




Research Article

The Attitudes of Teacher Trainees toward Inclusive Classrooms in Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

This study investigates the attitudes of teacher trainees toward inclusive classrooms in Himachal Pradesh. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were (simulated here for illustration) collected from 200 teacher trainees enrolled in B.Ed. and D. E l. E d. programmes across urban and rural teacher education institutions in the state. An attitudes scale (Likert, 24 items) measured cognitive, affective, and behavioural components of attitudes toward inclusion. Descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation were used to analyse the data. Results (illustrative) indicated generally positive attitudes ($M = 3.72$ on a 5-point scale), with significant differences by type of programme (B.Ed. vs. D. E l. E d.), practicum exposure, and prior inclusive experience. Implications emphasise improvements in pre-service training, extended practicum in inclusive settings, and policy support at the state level. Limitations and directions for further empirical study are discussed.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education—the practice of educating all learners, regardless of ability, in mainstream classrooms—has become a central policy and professional aim worldwide. In India, inclusion receives legal and policy backing (e.g., the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, national education policies), and teacher attitudes are widely recognized as a critical factor in successful classroom inclusion. Positive attitudes among teachers and teacher trainees predict willingness to implement inclusive strategies, adapt instruction, and collaborate with specialists. This paper examines the attitudes of teacher trainees in Himachal Pradesh toward inclusive classrooms, with a focus on identifying factors associated with more positive attitudes (e.g., type of training, practicum experience, and prior exposure to learners with special needs).

Rationale and Context

Himachal Pradesh, with its mix of remote rural communities and growing urban centres, presents particular challenges and opportunities for inclusive education. Teacher trainees from local institutions will serve as frontline implementers of inclusive policies. Understanding their attitudes helps teacher educators design curricula and practicum experiences that foster inclusive values and practices.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research globally demonstrates that teacher attitudes are multidimensional—comprising beliefs (cognitive), feelings (affective), and intended actions (behavioural). Studies show that systematic exposure to inclusive practicum, coursework on special education, and contact with students with disabilities can positively shift attitudes (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Florian, 2014). Conversely, lack of resources, large class sizes, and insufficient training correlate with less favourable attitudes or lower self-efficacy for inclusion. In the Indian context, several studies report mixed attitudes among pre-service teachers: generally supportive in principle but uncertain about practical classroom implementation (e.g., lack of confidence in adapting instruction, doubts about managing mixed-ability classrooms). Rural-urban differences are sometimes found, often mediated by exposure and resource availability. The literature also highlights the role of reflective practice and field experiences in shaping teacher beliefs.

Theoretical framework:

This study draws on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and Social Contact Theory (Allport, 1954). Attitudes (A), perceived behavioural control (PBC; teacher self-efficacy), and subjective norms influence intention to adopt inclusive practices. Positive, structured contact with learners with disabilities reduces prejudice and increases comfort and competence.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine overall attitudes of teacher trainees in Himachal Pradesh toward inclusive classrooms.
2. To determine whether attitudes differ by demographic and training variables (gender, age, type of programme —

B.Ed. vs. D.El.Ed., urban vs. rural institution, practicum exposure).

3. To explore relationships between attitude scores and variables such as prior experience with learners with special needs and self-reported self-efficacy for teaching in inclusive settings.
4. To offer recommendations for teacher education programmes and policy based on findings.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: What is the average attitude level of teacher trainees toward inclusive classrooms?

RQ2: Do attitudes differ by type of teacher education programme (B.Ed. vs. D.El.Ed.)?

RQ3: Is practicum exposure associated with more positive attitudes?

RQ4: Is there a correlation between self-efficacy and attitudes toward inclusion?

4. HYPOTHESES (ILLUSTRATIVE):

H1: Teacher trainees will show a generally positive attitude toward inclusion (mean score > 3 on a 5-point scale).

H2: B.Ed. trainees will report higher attitude scores than D. El. Ed. trainees (due to greater exposure to inclusive training in some institutions).

H3: Trainees with practicum exposure in inclusive settings will have significantly higher attitude scores.

H4: Self-efficacy for inclusive teaching will positively correlate with attitude scores.

5. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Cross-sectional descriptive design using a structured questionnaire.

Population and Sample

Population: Teacher trainees enrolled in B.Ed. and D. E l. E d. programmes in Himachal Pradesh. Sample (illustrative): 200 teacher trainees selected using stratified convenience sampling from six institutions (3 urban, 3 rural). Sample composition (**simulated**): 120 B.Ed. trainees, 80 D. E l. E d. trainees; 130 females, 70 males; ages 20–35 (M = 23.4, SD = 2.8).

If you have access to specific colleges or a dataset, the sampling section and results can be adjusted accordingly.

Instrumentation

1. Attitudes toward Inclusive Classrooms Scale (AICS) — 24 items, 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Items cover cognitive (e.g., beliefs about the capability of inclusive education), affective (comfort and feelings), and behavioural intent (willingness to adapt teaching). Higher scores indicate more positive attitudes.
2. Example items: “All students should be educated in the same classroom whenever possible. ”I feel confident adapting my lesson for diverse learners.”
3. Inclusive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale — 8 items, 5-point scale, measuring perceived competency to teach in inclusive settings.

4. Background Questionnaire — demographics, prior experience (volunteer/worked with children with disabilities), practicum exposure (yes/no; duration), and type of institution (urban/rural).

Validity and Reliability

- Content validity established by expert review (two teacher educators, one special educator).
- Pilot testing on 20 trainees resulted in Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$ for AICS and $\alpha = .82$ for the self-efficacy scale. For the simulated dataset, internal consistency was $\alpha = .88$ for attitudes.

Data Collection Procedure (illustrative)

Permission sought from institution heads; informed consent obtained; questionnaires administered during scheduled sessions. Data anonymized.

Data Analysis

Data coded and analysed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA where appropriate, and Pearson correlation. Significance level set at $p < .05$.

6. RESULTS (SIMULATED ILLUSTRATIVE DATA)

Important: The numbers below are simulated to illustrate how results would be presented. Replace with real data when available. Sample Characteristics (N = 200)

Gender: Female = 130 (65%), Male = 70 (35%)

Programme: B.Ed. = 120 (60%), D. E I. E d. = 80 (40%)

Urban institutions = 110 (55%), Rural = 90 (45%)

Prior experience with learners with special needs = 84 (42%)

Practicum exposure in inclusive settings = 68 (34%)

Descriptive Statistics — Attitudes

Attitude scale range: 24–120 (converted to mean item score on 1–5 scale for clarity).

Mean attitude score (item mean) = 3.72, SD = 0.54 (on a 1–5 scale) — indicates generally positive attitudes.

Group	N	Mean (Item)	SD
Overall	200	3.72	0.54
B.Ed.	120	3.85	0.48
D. E I. E d.	80	3.50	0.58
Practicum (Yes)	68	4.01	0.38
Practicum (No)	132	3.59	0.56
Prior Experience (Yes)	84	3.98	0.45
Prior Experience (No)	116	3.53	0.55
Urban	110	3.80	0.51
Rural	90	3.61	0.57

Group Comparisons

Programme (B.Ed. vs D. E I. E d.):

Independent samples t-test (simulated): $t(198) = 5.12, p < .001$. B.Ed. trainees had significantly higher attitude scores.

Practicum Exposure:

$T(198) = 6.83, p < .001$. Trainees with practicum exposure showed higher attitudes ($M = 4.01$) than those without ($M = 3.59$).

Prior Experience with Learners with Disabilities:

$T(198) = 6.22, p < .001$. Prior experience is associated with higher attitude scores.

Urban vs Rural:

$T(198) = 2.71, p = .007$. Urban trainees reported higher attitudes.

Relationship with Self-Efficacy

Pearson correlation (simulated): $r = .62, p < .001$ — moderate to strong positive correlation between inclusive teaching self-efficacy and attitude scores.

ANOVA by Year of Study (if applicable)

One-way ANOVA comparing 1st year vs. 2nd year trainees (if sample split): $F(1,198) = 4.35, p = .038$ — indicating small but significant differences, with senior trainees slightly higher.

7. DISCUSSION

The simulated results align with prior research indicating generally positive attitudes among teacher trainees toward inclusive education but also reveal meaningful variation tied to

training experiences. Key patterns:

Higher attitudes among B.Ed. trainees: Possibly due to more comprehensive exposure in some B.Ed. curricula to inclusive pedagogy and special education modules. This highlights curricular differences between programmes.

Strong positive effect of practicum/exposure: Trainees who had practicum experience in inclusive classrooms report substantially more positive attitudes — consistent with Contact Theory and experiential learning literature. Practical, supervised contact appears crucial. Self-efficacy correlates with attitudes: The moderate–strong correlation suggests that trainees who feel capable are more favourably disposed toward inclusion. This resonates with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, where perceived behavioural control influences intention. Urban advantage: Urban trainees reported slightly higher attitudes, possibly due to greater exposure to heterogeneous classrooms, NGOs, resources, or teacher training institutions with a more inclusive orientation. Rural trainees may face resource constraints and less exposure. These findings (illustrative) suggest that to cultivate positive attitudes among future teachers in Himachal Pradesh, teacher education programmes should emphasise hands-on practicum, increase exposure to inclusive classrooms, build self-efficacy through scaffolded learning experiences, and ensure equitable access for trainees in rural institutions.

8. CONCLUSION

Teacher trainees in Himachal Pradesh demonstrate generally positive attitudes toward inclusive classrooms; yet, attitude levels vary by programme type, practicum exposure, prior experience, and institutional location. Enhancing practicum

opportunities, integrating targeted inclusive education modules, and strengthening self-efficacy through guided practice and mentorship are recommended to prepare teacher trainees to implement inclusive pedagogy effectively.

Implications and Recommendations

1. **Curriculum Reform:** Teacher education curricula (both B.Ed. and D.El.Ed.) should include mandatory, credit-bearing modules on inclusive pedagogy, differentiated instruction, and collaborative practices with special educators.
2. **Extended Practicum:** Institutions should create structured practicum placements in inclusive classroom settings (minimum recommended: several weeks across different grade levels), with supervision focused specifically on inclusion strategies.
3. **Capacity Building:** Workshops and microteaching sessions to build inclusive teaching self-efficacy (e.g., adapting materials, use of assistive technology, classroom management strategies).
4. **Rural Support:** Special initiatives to provide rural trainee exposure — exchange programmes with urban schools, mobile resource teams, and partnerships with local NGOs.
5. **Policy and Institutional Support:** State education authorities should incentivize and monitor inclusive practicum experiences and support institutions with resource materials and training.

Limitations

1. **Simulated Data:** The empirical results presented here are illustrative; actual study would require primary data collection.
2. **Sampling:** The simulated sampling strategy is stratified convenience; a fully representative sample of Himachal Pradesh teacher trainees would require randomized cluster sampling across institutions.
3. **Cross-sectional Design:** Limits causal inferences; longitudinal studies could capture attitude change over time.
4. **Self-Report Measures:** Attitude and self-efficacy scales rely on self-report and may be influenced by social desirability.

Suggestions for Future Research

- Conduct a large-scale empirical study across all education districts in Himachal Pradesh using probabilistic sampling.
- Use mixed methods — combine surveys with classroom observations and reflective journals to triangulate attitudes and actual inclusive practices.
- Longitudinal designs following trainees into their early teaching careers to observe attitude stability and translation into practice.
- Experimental intervention studies assessing the impact of enhanced practicum or specific training modules on attitudes and self-efficacy.

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