INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS IN THE ERA OF INTERNATIONALIZATION: A MIXED-METHOD STUDY ON TEACHER READINESS AND PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES UNDER NEP 2020

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Abstract

Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study investigates how pre-service and in-service teachers develop and apply pedagogical strategies to support inclusive education, within the guiding framework of NEP 2020. A systematic questionnaire and open-ended reflections were filled out by 160 participants, who were both pre-service and in-service teachers. The quantitative findings reveal generally positive attitudes and a moderate level of readiness among participants, supported by high internal consistency across the measured variables (Cronbach's α = 0.75–0.89). Qualitative themes that emphasised hands-on engagement, cultural sensitivity, inclusive behaviours, and institutional inadequacies supported these findings. Triangulated research highlights that in order to foster inclusion in Indian classrooms, ongoing training, school-level support, and digital accessibility are essential.

These findings, which emphasise inclusive abilities crucial to internationally relevant teacher preparation, help India become more in line with worldwide education goals.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, NEP 2020, Pre-service Teachers, In-service Teachers, Internationalization, Mixed-Method Research, Teacher Readiness, Policy Implementation

Introduction:

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which prioritises equity, accessibility, and pedagogical innovation, is centred on inclusive education. Teachers are the major agents of inclusion, and their attitudes and preparedness create the classroom climate (Sharma & Sokal, 2015). Using a mixed-method approach, this study explores the perceptions of pre-service and in-service teachers in order to provide deeper insights for practice and policy. India's education vision is in line with international agreements like SDG-4 and Education for All with NEP 2020. Efforts to internationalise education by preserving the principles of access, quality, and global citizenship are closely related to the emphasis on equity and inclusion.

Review of Literature:

In line with earlier studies, teacher attitudes are crucial to effective inclusive education (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Although they face implementation challenges, India's evolving

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policies, such as the RTE Act and NEP 2020, promote inclusive practices (Jha, 2020). Research indicates that although training raises awareness, there are still gaps in classroom techniques, school-level assistance, and digital readiness (Kalyanpur, 2008; Pandey, 2019). Furthermore, international frameworks support inclusion as a means of achieving global academic standards and educational diplomacy, in addition to being a pedagogical principle. Inclusive readiness has emerged as both a local imperative and a global priority, particularly as the Indian education system advances toward internationalisation.

Methodology:

A mixed-method approach was adopted:

- Quantitative Tool: A 40-item Likert-scale questionnaire across 8 dimensions (Bias, Cultural Sensitivity, Digital Literacy, Mental Health, Engagement, Support, Strategies, Attitudes).
- Qualitative Tool: 6 open-ended questions exploring classroom practices and beliefs.
- Sample: 160 participants (almost equal numbers of in-service and pre-service teachers) from schools in Mumbai and Thane. This design enabled a comparative perspective on how India's teacher preparation aligns with global trends in inclusive education.

Results:

1. Quantitative Analysis

The data reflects consistently favorable perceptions across all dimensions, with strong internal reliability ($\alpha > 0.75$). Highest scores were observed in Cultural Sensitivity and Engagement Strategies, indicating teachers' awareness and efforts in inclusive classroom implementation.

Table 1: Dimension-wise Mean, SD, and Reliability

Dimension	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Teacher Bias and Stereotypes	4.04	0.68	0.75
Cultural and Gender Sensitivity	4.14	0.62	0.829
Digital Literacy and Inclusivity	3.89	0.67	0.811
Mental Health Considerations	4.04	0.65	0.873
Community and Parental Engagement	3.87	0.73	0.889
School Support and Professional Development	3.9	0.67	0.855
Classroom Strategies and Student Engagement	4.12	0.64	0.893
Teacher Attitude and Beliefs	4.1	0.67	0.883

Table 2: Mean Scores by Teacher Type

Dimension	Pre-Service Mean	In-Service Mean
Teacher Bias and Stereotypes	3.99	4.1
Cultural and Gender Sensitivity	4.15	4.12
Digital Literacy and Inclusivity	3.92	3.85
Mental Health Considerations	4.02	4.07
Community and Parental Engagement	3.88	3.86

School Support and Professional Development	3.92	3.87
Classroom Strategies and Student Engagement	4.09	4.16
Teacher Attitude and Beliefs	4.08	4.12

The comparison reveals that in-service teachers feel slightly more confident in classroom strategies and mental health responsiveness, whereas pre-service teachers lean ahead in cultural sensitivity and digital integration. This highlight differentiated training needs for each group.

2. **Qualitative Analysis**

The qualitative data complements the quantitative trends. High-frequency themes such as multimedia use (72 mentions), inclusive pedagogy (49 mentions), and cultural responsiveness (63 mentions) suggest that participants are not only aware of inclusive principles but are also applying them in contextually rich ways.

Table 3: Thematic Coding with Mentions and Sample Quotes

Question	Theme/Code	Mentions	Sample Quote
Question 1 Teaching Adaptation	Inclusive Practices	49	As a pre-service teacher, I adapt my teaching by using culturally relevant examples, gender-neutral language, and inclusive materials. I make available visual aids, basic instructions, and peer backing. I work on creating a safe, respectful and loving space for my students
Question 1 Teaching Adaptation	Cultural Responsiveness	63	As a pre-service teacher, I adapt my teaching by using culturally relevant examples, gender-neutral language, and inclusive materials. To support children with learning difficulties in my classroom, I employ visual aids, deliver simplified instructions sequentially, and facilitate peer-assisted learning.
Question 2 Technology Use	Assistive Tech	44	For students with special needs, I use tools like text-to-speech, speech-to-text, and educational games that build skills in an engaging, accessible way.
Question 2 Technology Use	Multimedia Tools	72	Ppt, or audio-visual equipment
Question 3 Institutional Support	Supportive Leadership	29	Supportive institutional policies, access to resource rooms, and guidance from special educators have helped me implement inclusion

Question 3 Institutional Support	Barriers	49	Supportive leadership, resource availability, and regular training have helped inclusion, while lack of specialized staff and limited infrastructure sometimes hinder it.
Question 4 Engagement Strategies	Hands-on Learning	31	Hands on toys, clay, picture books
Question 4 Engagement Strategies	Differentiation	24	Flexible choice of subjects
Question 5 Training Beliefs	Growth Through Training	61	Through my training, I've learned that inclusive education is not just about accommodating differences, but about celebrating them. I now see inclusion as a mindset—focusing on equity, flexibility in teaching, and ensuring every child, regardless of their disabilities
Question 5 Training Beliefs	Need for More Training	41	I feel I need more training on this.
Question 6 Inclusion Readiness	Positive Outlook	69	I believe implementing inclusion in regular schools is essential for building empathy and equality. While I feel more prepared through my training, I know continuous learning is needed. To improve inclusion, schools should provide regular teacher training
Question 6 Inclusion Readiness	Need for Improvement	74	I believe implementing inclusion in regular schools is essential for building empathy and equality. While I feel more prepared through my training, I know continuous learning is needed.

Discussion:

Quantitative scores reflected high agreement across all eight dimensions (M = 3.87–4.14, SD ≈ 0.6–0.7), with the strongest mean scores observed in Classroom Strategies (M = 4.12), Cultural Sensitivity (M = 4.14), and Attitudes and Beliefs (M = 4.10). Group-wise analysis revealed that in-service teachers reported greater confidence in classroom strategies (M = 4.16), while pre-service teachers scored higher on digital inclusivity (M = 3.92) and cultural sensitivity (M = 4.15). Qualitative data reinforced these findings: 63 references to cultural responsiveness, 72 to multimedia technology, and 61 acknowledging training impact. Notably, 74 reflections

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called for more support and ongoing professional development. This triangulation underscores that while foundational attitudes are strong, systemic support and structured training must be amplified for the NEP's inclusive agenda to resonate with international standards of education. These findings also expose a policy-to-practice gap in school-based support, highlighting the need for NEP 2020 implementation mechanisms that are globally benchmarked and locally responsive.

Conclusion & Recommendations:

This study emphasises teachers' growing proficiency in creating inclusive classrooms, but it also calls for:

- Ongoing professional development with an emphasis on digital inclusion and mental health;
- Administrative assistance to close the gap between policy and practice
- Fostering mentoring and peer learning opportunities between pre-service and in-service teachers serves as a strategic approach to bridging theoretical knowledge with practical classroom experience, while promoting collaborative professional growth.

NEP-aligned classrooms must place a strong emphasis on both mindset and method. Teaching inclusive pedagogies to teachers is essential as India establishes itself as a global center for education. This is true not just for domestic reform but also for internationalization and conformity to international norms. A wider dedication to education as a fundamental right and a transformative tool is indicated by the convergence of inclusive education and international principles. Empowering teachers through inclusive education serves as a vital catalyst for fostering transformative and equitable change within the educational landscape.

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