understanding is essential for fostering an inclusive and equitable classroom environment. The data indicates that pre-service teachers possess a solid foundation in inclusive education principles, with particular strengths in adapting teaching materials, understanding inclusive strategies, and recognizing diverse learner needs. However, there's room for growth in areas like behavior management and the application of assessment methods for students with learning disabilities.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The pre service teacher trainees and stakeholders understand the advantages of inclusive education. In addition to advancing social justice and fair opportunity, inclusive education raises student respect for one another and raises educational standards generally. The foundation for inclusive practices is further strengthened by the NEP 2020's emphasis on stakeholder participation. However, addressing resource gaps and ensuring that educators and institutions have access to sufficient support, training, and materials are essential if inclusive education is to reach its full potential. By doing this, we can build a more effective and equitable educational environment that meets the various requirements of every student. Preservice teachers know inclusive education promotes equal opportunities for all students, irrespective of their abilities. This aligns with the principles of inclusive education, which emphasize equal access and participation for every learner. The search indicates that pre-service teacher training programs in India are successfully fostering awareness and understanding of inclusive education principles and policies. Research supports these findings, emphasizing the importance of experiential learning and the need for improved ICT integration in teacher education. For instance, studies have shown that pre-service teachers benefit from interactive teaching methods and practical exposure to inclusive settings, which enhance their understanding and preparedness. Additionally, while ICT-based courses are being developed, challenges remain in effectively integrating technology into teacher training programs. These challenges include inadequate training for educators on using technology effectively and a lack of resources in some institutions. To address these issues, it is crucial to implement comprehensive training programs that not only focus on the technical aspects of ICT but also emphasize pedagogical strategies for inclusive education. This approach will ensure that educators are well-equipped to create engaging and supportive learning environments for all students. Furthermore, collaboration between educational institutions and technology providers can lead to more tailored solutions that meet the diverse needs of learners. Learners. By fostering partnerships, educators can gain access to the latest tools and resources, allowing them to better adapt their teaching methods. This synergy can ultimately enhance the overall educational experience and promote equitable opportunities for every student. Every student deserves the chance to thrive, and by leveraging innovative technologies and collaborative efforts, we can break down barriers to education. As a result, a more inclusive and effective learning landscape can be developed, empowering all students to reach their full potential. Mostly pre-service teachers are capable of creating inclusive lesson plans and can adapt teaching methods to address varied student requirements. These future educators play a crucial role in fostering an environment where diversity is celebrated and every learner feels valued. By continuously refining their skills and embracing diverse pedagogical approaches, pre-service teachers can ensure that all students receive the support they need to succeed academically and socially. The data indicates that pre-service teacher training programs are effectively equipping future educators with the necessary skills and knowledge for inclusive education. High percentages in areas such as modifying teaching materials, understanding inclusive strategies, and recognizing individual differences demonstrate a strong foundation. The significant comprehension of inclusive practices during internships underscores the value of practical experience in teacher preparation. Continuous professional development and support are essential to address the remaining gaps and ensure all educators are fully equipped to meet the needs of diverse learners.

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