



Research Article

## Impact of Teacher-Trainees' Attitudes on the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Mandi Division, Himachal Pradesh

 Neelam Kumari <sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Anil Soni <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Education, Career Point University, Kota, Rajasthan, India

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Career Point University, Kota, Rajasthan, India

Corresponding Author: \*Neelam Kumari 

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### Abstract

This study examines how the attitudes of teacher-trainees influence the implementation of inclusive education in the Mandi Division of Himachal Pradesh. Drawing on policy documents, state reports, and a simulated cross-sectional survey (illustrative) of 180 teacher-trainees from B.Ed. and D.El.Ed. Institutes across Mandi Division, the paper investigates relationships between attitude (cognitive, affective, and behavioural components), practicum exposure, self-efficacy, and reported implementation behaviours in inclusive classrooms. The review of state initiatives (SCERT, Samagra Shiksha, special educator recruitment) provides contextual background. Simulated findings indicate generally positive attitudes (mean item score = 3.68/5), higher attitude scores among trainees with inclusive practicum, and a moderate positive correlation between inclusive-teaching self-efficacy and reported implementation of inclusive practices ( $r = .59$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The paper concludes with policy and teacher-education recommendations tailored to the Mandi Division's geographic and institutional realities. The empirical results are illustrative; placing real data in the presented framework is straightforward and recommended for a final submission.

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**KEYWORDS:** inclusive education, teacher-trainees, attitudes, implementation, Mandi Division, Himachal Pradesh.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education — the principle and practice of educating children with diverse abilities together in mainstream schools with appropriate supports — has become central to India's education agenda under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act (2016) and the National Education Policy (NEP, 2020). Realisation of inclusive education depends less on policy rhetoric and more on micro-level actors: teachers and future teachers whose attitudes, beliefs, and competencies shape classroom reality. In hilly regions such as Mandi Division (Himachal Pradesh), geography, small multi-grade schools, and resource constraints add implementation complexity; therefore, the attitudes of teacher-trainees—soon to join the teaching force—are particularly consequential for how inclusion unfolds on the ground.

This paper investigates the impact of teacher-trainees' attitudes on the implementation of inclusive education in Mandi Division. It combines a policy/institutional review of state actions (SCERT, Samagra Shiksha, special educator posts) with a structured empirical framework. Because the user requested a ready full-length academic paper, the empirical component below uses simulated but plausible data presented transparently; if you provide real survey data later, I will replace the simulations with exact analyses.

**Key questions addressed:** (1) What is the current policy and institutional context for inclusion in Himachal Pradesh and Mandi Division? (2) What are the prevailing attitudes among teacher-trainees toward inclusive classrooms? (3) How do attitudes relate to practicum exposure, self-efficacy, and reported implementation behaviours? (4) What recommendations can strengthen the bridge from positive attitudes to consistent, high-quality inclusive practice in Mandi Division?

## 2. Policy & Local Context (Himachal Pradesh — Mandi Division)

Himachal Pradesh has institutionalised inclusion through state bodies such as SCERT's Inclusive Education Cell and by implementing central schemes like Samagra Shiksha. SCERT Himachal operates special/inclusive education training programmes and district nodal structures that include Mandi as a coverage area. Samagra Shiksha provides programmatic funding and has supported the appointment/creation of posts for special educators at the state level. Recently (Aug 24, 2024), the Himachal Education Department notified the creation of 245 special-educator posts to be filled, reflecting an administrative commitment to strengthening human resources for inclusion.

UDISE and state statistical booklets show district-wise school structure and resource patterns; in Himachal, a notable share of small or single-teacher schools exists — a structural reality that affects how inclusive approaches can be operationalised in remote or hilly panchayats. Local initiatives in Mandi include NGOs and district institutions (e.g., Institution for Children with Special Abilities in Sundernagar) that collaborate on identification, assistive devices, and community mobilisation. These state and local frames create both opportunities (formal training channels, special-educator posts, assistive device

partnerships) and constraints (terrain, single-teacher schools, resource distribution) for implementation in Mandi Division.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 Attitudes and Inclusion

Attitudes toward inclusive education are multidimensional (beliefs, feelings, intended behaviours) and shape teachers' willingness to adapt instruction, collaborate with specialists, and persist with inclusive strategies (Florian, 2014; Ajzen, 1991). International and Indian studies consistently show that direct contact with learners with disabilities, targeted training, and practicum experiences improve attitudes and implementation readiness. Conversely, perceived lack of resources, large class sizes, and insufficient training reduce confidence and implementation effort.

### 3.2 Teacher Education & Practicum

Effective pre-service programmes combine theoretical coursework with supervised practicum in inclusive settings; the practicum experience is often the strongest predictor of later inclusive practice. SCERT and state-level teacher-education reforms emphasise such integration, but implementation varies by institution and region.

### 3.3 Contextual Studies from HP and Similar Regions

Studies in Indian hill regions and smaller states highlight that geography, multi-grade primary schools, and limited specialist availability pose distinct challenges for inclusion; cluster resource models and mobile support teams have been recommended as adaptive strategies. Evidence from regional research indicates that attitudes among pre-service teachers are positive in principle but hesitant regarding classroom-level adaptation absent practical support.

## 4. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### Objectives

1. To assess the attitudes of teacher-trainees in Mandi Division toward inclusive classrooms.
2. To examine the relationship between attitudes, practicum exposure, self-efficacy, and reported implementation behaviours
3. To identify constraints and enablers for translating trainee attitudes into sustained inclusive practice in Mandi Division.
4. To provide targeted recommendations for teacher education institutions, SCERT, and district authorities.

### Research Questions

1. What is the overall attitude level of teacher-trainees toward inclusive education in Mandi Division?
2. Do attitude scores differ by programme (B.Ed. vs D.El.Ed.), gender, or practicum exposure?
3. How do attitude and inclusive-teaching self-efficacy relate to self-reported implementation of inclusive practices?
4. What contextual barriers do trainees report that hinder the implementation of inclusive education in Mandi Division?

## 5. METHODOLOGY

### 5.1 Design

Cross-sectional descriptive study with quantitative survey and short open-ended qualitative prompts (mixed methods). Because this paper is meant as a complete template, the empirical figures presented below are **simulated** to illustrate analysis and reporting; they follow realistic distributions based on regional literature and state context. Replace with real data when available.

### 5.2 Sample (Simulated)

- **Population:** Teacher-trainees enrolled in B.Ed. and D.El.Ed. programmes in institutes located in Mandi Division (urban and rural campuses).
- **Sample size (simulated):** N = 180 (110 B.Ed., 70 D.El.Ed.). Gender: Female = 120, Male = 60. Practicum exposure in inclusive settings: Yes = 60 (33%), No = 120 (67%). Ages 20–30 (M = 23.1, SD = 2.4).
- **Sampling approach:** stratified convenience sampling across 6 institutes (2 urban, 4 rural) to reflect the distribution in the Mandi Division. For an actual study, cluster sampling across DIETs and private colleges is recommended for representativeness.

### 5.3 Instruments

**1. Attitudes to Inclusive Education Scale (AIES)** — 24 items, 5-point Likert (1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree). Subscales: cognitive (beliefs), affective (comfort), and behavioural intention (willingness to adapt). Higher scores = more positive attitudes. (Piloted earlier in similar contexts; Cronbach's  $\alpha$  in pilot = .86.)

**2. Inclusive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (ITSES)** — 8 items, 5-point Likert scale measuring confidence in differentiating instruction, classroom management, and using assistive supports.

**3. Implementation Behaviour Checklist (IBC)** — 10 self-report items on frequency of inclusive practices (use of differentiated tasks, collaboration with special educators, adapting materials — 0 = never to 4 = always).

**4. Background questionnaire** — demographics, prior experience with CwSN (children with special needs), practicum details, exposure to SCERT / NISHTHA / DIKSHA trainings.

**5. Open-ended prompts** — perceived barriers and supports for implementation in their local schools.

### 5.4 Procedure

With institutional permission (simulated), questionnaires were administered during scheduled sessions. Participation voluntary and anonymous. Data coded and analysed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, ANOVA, and Pearson correlations. Qualitative responses were coded thematically.

## 6. (Simulated) Results

**Note:** The numbers below are illustrative and intended to demonstrate how an empirical section should be written. Replace with real study data for publication.

### 6.1 Descriptive Statistics

**Attitude (AIES item mean):** M = 3.68, SD = 0.52 (range 1–5) — generally positive.

**Self-efficacy (ITSES mean):** M = 3.34, SD = 0.61 — moderate confidence.

**Implementation behaviour (IBC mean):** M = 2.95, SD = 0.70 — occasional to regular use of some inclusive practices.

Table 1: Mean attitude scores by group (simulated)

Group	N	Attitude Mean (item)	SD
Overall	180	3.68	0.52
B.Ed.	110	3.82	0.48
D.El.Ed.	70	3.44	0.50
Practicum (Yes)	60	4.05	0.36
Practicum (No)	120	3.46	0.47
Prior experience (Yes)	70	3.99	0.44
Prior experience (No)	110	3.53	0.50

### 6.2 Group Comparisons

**Programme:** Independent samples t-test (B.Ed. vs D.El.Ed.) shows B.Ed. trainees have significantly higher attitude scores ( $t(178) = 5.12, p < .001$ ).

**Practicum exposure:** Trainees with inclusive practicum reported higher attitudes ( $t(178) = 8.25, p < .001$ ) and higher reported implementation behaviours ( $t(178) = 7.90, p < .001$ ).

**Prior experience with CwSN:** Associated with higher attitude and self-efficacy scores ( $p < .001$ ).

### 6.3 Correlations

**Attitude ↔ Self-efficacy:** Pearson  $r = .59, p < .001$  (moderate positive).

**Attitude ↔ Implementation behaviours:**  $r = .54, p < .001$ .

**Self-efficacy ↔ Implementation behaviours:**  $r = .62, p < .001$ .

Interpretation: Trainees with more positive attitudes tend to report greater confidence and more frequent implementation of inclusive practices; self-efficacy is a strong predictor of implementation.

### 6.4 Qualitative Themes (from open-ended prompts)

Common barriers reported by trainees in Mandi Division:

**Resource constraints** (lack of adapted materials, assistive devices).

**Infrastructure/accessibility** (rural/hilly schools lacking ramps, transport).

**Single-teacher classrooms & multi-grade teaching** (makes individual attention difficult).

**Limited specialist support** (few visiting special educators; posts recently sanctioned but not yet fully recruited).

**Large classes and management concerns.**

Enablers mentioned:

**Practicum exposure** and supportive mentor teachers.

**SCERT trainings and DIET workshops**, when available.

**Community and parental involvement** were present.

These themes align with state-level evidence that while policy and sanctioned posts exist, on-ground realities vary by locality and school size.

## 7. DISCUSSION

### 7.1 Attitude as necessary but not sufficient

The simulated results mirror broader literature: teacher-trainees generally express positive attitudes toward inclusion, but positive attitudes alone do not automatically translate into comprehensive classroom implementation. Self-efficacy and practicum exposure are mediators — trainees who have hands-on experience and feel competent are more likely to adopt inclusive strategies regularly. This suggests a two-pronged approach: build favourable attitudes through awareness and coursework, and—critically—strengthen self-efficacy through supervised practice and accessible resources.

### 7.2 Programme differences (B.Ed. vs D.El.Ed.)

Higher attitude scores among B.Ed. trainees may reflect curricular differences (B.Ed. often contains more content on pedagogy and exposure to inclusive pedagogy, depending on the institution) or differential practicum placements. Policy action could standardise inclusion components across both B.Ed. and D.El.Ed. curricula and ensure mandatory inclusive practicum for all teacher education pathways. SCERT HP's Inclusive Education Cell can play a leading role in curriculum harmonisation and practicum guidelines.

### 7.3 Mandi Division-specific constraints

The Mandi Division's geography (hilly terrain) and prevalence of small or single-teacher schools make individualised supports and teacher collaboration difficult. Cluster resource teacher models, mobile resource teams, and tele-mentoring (low-bandwidth DIKSHA / NISHTHA modules) may be practical adaptations. Approved special educator posts, once recruited and strategically placed, could support clusters of schools.

### 7.4 From attitude to implementation — policy levers

State-level commitments (e.g., special educator posts, SCERT training) show political will; converting these into regular implementation in Mandi requires:

Rapid recruitment and cluster deployment of special educators;  
Mandatory supervised inclusive practicum integrated into teacher-education programmes;  
Investment in assistive devices and transport where necessary;  
Strengthened district monitoring to capture not just enrolment but learning outcomes and social participation for CwSN.

## 8. Recommendations

Drawing on the empirical framework and local realities, the following recommendations are proposed for Mandi Division stakeholders (District Education Office, SCERT HP, DIETs, teacher-education colleges):

**Mandate inclusive practicum:** Make a minimum period of supervised practicum in inclusive settings compulsory for B.Ed. and D.El.Ed. programmes, with reflective portfolios and mentor evaluation.

**Cluster resource teacher model:** Deploy special educators and resource teams at the cluster level (covering multiple small schools) so single-teacher schools can receive visiting specialist support.

**Fast-track recruitment & strategic deployment:** Prioritise hiring the 245 sanctioned special-educator posts and deploy

some specifically to Mandi's high-need clusters; monitor deployment and vacancies publicly.

**Build sustained self-efficacy:** Design longitudinal in-service modules (SCERT/DIET) combining micro-teaching, simulated case work, assistive tech use, and on-site mentoring to increase confidence.

**Assistive devices & accessibility grant:** Allocate small, targeted grants for ramps, accessible toilets, and basic assistive materials for schools in remote panchayats; partner with NGOs and ALIMCO for devices.

**Monitoring beyond enrolment:** Use UDISE+ plus district tracking to monitor retention, grade progression, learning outcomes (foundational literacy/numeracy), and social participation for CwSN in Mandi.

**Community engagement:** Strengthen parent-teacher associations' capacity to support home-based learning where required and reduce stigma through awareness drives.

**Research loop:** Conduct a full, representative empirical study replacing the simulated dataset here, using probabilistic sampling across DIETs, private colleges, and institutions serving Mandi Division to guide district policy.

## 9. Limitations

**Simulated data:** The empirical findings included here are illustrative; they demonstrate analysis structure but must be replaced by primary data for empirical claims.

**Sampling constraints (if replicated):** Small, stratified convenience samples limit generalisability; recommended follow-up is a representative district-level survey.

**Self-report measures:** Implementation behaviours were self-reported; classroom observations and mentor ratings would provide more objective measures.

## 10. CONCLUSION

Teacher-trainees' attitudes in Mandi Division are important predictors of future inclusive practice but operate in a larger ecosystem of practicum experience, self-efficacy, resources, and structural constraints. Positive attitudes are a promising foundation; converting them into consistent, high-quality inclusion requires deliberate practicum experiences, recruitment and cluster deployment of special educators, targeted infrastructure investments, and continuous mentoring. Given the state's policy traction (SCERT's Inclusive Education Cell, Samagra Shiksha funding lines, sanctioned special educator posts), the key is to operationalise these policy levers locally in Mandi Division so that trainees enter schools equipped and confident to implement inclusion, even in remote and multi-grade settings.

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#### About the corresponding author



**Neelam Kumari** is a Research Scholar in the Department of Education at Career Point University, Kota, Rajasthan, India. Her research focuses on contemporary issues in education, including inclusive practices, teaching methodologies, and policy analysis. She is actively engaged in academic research and contributes to educational development through scholarly work.