Pre-service Teachers' (B.Ed. Students) Perspectives on Inclusive Education: A Case Study of Teacher Education Colleges in Chapra (Bihar)

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this study entitled, **"Pre-Service Teachers' (B.Ed. Students) Perspectives on Inclusive Education: A Case Study of Teacher Education Colleges in Chapra (Bihar)"** has been carried out by me during the academic years 2022-2024 in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Two-Year M.Ed. Course of Barkatullah University, Bhopal (M.P.).

This study has been conducted under the guidance and supervision of **Dr. Rajesh Kumar,** Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Regional Institute of Education (NCERT), Bhopal (M.P.).

I hereby declare that the research work done by me is original. This dissertation has not been submitted by me for the award of any degree or diploma in any Institute / University.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that **MANISHA UPADHYAY** student of Two-Year M.Ed. Course in the year **2022-2024** of Regional Institute of Education, Bhopal has worked under my guidance and supervision for her dissertation **"Pre-Service Teachers' (B.Ed. Students) Perspectives on Inclusive Education: A Case Study of Teacher Education Colleges in Chapra (Bihar)"**. This piece of research work is genuine and ready for submission and evaluation.

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Chapter: 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Education is widely recognised as a fundamental human right and a powerful driver of social change. Inclusive education – the practice of educating students of all abilities and backgrounds together in mainstream classrooms – has gained significant importance in recent decades as societies strive for equity and "Education for All." According to the Salamanca Statement (1994), schools should **"accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions"**, reaffirming the right of every child to education within a single, inclusive system. This vision of inclusion reflects a global consensus that educational systems must adapt to *students' diverse needs* rather than expect learners to fit rigid structures. International frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) further cement the principle that children with disabilities should learn alongside peers without disabilities in regular schools, with appropriate support. In essence, inclusive education is about restructuring school cultures, policies, and practices so that they respond to the variability of all learners.

India, home to one of the largest education systems in the world, has embraced the idea of inclusive education at the policy level. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016 defines inclusive education as *"a system of education wherein students with and without disability learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities"*. This definition underscores two critical aspects: learning together in a common environment, and adapting pedagogy to meet different needs. India's commitment to inclusion is evident in constitutional provisions and legislation. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 guarantees free, compulsory education to all children aged 6–14, and was amended in 2012 to explicitly cover children with disabilities up to 18 years of age. Likewise, the RPWD Act (2016) mandates that educational institutions provide inclusive opportunities, including accessible infrastructure, individualized support services, and teacher training for inclusive education. Through programs like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the newer Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, the government has launched initiatives to improve school access and quality for children with special needs, such as provisioning of aids,

appliances, and resource teachers. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 further reinforces inclusive education, calling for *"barrier-free access"* to education for all children, the appointment of special educators, and the promotion of inclusive pedagogies and assessment practices. These policy measures illustrate a strong normative framework supporting inclusion.

Despite these commitments, *translating policy into practice* remains challenging. India's education system still faces a significant inclusion gap on the ground. As of the 2011 Census, there were 7.86 million children with disabilities in India (roughly 1.7% of the child population). However, a UNESCO-supported report noted that *only about 61% of children with disabilities aged 5–19 years were attending any educational institution, compared to 71% of all children in that age group*. Alarmingly, approximately **27% of children with disabilities have never attended school**, a rate much higher than the 17% among the general child population. These statistics highlight that a large number of children with special needs are still being left behind. In Bihar state in particular, the challenges are pronounced – socio-economic disadvantages, rural-urban disparities, and resource constraints can exacerbate exclusion. A 2019 UNESCO report emphasized that three-fourths of five-year-old children with disabilities in India do not attend educational institutions at all. The problem is not merely one of access; even among those enrolled, many do not progress to higher levels of schooling, and dropout rates remain high for students with special needs. This scenario underscores the urgency of effective inclusive education practices in classrooms. It also suggests that *teachers* – who are the primary implementers of inclusion – play a pivotal role in determining whether these children are meaningfully included or only nominally enrolled.

Teachers are at the heart of inclusive education. It is widely acknowledged that the attitudes, knowledge, and skills of teachers can make or break inclusive initiatives in schools. If teachers are well-prepared and positively inclined towards inclusion, they can create supportive learning environments where all students thrive. Conversely, if teachers lack awareness or harbour negative attitudes, they may consciously or unconsciously become barriers to inclusion. Research across contexts has shown that teacher attitudes are often one of the biggest hurdles to implementing inclusive classroom practices. In the specific context of India, the challenge is multifaceted – many teachers have never received formal training in inclusive strategies, resources in classrooms are limited, and there may be deep-rooted misconceptions about the capabilities of children with disabilities or other marginalised groups. **Bihar**, being one of India's educationally lagging states in some indicators, faces added difficulties such as larger class sizes, scarcity of special educators, and infrastructural shortcomings in schools. Chapra (Saran district of Bihar), the focus of this case

study, is no exception. It is against this backdrop that understanding the perspective of *pre-service teachers* – those currently training to become educators – becomes critically important. These future teachers will soon be at the forefront of classrooms and will carry the responsibility of actualising inclusive education ideals.

1.2 Inclusive Education: Concept and Importance

Inclusive education extends beyond merely placing students with disabilities in regular classrooms; it is about transforming the education system to respond to *all* learners' needs. According to UNESCO (1994), inclusive education is a process aimed at offering **"learning opportunities for all children within the regular education system by removing barriers to and within learning"**. This concept implies that differences among students (whether in ability, ethnicity, language, gender, socio-economic background, or any other characteristic) should be acknowledged and valued within the classroom. In an inclusive setup, *every* child is to feel welcomed, supported, and able to learn from the common curriculum, albeit with necessary adaptations or support services as required. UNICEF similarly defines inclusive education as meaning **"all children in the same classrooms, in the same schools… real learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been excluded"**, noting that inclusive systems value the unique contributions of students of all backgrounds and allow diverse groups to grow together for the benefit of all. In practical terms, inclusive education requires changes such as modifying teaching methods, providing additional learning aids or assistive technology, ensuring physical accessibility, and fostering a positive school climate that celebrates diversity.

The importance of inclusive education is rooted in principles of social justice, human rights, and educational effectiveness. By educating children together, inclusive education aims to break down stereotypes and build a more cohesive society where differences are respected. It helps all students develop empathy, cooperative skills, and positive attitudes towards diversity from an early age. For children with disabilities or other special needs, inclusive education provides access to the same educational opportunities as others, improving their academic and social outcomes in comparison to segregated schooling. At the same time, inclusive classrooms benefit typically developing children by enriching their learning experience – they learn to appreciate multiple perspectives and to assist peers, which can enhance their own mastery and interpersonal skills. Inclusive education is also seen as cost-effective and sustainable: rather than maintaining parallel systems of special schools, resources can be invested in one robust system that serves all learners. Perhaps most importantly,

inclusive education aligns with the moral imperative that *no child should be excluded* or discriminated against in education. As India strives to achieve its Sustainable Development Goal of inclusive and equitable quality education for all (SDG4), strengthening inclusive practices in every school becomes a key strategy.

In India's context, inclusive education takes on additional significance because of the country's vast diversity and historical disparities. Inclusion here not only refers to disability but also to other forms of marginalisation – such as gender, caste, minority status, language barriers, and poverty. India's classrooms often reflect the broad spectrum of society, and inclusive education in the Indian milieu must address multiple overlapping disadvantages. For instance, a child who is from a low-income family, belonging to a scheduled caste community, and who has a mild visual impairment faces a complex of challenges in accessing education. An inclusive approach in such a case would require the teacher to be sensitive to socio-economic hardships, cognisant of caste-based exclusion, and equipped to provide assistive tools for vision support – all within the regular classroom. This comprehensive view of inclusion aligns with India's *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (Education for All Movement) and the NEP 2020's broadened definition of inclusivity, which includes not just children with disabilities but also those from *"socio-economically disadvantaged groups"* in its ambit. In short, inclusive education is integral to India's goal of universalising education and improving its quality; without inclusion, the goal of true universality, accessibility and equity remains elusive.

1.3 Teacher Education and Inclusive Education in India

Recognising that teachers are the agents who bring inclusion to life in classrooms, India's education planners have increasingly turned attention to the preparation of teachers for inclusive education. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) 2009 highlighted that teachers need to be **"highly skilled and accountable"** in creating a congenial atmosphere for all learners, calling for teacher education programs to equip prospective teachers with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions required for inclusive classrooms. This means that *pre-service teacher education curricula* should include components on understanding diverse learners, adapting pedagogy to different learning needs, managing classrooms with heterogeneity, and collaborating with special educators or professionals. In line with this, since 2014 the Indian government (through NCTE regulations) mandated a course on inclusive education (often titled "Creating an Inclusive School") in the two-year B.Ed. curriculum across universities. For example, universities such as

Delhi University, Mumbai University, and many others introduced compulsory papers on inclusive education in their B.Ed programs (usually in the second year or final semester). These courses typically cover disability awareness, inclusive teaching strategies, and relevant legislations. The intent is that by the time student-teachers graduate, they have at least foundational knowledge about inclusive education principles.

However, the reality of teacher education for inclusion in India still faces shortcomings. Studies have found that many B.Ed graduates still feel unprepared to implement inclusion in real classrooms. Often, the curriculum content on inclusive education is theoretical, lacking adequate field exposure or practical training. B.Ed students may learn definitions and policies but may not have opportunities to **interact with children with disabilities** or practice inclusive teaching methods during their training. For instance, a survey of 100 pre-service teachers in Delhi University revealed that while the vast majority (over 80%) had encountered special needs students during their practice teaching, a significant proportion felt only "slightly" or "moderately" confident about teaching in an inclusive classroom. Many expressed a need for additional training specifically focused on inclusion. Another study by Rajak and Gupta (2022) examining attitudes and self-efficacy of 154 pre-service teachers in Bihar found that overall attitudes were favourable, yet the authors emphasize an *"urgent need to provide the support system for training in inclusive practices"*. This suggests that even when attitudes are positive, practical competence might lag behind. Common gaps identified in teacher preparation include insufficient coursework on differentiated instruction, minimal focus on assistive technologies, and a lack of content on managing behavioural or learning difficulties in general classrooms.

In Bihar specifically, the challenge of teacher preparation is compounded by resource constraints. The state has been making efforts – for example, the Bihar government recently moved to hire over 7,000 special educators to support inclusive classrooms, and the Bihar Education Project Council had earlier developed short-term training modules (like the *Samarth* program in mid-2000s) to sensitize teachers on inclusive education. Additionally, DIETs and teacher training colleges in Bihar have begun integrating inclusive education topics in their in-service training sessions. Despite these steps, evaluations by educational NGOs indicate that many teachers in Bihar's schools still lack awareness and skills for inclusive teaching. Teachers often cite large class sizes, lack of instructional materials, and rigid curricula as barriers to giving individualized attention to children

with special needs. These issues highlight that pre-service teacher education must be bolstered so that new teachers enter the profession better equipped to handle diversity.

Ultimately, the success of inclusive education hinges on teachers who are not only competent in subject matter and pedagogy, but also *emotionally and attitudinally committed* to the philosophy of inclusion. Teacher education institutions carry the responsibility of nurturing this commitment. By focusing on the next generation of teachers – the B.Ed students currently in training – we can gauge how well our teacher education system is instilling the values and competencies of inclusive education. Their perspectives can illuminate both strengths and blind spots in current preparation programs.

1.4 Rationale and Significance of the Study

The rationale for conducting this study stems from the recognition that sustainable inclusive education reform must begin with teacher preparation. Pre-service teachers are at a formative stage where attitudes can be shaped and skills can be built. By focusing on B.Ed students in Chapra, this research aims to provide insights that are both locally relevant and broadly informative. Chapra and similar areas in Bihar have their unique socio-cultural context; teachers here will face different realities (such as multilingual classrooms, higher rates of poverty, limited special education resources) compared to their counterparts in metropolitan areas. Hence, it is significant to document how aspiring teachers in such a context perceive inclusive education. This study can help identify whether the current teacher education programs in Chapra's colleges are adequately addressing inclusive education or if there are gaps that need attention.

From a policy and institutional perspective, the findings of this research will be valuable for teacher training institutions, curriculum designers, and educational authorities in Bihar. If the study finds, for example, that pre-service teachers have only superficial understanding of inclusive strategies, the state's teacher education curriculum might need revamping with more robust content on inclusion. If attitudinal issues or anxieties are prevalent, mentorship programs or sensitisation workshops could be introduced. The study's significance also lies in giving *voice* to pre-service teachers – by capturing their perspectives, challenges, and suggestions, the research ensures that the experiences of those who are often the implementers (but rarely the decision-makers) inform the conversation on inclusive education implementation. Moreover, this case study can contribute to the academic literature by adding data from a part of India that is under-represented in research. Much

of the literature on teacher attitudes in India has focused on regions like Delhi, Maharashtra, or the southern states. By studying Chapra, we gain insight into the situation in the Hindi heartland, which might resonate with other low-resource settings.

Finally, the significance extends to the ultimate beneficiaries – students in schools. When teachers are well-prepared and positively inclined, students with disabilities and other learning needs are more likely to receive quality education. Conversely, if new teachers enter the workforce ill-equipped for inclusion, students requiring support might continue to be excluded in subtle ways (even if they are physically present in classrooms). Thus, this study, in shining a light on pre-service teacher preparedness, is indirectly aimed at improving the educational experiences of children who have historically been marginalised. In summary, the rationale for this study is grounded in the urgent need to strengthen the foundation of inclusive education through teacher preparation, and its significance lies in the potential to inform targeted improvements in policy, practice, and further research.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What is the current level of awareness and conceptual understanding of inclusive education among pre-service teachers in Chapra's B.Ed colleges?
2. What are the attitudes of these pre-service teachers towards inclusive education and inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream classrooms?
3. How prepared do pre-service teachers feel to implement inclusive teaching strategies, and in which areas (if any) do they lack confidence?
4. What challenges or barriers do pre-service teachers anticipate when they think about executing inclusive education in real classrooms?
5. Are there differences in perspectives on inclusive education between male and female B.Ed students, or between students from the two different colleges studied?

1.6 Statement of the Problem

The problem is stated as: "**Pre-service Teachers' (B.Ed. Students) Perspectives on Inclusive Education: A Case Study of Teacher Education Colleges in Chapra (Bihar)**".

1.7 Operational Definition of Key Terms

Pre-service Teachers': This refers to the students who are pursuing Bachelor of Education programme of study.

Perspectives: This refers to the overall attitude, acceptance, know how and understanding regarding Inclusive Education and its need among the students.

Inclusive Education: This refers to a system of education where all children — regardless of their physical, mental, social, or economic conditions — learn together in the same classroom, receiving equal opportunities, support, and respect. It emphasizes removing barriers to learning and ensuring the full participation of every learner.

1.8 Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following main objectives:

1. To assess the level of awareness and understanding of inclusive education among pre-service teachers in teacher education colleges of Chapra.
2. To examine the attitudes of B.Ed students towards inclusive education, particularly their willingness to include children with diverse needs (such as disabilities or learning difficulties) in regular classrooms and their beliefs about the outcomes of such inclusion.
3. To evaluate the self-perceived preparedness and self-efficacy of pre-service teachers for implementing inclusive practices.
4. To identify the challenges and concerns that pre-service teachers anticipate in the implementation of inclusive education.
5. To explore any notable differences in perspectives based on selected demographics

1.9 Delimitations of the Study

- Study has been delimited to Chapra (District Headquarters of Saran District, Bihar)
- Study has been delimited to two Teacher Training colleges.
- Study has been delimited to only final year B.Ed. students.

Chapter 2:

Review of Literature

2.1 Global Commitments and Frameworks for Inclusive Education

The concept of inclusive education has been championed globally for several decades, supported by major international declarations and frameworks. A milestone in this movement was the **World Conference on Special Needs of Education** held in Salamanca, Spain in 1994, which produced the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action. The Salamanca Statement called upon all governments to adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools unless there were compelling reasons for doing otherwise. It emphasized that schools should accommodate all children "*regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions*". Over 90 governments, including India, signed this Statement, signalling broad international commitment. The Salamanca Framework for Action outlined that inclusive schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, and achieving education for all; moreover, it argued that such schools can improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.

Subsequent global initiatives built on this foundation. In 2000, the World Education Forum in Dakar reaffirmed the goal of Education for All (EFA), which implicitly included children with disabilities and other marginalised groups. The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**, adopted in 2006, explicitly addressed education. Article 24 of UNCRPD stipulates that states must ensure an inclusive education system at all levels – persons with disabilities should not be excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and children with disabilities should have access to inclusive, quality, and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in their communities. This has been a powerful driver for countries to reform their laws to support inclusion. Globally, many countries have embedded the right to inclusive education in national legislation following UNCRPD ratification.

Another important global framework is the **2030 Sustainable Development Agenda**, specifically **Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4)**, which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." Indicator 4.5 focuses on equity in

education, and inclusion of persons with disabilities is a key element. International agencies like UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank have launched initiatives to assist countries in implementing inclusive education. For instance, UNICEF's Global Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI) has researched the barriers preventing children with disabilities from attending school and advocated strategies to overcome them. Such efforts highlight that inclusive education is not just a matter of philosophy but also of practical planning – identifying out-of-school children, adapting infrastructure, training teachers, and monitoring progress.

It's also instructive to consider how different regions approach inclusive education. In many Western countries, the push for inclusion began in the 1970s and 1980s with the integration or "mainstreaming" movements and evolved into more holistic inclusion policies by the 1990s. For example, the United States' **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**, first passed in 1975 (as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act) and amended multiple times (notably in 2004), guarantees children with disabilities the right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). This has resulted in a continuum of services, with a strong preference for educating children in regular classrooms with necessary supports. In the UK and other European countries, similar legal mandates exist, and bodies like the **European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education** facilitate sharing of best practices among member countries. Developing countries have also increasingly embraced inclusion, though with varying degrees of implementation success. Countries like Brazil and South Africa, for instance, have made inclusive education a national policy focus, sometimes in tandem with broader social inclusion policies.

Key theoretical perspectives underpinning inclusive education globally include the social model of disability and the philosophy of "normalization." The social model, in contrast to the medical model, posits that disability is not an inherent deficiency in the individual but rather a result of barriers created by society. This perspective shifts the focus to removing barriers (physical, curricular, attitudinal) in schools so that children with differences can participate fully. Normalization, a concept that emerged from Scandinavian disability rights advocates, argues that people with disabilities should have life conditions and routines as close as possible to the norms of mainstream society – including going to the neighborhood school. These ideas have fed into inclusive education policies by emphasizing rights, equality, and the need to reform systems rather than "fix" individuals. Overall, the global discourse on inclusive education establishes that inclusion is both an educational and a social imperative. The next sections will examine how these

global ideals have been reflected in the Indian context and what progress and challenges have been documented in literature.

2.2 Inclusive Education in India: Policies and Legislative Framework

India's journey towards inclusive education has been a gradual evolution, moving from segregated schooling models to integrated education and now towards inclusion. In the 1970s and 1980s, the focus was on establishing special schools and launching pilot programs for integrated education (such as the Integrated Education for Disabled Children scheme in 1974). A significant policy shift came with the **National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986** (and its Program of Action 1992), which for the first time gave official encouragement to integrating children with mild disabilities into regular schools and emphasized the education of those with severe disabilities in special schools. The NPE stated that *"where feasible, the education of children with motor handicaps and other mild handicaps will be in regular schools"*, reflecting an early integration approach.

Legislatively, a landmark was the **Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995** (often called the PwD Act 1995). This law explicitly stressed inclusive schooling. It stated that *"the appropriate governments and local authorities shall ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till he attains the age of 18"*, thereby endorsing the principle that children with disabilities should be educated in environments that are as close to normal as possible. The Act mandated measures like the removal of architectural barriers in schools, supply of assistive devices, and provision of special educators. Another significant development was the establishment of the **Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) Act 1992**, which professionalized special education training – it requires that special educators and related personnel be trained and registered, and in doing so, it set standards for teacher training curriculum related to special needs. The RCI has since played a role in standardizing B.Ed. special education courses and also contributes to inclusive education efforts by upgrading skills of educators.

The **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE)**, 2009 is perhaps the most powerful legal mandate for inclusive education in India's recent history. RTE made education a fundamental right for all children aged 6–14. Although initially RTE did not explicitly mention children with disabilities (since disability fell under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment at that time), a 2012 amendment brought children with disabilities into the ambit of

RTE up to age 18, aligning with the PwD Act's provisions. The integration of RTE and disability rights meant that neighborhood schools became responsible for admitting and accommodating children with disabilities, with no denial of admission on any grounds. It also placed the onus on schools to have trained teachers and accessible infrastructure. Complementary to RTE, the **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** – launched in 2001 as India's flagship program to universalize elementary education – had a specific component for *inclusive education for children with special needs (CWSN)*. Under SSA, every district received resources to identify CWSN, provide them assistive devices, medical rehabilitation if needed, and even home-based education for severely disabled children. SSA claimed success in bringing large numbers of CWSN into schools (reporting over 2 million such enrolments by the mid-2010s), though critics noted that "enrolment" did not always translate to meaningful participation.

A transformative update to the legislative landscape was the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016**, which replaced the 1995 Act. The RPWD Act expanded the recognised categories of disabilities from 7 to 21, incorporating autism spectrum disorder, specific learning disabilities, mental illness, and others, which had implications for schools (they would now likely have students with these conditions identified). Importantly, RPWD 2016 includes a dedicated section on education, mandating governments and local authorities to ensure inclusive education. It requires that *"the education of persons with disabilities is an integral part of the general education system"* and calls for specific measures such as: adapting curriculum and examination systems to meet diverse needs, providing training to teachers in inclusive strategies, establishing resource centers, and promoting research in inclusive education techniques. It also outlaws discrimination in admissions. As previously noted, RPWD 2016 aligns with UNCRPD, reflecting a rights-based approach. The Act also charges regulatory bodies like the **National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE)** to develop training programs for teachers on inclusive education – thereby acknowledging that teacher preparation is key to implementation.

In recent policy discourse, the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** marks a paradigm shift by weaving inclusivity throughout its recommendations. NEP 2020 not only addresses disability inclusion (e.g., calling for *"barrier free access"*to education for all children with disabilities, supplying appropriate technology, and having *"special educators for every school complex"*), but also broadens the concept to include gender equity (through a Gender Inclusion Fund), equity for socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), and inclusive pedagogies that respect multicultural and multilingual needs. It endorses the idea of an inclusive school curriculum that

reflects the needs of children in diverse contexts, and importantly for teacher education, it advocates that all B.Ed programs include training in *"teaching children with disabilities or special needs"* as a core unit.

To implement these policies, various national and state-level schemes are in operation. The **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan**, launched in 2018 by merging SSA, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Teacher Education schemes, continues to fund inclusive education interventions from pre-primary to higher secondary. Under Samagra Shiksha, schools are supported to provide resources like Braille books, accessible labs, therapists, etc., and each district is encouraged to have at least one model inclusive school. Additionally, initiatives like the **Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS)** scheme (a component under RMSA) aimed to assist students with disabilities at the secondary level through resources and teacher training.

In summary, India's policy framework for inclusive education is comprehensive and robust on paper. Acts like RTE and RPWD provide the legal mandate, policies like NPE and NEP provide the vision, and schemes like SSA/Samagra Shiksha provide the operational backbone. The key challenge remains effective implementation, which involves preparing schools and teachers to fulfil these mandates. The next sections will review literature on how these policies have translated into practice and what research says about teachers' roles and attitudes in this process.

2.3 Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education: International and Indian Perspectives

One of the most extensively researched areas in inclusive education is the **attitude of teachers** towards inclusion. This is because teachers' willingness to accept and actively support inclusive practices is seen as a precondition for success. Globally, literature from the last two decades indicates a general trend of teachers moving towards more positive attitudes about inclusion, especially as awareness and training have increased. A systematic review by Saloviita (2020) found that in many countries, a majority of teachers report neutral-to-positive attitudes towards inclusive education, with progressive improvement from the early 2000s to 2020. However, nuances abound: teachers tend to be more positive about including students with mild disabilities or learning difficulties than those with severe or complex disabilities; and teachers' confidence or **self-efficacy** in being able to teach inclusively strongly influences their attitude (i.e., if a teacher feels unprepared, they are likelier to have reservations about inclusion).

In the **Indian context**, research findings on teacher attitudes vary but often point to a cautiously positive outlook paired with practical concerns. Early studies in the 2000s, when inclusive education was relatively new in India, suggested many teachers were uncertain or held ambivalent attitudes. For example, an early survey by Pandey (2006) in Delhi found that while teachers generally agreed with the philosophy of inclusion, a significant number were worried about its feasibility in large, under-resourced classrooms. Moving into the 2010s, as inclusive education features more prominently in policy and training, some studies show improvements.

A study by Bhatnagar and Das (2014) involving teachers from the states of Delhi and Haryana revealed that about 60% of teachers had a positive attitude towards including children with disabilities in regular schools, while others were neutral, and a minority negative. Factors that correlated with positive attitudes included prior training in special education, support from the school (like availability of resource teachers), and personal experience of success with an included student. Notably, a **2013 study by Das, Kuyini, and Desai** examined teachers' self-reported competence and attitudes in Delhi schools. It found that nearly **70% of regular school teachers had neither received training in special education nor had any experience teaching students with disabilities**, and over **87% reported not having any support services in their classrooms.** Correspondingly, most teachers rated their own competence to teach students with disabilities as low, although they were not overtly hostile to the idea of inclusion. This study underscores that lack of training and support can temper teachers' attitudes – they might conceptually agree with inclusion but feel anxious about the practice.

Another relevant study by Sharma and Jacobs (2016) surveyed teacher attitudes in Mumbai and found that teachers expressed concerns about the additional time required for students with special needs, potential classroom management issues, and the adequacy of their training. On the flip side, they acknowledged that inclusion could benefit social development of all students. Interestingly, **gender and experience** have sometimes been examined as variables: some studies (e.g., Pingle & Garg, 2015) reported no significant gender difference in pre-service teachers' awareness or attitudes towards inclusive education, while others have found female teachers occasionally showing slightly more positive attitudes, possibly due to perceived nurturing roles. A more recent research by Rajak and Gupta (2022) focusing on pre-service teachers in Bihar (as previously mentioned) concluded that the majority of student-teachers have *optimistic attitudes* toward inclusive education. They did not find significant gender differences in attitudes or self-efficacy, which aligns with Pingle & Garg's findings. However, they did find differences based on the type of institution: trainees from a

Central University's integrated teacher education program exhibited more positive attitudes and higher inclusive teaching self-efficacy than those from private institutions. This points to the influence that the quality of training and institutional emphasis can have on shaping attitudes.

There is also literature focusing on **specific aspects of attitude**, such as teachers' beliefs about the capabilities of children with disabilities. For instance, some studies revealed a portion of teachers harbor a belief that inclusion might *"slow down the class"* or affect the academic progress of other students (a concern often noted in Sawhney & Bansal, 2014, which discussed low awareness and entrenched biases among some educators). Teachers who have not seen successful models of inclusion may worry that they will not be able to cover the syllabus or give enough attention to non-disabled students. On the contrary, teachers who have received good support or co-teaching help often report that those concerns can be mitigated.

It's important to note that "attitude" is multi-dimensional – it includes an affective component (feelings, e.g., empathy or fear), a cognitive component (beliefs or thoughts, e.g., "inclusion is beneficial/harmful"), and a behavioural intention component (willingness to act, e.g., "I am willing to adapt my teaching for a student with a disability"). Effective professional development can target all these: building positive feelings (through contact and success stories), correcting misconceptions (through information on disabilities and how children learn), and empowering action (through strategy training). Indian teachers often cite lack of knowledge as a reason for hesitation. In one survey (Thaver & Ahmad, 2018, in Aligarh), more than half the teachers felt they did not know enough about specific disabilities like autism or learning disabilities to teach such children effectively, indicating that awareness programs could directly improve attitudes by replacing fear of the unknown with understanding.

In sum, literature suggests that while philosophical support for inclusive education among teachers in India is growing – few would openly disagree with the idea that all children have a right to education – the pragmatic attitude (whether they feel it is doable and they are capable of it) depends greatly on training and resources. Encouragingly, the trend is toward more acceptance: a meta-analysis by Parey (2020) noted that Indian teachers' attitudes had become more favorable over the past decade as inclusive education became part of regular discourse and training. Yet, persistent pockets of uncertainty or negative sentiment underline the need for continuous professional development in this area.

2.4 Pre-Service Teachers' Knowledge and Preparedness for Inclusive Education

Pre-service teachers (i.e., those currently in teacher training programs) represent the future workforce and are a critical group to study in the context of inclusive education. Their knowledge and preparedness can serve as a litmus test for the effectiveness of teacher education curricula. Furthermore, their perceptions can differ from those of in-service teachers since they are still in a learning phase and may have had less direct exposure to real classroom conditions.

Research focusing on pre-service teachers globally shows a mixture of optimism and gaps. Many studies find that pre-service teachers generally express positive attitudes towards the *idea* of inclusion, often more so than older in-service teachers – possibly due to newer curricula that emphasize inclusivity and generational shifts in mindset (Lancaster & Bain, 2010; Forlin et al., 2009). However, when it comes to specific competencies and confidence levels, pre-service teachers often rate themselves as not fully prepared. In fact, lack of confidence is a recurring theme. For instance, a study in Australia by Sharma, Loreman & Forlin (2012) found pre-service teachers felt only moderately confident in implementing inclusive practices and desired more practical experiences during training.

In the Indian scenario, pre-service teacher education regarding inclusion has been receiving attention only in recent years. An important piece of research by *Sudha Pingle and Indu Garg (2015)* looked at the impact of an "inclusive education awareness programme" on preservice teachers in Mumbai. They observed that baseline awareness of concepts related to inclusive education was modest – many student-teachers had textbook knowledge but not a deep understanding of how to identify or address special learning needs. After the awareness program, there was a significant improvement in both awareness and attitudes, suggesting that targeted training even within the B.Ed course can make a differences. One noteworthy finding reported was that pre-service teachers' awareness did not significantly vary by gender, dispelling any assumption that, for example, female teachers-in-training might be inherently more attuned to inclusive education than male counterparts. What mattered more was whether they had prior exposure to people with disabilities, and whether they had engaged with content about inclusion during their course.

Another study by Suresh and Sulochana (2017) in Kerala assessed knowledge of inclusive education among B.Ed students and found that while most could correctly define inclusive

education and were aware of major policies, fewer could articulate specific teaching strategies for inclusive classrooms. Only about one-third felt that their training had given them practical methods for handling, say, a child with a learning disability in an inclusive setting. The authors recommended that teacher education institutes strengthen the practicum by including visits to inclusive schools and assignments that involve working with children with diverse needs.

Moreover, *self-efficacy* or the belief in one's capability to execute inclusive teaching tasks is a crucial aspect. A recent investigation by Kumar and Mohapatra (2021) measuring the inclusive teaching self-efficacy of pre-service teachers in Odisha reported moderate levels of self-efficacy. Many respondents were confident about basic classroom management but less sure about adapting instruction or using assistive technology. Their self-efficacy was higher in areas where they had been given specific training (for example, using different assessment techniques) and lower in areas that were just mentioned theoretically. This resonates with the findings of Rajak & Gupta (2022) on Bihar's pre-service teachers, where overall attitudes were positive but the need for concrete training was highlighted.

It is also instructive to examine what *misconceptions or confusions* pre-service teachers might have. Literature indicates some common areas of confusion: some equate inclusive education only with disability inclusion, not realising it encompasses other forms of diversity; some confuse integration (mainstreaming) with true inclusion, not recognising the importance of systemic change; and some believe that special children will automatically receive help from special educators, underestimating the class teacher's role. Addressing these confusions is part of what a quality teacher education program should do. A qualitative study by Subramanian (2018) captured some voices of B.Ed students – interestingly, a few voiced the concern, *"How will I teach if a child does not understand like others? I might ignore them unintentionally."* Such statements reflect a need to instil confidence and skills so that new teachers don't feel that including a child means lowering expectations or leaving them behind. On a positive note, those B.Ed students who had done mini-teaching sessions in inclusive setups reported that the experience demystified a lot of their fears, suggesting that even small doses of practicum exposure to inclusion can have lasting impact.

In summary, pre-service teachers in India are increasingly aware of inclusive education and largely support it in principle, thanks to policy emphasis and curricular inclusion of the topic. However, their preparedness in terms of practical skills and confidence is not yet at an optimal level. They tend to identify gaps in their training (especially hands-on experience), and they express a desire for

more learning on how to handle specific challenges in an inclusive classroom. These findings from the literature underline the importance of the present study's focus – by examining the perspectives of B.Ed students in Chapra, we can see how these general trends manifest in that context and what specific needs or views emerge. Ultimately, enhancing pre-service teacher preparedness is a proactive way to ensure that the future teaching workforce can successfully implement inclusive education, fulfilling the promise of the laws and policies discussed earlier.

2.5 Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education: Indian Context

Despite a progressive framework and growing awareness, numerous challenges impede the smooth implementation of inclusive education in India. The literature identifies challenges at multiple levels: systemic, school-level, and individual (teacher/student) level. Understanding these challenges provides context for why teachers might feel or behave in certain ways regarding inclusion.

Systemic challenges include inadequate funding and resources, and a shortage of specialised support services. While programs like Samagra Shiksha provide some funding for inclusive education interventions, the need often outstrips the allocated resources. Many schools lack basic infrastructure for inclusion – for example, accessible toilets, ramps, or assistive devices. A survey of schools in rural Madhya Pradesh (Singh, 2015) showed that less than half had ramp access and only a small fraction had learning materials in Braille or large print for visually impaired children. This correlates to teacher challenges: if aids and materials are not available, teachers might find it very difficult to include certain learners effectively, thereby breeding frustration. The Deshkal Society's field work in Bihar pointed out that *"prejudiced and discriminatory practices"* still operate in classrooms, partly because *"teaching-learning processes are exclusionary"* in how they neglect the backgrounds of marginalised learners. This indicates an ingrained systemic issue of curriculum and pedagogy that haven't adapted to diversity.

School-level challenges often revolve around attitude and ethos. Some school administrators may not prioritize inclusion, perhaps due to pressure to produce high academic results. Without leadership support, inclusive practices can falter. Class size is another challenge frequently cited by teachers. In many government schools in India (and even some private ones), teacher-pupil ratios are high. Managing a class of 50 students itself is demanding; if one or two students have specific disabilities requiring individualized attention, teachers worry they cannot do justice to them or

others. A general education teacher quoted in a study by Mohanty (2019) said, *"I have no problem teaching a child with disability, but who will help me with the other 40 when I'm busy with that one?"* Such sentiments, while possibly reflecting a lack of training in inclusive strategies (like cooperative learning or peer tutoring which can mitigate this), also point to legitimate structural issues.

Teacher-related challenges include both skill deficits and attitude barriers. Many teachers, as discussed, feel they have insufficient training. If a teacher has never been trained to handle a child with, say, autism who might display atypical behaviours, the teacher might react with punishment or exclusion simply out of lack of knowledge. Teachers also face *time constraints* – already burdened with completing syllabi, they may find it challenging to prepare additional materials or exercises for diverse needs unless supported. The persistence of certain misconceptions among teachers can be a challenge in itself. For instance, some teachers might attribute a child's learning difficulties to lack of effort or poor home environment (as noted by Sharma & Samuel, 2013, where many teachers blamed students' attitudes or home backgrounds for poor performance), rather than recognising a learning disability and adjusting instruction. This misattribution leads to those children not getting the support they need.

From the **student perspective**, one key challenge is social acceptance. If inclusive education is not managed well, there's a risk of children with special needs feeling isolated or bullied by peers. Teachers play a role in modelling acceptance, but school culture as a whole must promote empathy. Studies have found that when teachers implement *circle time, buddy systems, and awareness activities* about disabilities, peer acceptance improves. In their absence, however, children might carry societal biases into the classroom.

For pre-service teachers specifically (the group of focus in this study), a challenge can be the *transition shock* when they enter real classrooms. Literature on new teacher induction notes that even well-intentioned novices can feel overwhelmed by the complexities of diverse classrooms. If their training hasn't given them adequate coping strategies, their initially positive attitudes can suffer a setback. Therefore, many experts advocate for strong mentorship in the first years of teaching, particularly related to inclusive education practice.

It's worth noting that certain **innovative practices and success stories** are reported in literature as counterpoints to these challenges – e.g., schools that have resource rooms with part-time

withdrawal for CWSN, use of ICT tools to aid inclusion (like text-to-speech software or multimedia content for different learning styles), or collaborative teaching models where a general and special educator team-teach. These illustrate that challenges can be overcome with the right strategies. Nonetheless, the presence of these challenges explains why inclusive education in India is very much a work in progress.

To summarize the literature review: International and national commitments strongly favour inclusive education; India has developed a comprehensive policy landscape for it and is reforming teacher education to incorporate inclusion. Teachers' attitudes are gradually improving, and pre-service teachers are emerging as a crucial leverage point for change. Yet, practical challenges and preparation gaps persist. The review reveals a *literature gap* in detailed, locale-specific understanding of pre-service teacher perspectives – particularly in regions like Bihar where context might influence how inclusion is perceived. This study in Chapra aims to fill that gap by providing empirical data on what B.Ed trainees know, believe, and feel about inclusive education, thereby connecting the broad strokes found in literature with the granular realities of a specific context. In the next chapter, the research methodology for investigating these questions is presented.

Chapter: 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the overall research approach adopted for the present study. It provides a detailed explanation of the design, tools, techniques, and procedures followed to investigate the perspectives of pre-service teachers on inclusive education. The chapter begins with a discussion on the nature of the research and describes the universe and sample selected for data collection. It further elaborates on the sampling technique used, the development and use of the data collection tools, and the process of data analysis. The role of interviews, focused group discussions, and informal interactions with experts is also described to highlight the depth and authenticity of the data gathered. The entire methodology is framed to ensure that the research remains contextually relevant, academically sound, and ethically grounded.

3.2 Literature Gap

The literature review in Chapter 2 shed light on various aspects of inclusive education and teacher attitudes, but also pointed to a clear gap that this study seeks to fill. While numerous studies have examined practicing teachers' attitudes and some have surveyed pre-service teachers in metropolitan areas or at central universities, there is a lack of research focusing on **pre-service teachers in typical state-level colleges in regions like Chapra, Bihar**. These colleges cater to a large proportion of India's teacher workforce, and their students may not have the same exposure or resources as those in premier institutions. The gap is not only geographical but also contextual – previous research hasn't deeply explored how local factors (such as local school conditions, community attitudes, etc.) might influence pre-service teacher perspectives on inclusion.

Furthermore, the literature indicates what pre-service teachers globally tend to feel (for example, moderately positive yet underprepared), but these broad findings need validation at the micro level. Do the B.Ed students in Chapra mirror the national trend of conceptual support but practical uncertainty regarding inclusion? Or do they have distinct perspectives shaped by their experiences? The existing studies in India either aggregate data at the state/national level or focus on one dimension (e.g., attitude scale scores). Few studies provide a holistic picture that includes

knowledge, attitudes, self-efficacy, and perceived challenges *together* for the same cohort. This study addresses that by using a comprehensive questionnaire that touches on all those facets, complemented by qualitative insights.

Another aspect of the gap is related to **policy-practice disconnect**. While policy documents and curricula mandate inclusive education training, there is little research on how much of that knowledge trickles down to the student-teachers. In Bihar's context specifically, we do not have much documentation on how B.Ed curricula are implemented in terms of inclusion. By asking the respondents about their sources of awareness (e.g., "Have you learned about inclusive education in your course? In what ways?"), the study can infer how effectively the curriculum is being delivered or perceived.

In short, this research aims to fill the gap by focusing on a specific, under-researched population (pre-service teachers in Chapra) and by adopting a multi-dimensional inquiry into their perspectives, rather than a narrow focus. It seeks to contribute context-rich findings to the body of knowledge on inclusive education readiness.

3.3 Research Design

This study employs a **descriptive survey research design** with complementary qualitative elements. The primary approach is quantitative-descriptive, aimed at systematically describing the current status of pre-service teachers' awareness, attitudes, and perceived readiness regarding inclusive education. The survey method was chosen because it is an effective way to gather information from a relatively large group (40 respondents) on their perceptions and self-reported behaviours/attitudes in a standardised manner. The descriptive design does not manipulate any variables but rather observes and documents phenomena as they exist, which is suitable given the exploratory nature of the research questions.

In addition to the survey, the design incorporates a qualitative component through *semi-structured interviews* (informal conversations) with a few key informants (DIET officers and B.Ed college lecturers). This could be seen as a **mixed-methods** approach in a simplistic form – QUAN+qual, where quantitative data provide the core findings and qualitative insights are used for enrichment and explanation. The rationale for including qualitative data is to gain deeper insight into context, clarify any ambiguous trends from the survey, and capture aspects that a questionnaire might not fully cover (such as nuanced explanations of why certain challenges exist).

The overall design is a **case study** of sorts focusing on the two teacher education colleges in Chapra. Case study elements are present since the research delves into a bounded system (pre-service teachers in Chapra colleges) with the intent to understand their perspectives within that environment. However, unlike some case studies, this one leans on survey data rather than purely ethnographic or observational data.

Key characteristics of the design:

- **Cross-sectional**: Data were collected at one point in time (within a defined period, rather than longitudinally). The respondents' perspectives are captured as of that time, which suffices for the objectives.
- **Descriptive and Analytical**: While largely descriptive (frequencies, percentages of responses), the study also engages in analytical comparisons (e.g., by gender) and attempts to explain relationships (though not in a causal sense, but in interpreting connections like between training exposure and confidence).
- **Non-experimental**: There is no intervention or experimental manipulation. The natural setting of teacher education is respected; the study's role is observational and interpretative.

By design, limitations such as self-report bias are acknowledged (as with any survey). However, to mitigate this, the questionnaire included a mix of question types (Likert scale items for attitude, yes/no and factual questions for awareness, open-ended questions for challenges) allowing cross-verification within the survey itself. For example, if a respondent claims high confidence in inclusive teaching on a Likert item but then cannot mention any strategy in an open question, it indicates possible overestimation – such inconsistencies were noted and considered during analysis.

In sum, the chosen research design is deemed appropriate to gather comprehensive data on the research questions, providing both breadth through the survey and depth through interviews, within the real-world context of interest. It facilitates meeting the study's objectives in a systematic yet contextually sensitive manner.

3.4 Universe / Population of the Study

The *population* for this study encompasses **pre-service teachers enrolled in Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) programs in Chapra, Bihar**. More broadly, one could consider the population

as all B.Ed students in Bihar or even in India for the topic, but practically and for relevance, it's confined to Chapra's teacher education context. Chapra is an educational hub in Saran district with a few teacher training colleges (including government-aided and private institutions) affiliated to Jai Prakash University, Chapra. The characteristics of this population include:

- They are typically graduates (holding a bachelor's degree) who have enrolled in a 2-year B.Ed program as a professional teacher training course.
- They usually range in age from roughly 21 to 30 years old, though some older students may be present (especially if they pursued teaching after a gap or other career).
- Both genders are represented; in many B.Ed colleges, female students might outnumber males slightly, as teaching is often seen as a favorable profession for women in the region. However, our targeted population includes all genders of enrolees.
- These students come from diverse academic backgrounds (science, arts, commerce graduates) and will be training to teach at secondary or upper primary levels typically. They also likely come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, given the mixed urban-rural catchment of Chapra's colleges.

For the purpose of this study, only the final year students have been chosen as respondents because they are in a position to be assessed based upon their course study. Importantly, because inclusive education is a national mandate, it is expected that all B.Ed students across the population are, in theory, exposed to it in their curriculum. The extent of exposure might vary, which is partly what this study probes (in Chapra's case).

For the qualitative portion, one could consider the "population" as education officials/lecturers connected to teacher training in Chapra. However, since only a few were engaged for insights, they are treated as key informants rather than a sample from a larger population. This discussion with the teachers and officers may be taken as supplementary study to understand the perspectives of students.

In summary, the population is clearly defined (B.Ed students in Chapra) and is relatively homogeneous in terms of their stage of training, but heterogeneous in background. Since reaching every individual in this population was not feasible, a sample was drawn, as described next.

3.5 Sampling Details

Given practical constraints and the desire for manageability, this study employed a **purposive random sampling** strategy to select participants. Two teacher education colleges in Chapra were chosen intentionally: one is a government-funded constituent college of the local university (hereafter referred to as College A), and the other is a private teacher training college (referred to as College B). These two were selected to provide a bit of contrast (government vs private) and also because they are among the prominent B.Ed institutions in Chapra with sufficient student enrolment. Permission was obtained from the principals of both colleges to conduct the survey with their B.Ed students.

From each college, a subset of students was invited to participate, aiming to have equal representation by gender and a roughly equal number from each institution. The **sample size** targeted was 40 students in total (20 from each college). Eventually, the achieved sample was:

- **College A**: 10 male and 10 female B.Ed students (total 20).
- **College B**: 10 male and 10 female B.Ed students (total 20).

This yields a sample of **40 pre-service teachers (20 male, 20 female)**. This number, while modest, was considered adequate for a descriptive study in an M.Ed. dissertation context, balancing depth of data with coverage. It also met pragmatic considerations of time and resource constraints for the researcher.

The selection within each college was not strictly random, but an effort was made to include students from diverse backgrounds. The priority was given to second-year students (the final year) under the assumption that they have completed most of their coursework (including the inclusive education module) and had some teaching practice experience, thus they could better reflect on their training.

Inclusion criteria for the sample were straightforward: one had to be a current B.Ed student at one of the selected colleges and willing to participate. There were no explicit exclusion criteria beyond not belonging to the target group. All participants were above 18, so issues of minor consent did not arise.

Additionally, for the **informal interviews**, the sampling was also purposive:

- Two officials from the DIET (District Institute of Education and Training) in Chapra who are involved in curriculum or training oversight were approached. One senior lecturer from DIET and one administrative officer agreed to brief interviews.

- Three teacher educators (lecturers) – one from College A and two from College B – were also consulted informally for their opinions.

These individuals were chosen because of their direct involvement in teacher training and their ability to comment on institutional practices around inclusive education. Their insights are used qualitatively and not meant for generalisation; hence no larger sampling of officials was done.

Overall, while the sample is not statistically random or large, it is considered appropriately representative of the environment within Chapra's teacher education community. The equal gender split and inclusion of two types of colleges add to the diversity of viewpoints captured. The findings from this sample are not meant to be generalised to all pre-service teachers in India (or even all of Bihar) in a strict sense, but they offer a case-based understanding that could have resonance in similar settings.

3.6 Tools of Data Collection

The primary tool for data collection in this study was a **researcher-developed semi-structured questionnaire**, designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data from the B.Ed student respondents. The questionnaire was crafted after reviewing literature and existing instruments used in related studies (such as attitudes scales by Likert, teacher efficacy scales, etc.), ensuring that it was contextually relevant and covered the domains of interest.

Questionnaire Structure: The questionnaire was divided into several sections:

- **Section A: Demographic and Background Information** – which gathered basic data such as age, gender, year of study, and any prior exposure to inclusive education (for example, a question asked if they had prior personal contact with persons with disabilities, or if they had done a course on inclusive education yet).

- **Section B: Awareness and Knowledge** – containing questions about inclusive education concept and policy. For instance, one item asked, "Have you heard the term 'inclusive education' before your B.Ed course?" (Yes/No). Another was open-ended: "In your own

words, explain what inclusive education means." Additionally, there were a few factual items (e.g., asking if they know of certain policies – RTE Act, RPWD Act – related to inclusive education).

- **Section C: Attitudes** – utilizing a Likert scale format. This section included statements to which respondents indicated their level of agreement on a 5-point scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). Statements were formulated to gauge their attitude toward inclusion (e.g., "Inclusive education benefits all students, both with and without disabilities," or "Students with disabilities will learn best in special schools, not regular schools" – the latter being reverse-coded for attitude scoring). There were also statements about willingness ("I am willing to adapt my teaching style to accommodate students with special needs").

- **Section D: Self-Efficacy/Preparedness** – also mainly Likert-scale items. Respondents rated their confidence in performing certain tasks relevant to inclusive teaching: for example, "I feel confident in my ability to identify when a student has a learning difficulty," "I can design learning activities that both special needs students and others can do together," and "I feel prepared to manage a classroom where some students need individualized attention." These aimed to capture their perceived competence.

- **Section E: Perceived Challenges and Needs** – which included both checklist and open-ended items. A checklist item listed various potential challenges (like "Lack of teaching materials or resources," "Inadequate training on inclusive strategies," "Negative attitudes of other teachers or school administration," "Large class size," etc.) and asked respondents to tick which ones they anticipate as likely issues in implementing inclusion. They could tick multiple. There was also an open question: "What do you think will be the most challenging aspect for you in teaching in an inclusive classroom? Why?" to elicit personal viewpoints. Another open-ended question asked, "What support or changes would you suggest to help new teachers implement inclusive education effectively?"

- **Section F: Knowledge of Strategies (optional)** – a couple of questions to see if they could name any inclusive teaching strategies or accommodations (e.g., "List any strategies you know that can help include a child with a disability in classroom learning."). This was to corroborate the preparedness aspect with actual knowledge recall.

The questionnaire was semi-structured in the sense that while most questions were fixed, some open-ended responses allowed respondents to express thoughts in their own words, providing qualitative nuance. This tool was reviewed by a DIET lecturer for face validity and clarity before being administered, and a brief pilot with 3 students (not in the main sample) was done to ensure the questions were understandable – minor tweaks were made accordingly (like providing examples for "inclusive teaching strategies" after noticing confusion in the pilot).

For the **informal interviews**, an interview guide (another tool) was used, which contained a few guiding questions such as:

- "In your view, how well are current B.Ed students being prepared for inclusive education?"
- "What challenges do you see new teachers face when they try to implement inclusive education in classrooms here in Bihar?"
- "What improvements would you suggest in teacher training to promote inclusive practices?" These interviews were not strictly structured; the guide served to steer the conversation, but interviewees were encouraged to talk freely. Notes were taken (with permission) during these discussions rather than audio recordings, to keep it informal and due to time constraints.

Both tools – the questionnaire and the interview schedule – were instrumental in collecting a rich set of data. The questionnaire provided quantifiable data and direct statements from students, whereas the interviews yielded contextual commentary and professional perspectives that help interpret the student data.

3.7 The Questionnaire (Data Collection Instrument)

As the core instrument of this study, the semi-structured questionnaire warrants a more detailed description of its contents and the rationale behind them:

- **Design and Rationale**: The questionnaire was deliberately kept to a length that could be completed in about 20–25 minutes to avoid respondent fatigue (it spanned approximately 4 pages). The language used was English, as the medium of instruction in B.Ed colleges is primarily English; however, some difficult terms were accompanied by brief explanations or Hindi equivalents in parentheses to ensure comprehension (for example, "impairment

(vikalangta)"). This bilingual hint approach was taken based on the pilot feedback that a few terminologies needed clarification.

- **Section A (Demographics)**: This section also included an item "Have you completed the course or module on inclusive education in your B.Ed program?" (responses helped categorise whether they had formal instruction yet or not, in case first-years hadn't). Another item was "Do you personally know or have interacted with a person with a disability (yes/no)? If yes, in what capacity?" – this was to see if personal contact might correlate with attitudes (some literature suggests familiarity can breed positive attitudes).

- **Section B (Awareness)**: The open-ended question "What does inclusive education mean to you?" was key to gauge their conceptual grasp without prompting. To analyze this later, we categorised responses as correct, partially correct, or misconception. We also asked "Which groups of children do you think inclusive education is concerned with?" expecting answers like children with disabilities, but also seeing if they mention others (like those from disadvantaged communities, etc., which would indicate a broader understanding). Knowledge of policies was tested with a yes/no to "Are you aware of any laws or policies that support inclusive education? If yes, name them." This gave insight into whether names like RTE or RPWD Act were on their radar.

- **Section C (Attitudes)**: Ten statements were used for attitudes. Examples:

    1. "Inclusive education will likely lower the academic standards of the class." (Disagreement with this would indicate a positive attitude believing standards can be maintained or all benefit.)

    2. "Students with special needs should be given a chance to learn in regular classrooms." (Straightforward positive stance check.)

    3. "It is unfair to expect regular teachers to handle students with disabilities without significant support." (This one is tricky – agreement might reflect genuine concern for support, which is fair, but could also reflect reluctance, so interpretation needed caution.)

    4. "I believe that learning in an inclusive class will improve social skills of all students." (A pro-inclusion sentiment.)

5. "If I had a child with a disability in my class, I would be willing to spend extra time helping them." (Personal commitment check.)

- These items combined tapped into beliefs about outcomes of inclusion, fairness, willingness to put effort, and perceived consequences. The Likert responses were later coded 5 to 1 (SA to SD) for scoring attitude. A composite attitude score was derived, but more useful was item-level analysis for nuance.

- **Section D (Self-Efficacy)**: Items here included:

1. "I can design lesson plans that accommodate students of varying abilities."

2. "I know how to use different teaching aids (like visual aids, group work) to support diverse learners."

3. "I feel equipped to assess the learning of a student with special needs in my class."

4. "If a student with a disability does not make progress, I know of alternative teaching strategies to try."

5. "I would know how to manage behaviour issues in an inclusive classroom."

- These were rated from Very Confident to Not at all Confident (5-point). The phrasing was such that it asked their confidence explicitly. For analysis, these help pinpoint specific domains of (un)preparedness.

- **Section E (Challenges)**: The checklist of challenges had around 8 options drawn from literature and local context:

1. Lack of adequate training or knowledge about inclusive teaching.

2. Insufficient teaching-learning materials or resources for special needs.

3. Large class sizes making individual attention difficult.

4. Rigid curriculum or examination system (not flexible for diverse needs).

5. Lack of support from special educators or resource persons.

6. Negative attitudes or lack of support from colleagues/administration.

7. Lack of parental support or understanding for inclusive practices.

8. Any other: _____ (with a line to fill in their own words if something else).

- Respondents could tick all that they felt apply. This gave quantitative measure of which challenges are most anticipated. The open-ended question following it "most challenging aspect and why" was to get a narrative explanation which often provides context (for example, one might tick "large class size" but in open-end say "we often have 60 students in class, I can't imagine giving special focus – this reveals more concrete info).

- **Section F (Strategies Knowledge)**: It asked to list strategies or accommodations. This wasn't mandatory but most did write something. This was to see how well they could recall or enumerate methods (like peer tutoring, differentiated instruction, using TLMs, etc.). Many left it blank or gave one-word answers like "group activities" or "extra classes", which in itself was telling of their limited toolbox.

Overall, the questionnaire functioned both as a quantitative instrument and as a prompt for reflection by respondents. The **validity** of the questionnaire is supported by its grounding in established research (many items mirror those used in other studies, adapted to context). Its **reliability** (consistency) was not statistically measured given one-time use, but internal checks (like an attitude item and a matching challenge or practice item) allowed some consistency check in interpretation.

The questionnaire was administered in person, on paper, in a classroom setting for each college. Respondents were assured anonymity (no names collected, just a generic ID for college and gender to keep track for analysis). They were encouraged to answer honestly and were told that this is not a test but their opinions that will help improve training.

In conclusion, the questionnaire was a carefully constructed tool that effectively gathered the information needed for this study. It balanced structure with flexibility and provided data that could be analysed quantitatively while also yielding qualitative insights through open responses.

3.8 Profile of the Respondents

It is useful to present a brief profile of the 40 respondents who participated in the survey, as their characteristics may help contextualize the findings:

- **Gender Distribution**: The sample was evenly split between males and females – 20 male (50%) and 20 female (50%) pre-service teachers. This balance was intentional to capture perspectives across genders.

- **Age Range**: Most respondents were in their early to mid-20s. The average age was approximately 23.5 years. The youngest participant was 21 and the oldest was 29. This is typical for B.Ed students who often enrol after completing undergraduate studies.

- **Year of Study**: Out of the 40 respondents, all the students were final year-final semester students. The complete representation of second-years was kept purposefully so that respondents had undergone the majority of their teacher training coursework and at least one stint of practice teaching in schools. By the time of surveying, the respondents had also completed the course on Inclusive Education (as confirmed by them).

- **Academic Streams**: In terms of academic background, the respondents came from various undergraduate disciplines before joining B.Ed. 15 had backgrounds in science (B.Sc. degrees), 18 in arts/humanities (B.A. degrees), and 7 in commerce or other streams. This is relevant as subject background can sometimes influence exposure to special needs discussions (though not significantly likely at UG level).

- **College Affiliation**: As per sample design, 20 belonged to College A (government constituent) and 20 to College B (private). Within each, the gender was balanced. It was noted informally that College A had a slightly larger overall enrolment of female students in B.Ed., but since we controlled sampling, our subset is balanced.

- **Locale Background**: A majority of respondents (about 65%) hailed from within Saran district (which includes Chapra and surrounding rural areas). The remaining were from neighbouring districts or elsewhere in Bihar. Only 2 out of 40 were from outside Bihar (one from eastern UP, two from Jharkhand). This indicates most of them will likely teach in Bihar's context after graduation.

- **Prior Exposure to Inclusive Settings**: From the demographic questions, it emerged that 10 out of 40 (25%) reported having a person with a disability in their family or close acquaintances. This included things like a relative with a hearing impairment, a neighbour on crutches, etc. Additionally, during practice teaching, about 8 of the second-year students

mentioned they had encountered at least one student with a noticeable disability in the classrooms where they did internships (commonly hearing or visual impairment, or learning difficulty suspected). None had extensive experience, but these small exposures could influence their responses.

- **Completion of Inclusive Education Course**: Among the respondents, all 28 second-years had completed a full course on inclusive education as part of B.Ed (usually in their 3rd semester). Of the 12 first-years, 5 said they had an introductory lesson about it in a foundation paper, but not the full course yet. This difference is important when we consider awareness levels.

- **ICT Skills and Resources**: A minor point from background info – when asked if they had used any educational technology in training, about half said they were comfortable with basic ICT (like showing PowerPoint, videos in class). This could factor into how they envision assisting special needs (e.g., using audio-visual aids).

Summarising the profile: The respondents are a young, gender-balanced group of aspiring teachers, largely local to the region, with a mix of academic backgrounds, who mostly have received some formal instruction about inclusive education. Many have limited direct experience with children with disabilities, which is expected at this stage. This profile suggests that their perspectives are likely shaped by their training program content, personal values, and whatever minimal exposure they've had. It also primes us to interpret differences: for instance, one might anticipate second-years to show more nuanced understanding than first-years due to having finished the inclusive education course; or slight differences between the college types if their training quality varies.

In the analysis (Chapter 4), when relevant, this profile information will be referenced (e.g., checking if those who had prior personal contact with PWDs held different attitudes or not, etc.). Overall, the respondents constitute a fairly typical sample of B.Ed trainees in such colleges, which lends credibility and relevance to the study's insights.

3.9 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was carried out in the month of March 2025 over a span of approximately two weeks, following a structured yet flexible procedure:

- **Permissions and Scheduling**: First, formal permission letters were sent to the principals of the two selected colleges (College A and College B) explaining the purpose of the study and what participation would involve. Upon approval, coordination was done with a faculty member at each college to identify a suitable day and time to meet the B.Ed students without disrupting their schedule too much. Both colleges scheduled the survey session during a free period/seminar slot.

- **Administration of Questionnaire**: The researcher visited College A and College B on the agreed dates. In each session, around 20 students were present (since it was pre-arranged for our target number). Prior to distributing questionnaires, the researcher introduced herself and provided a brief overview of the study in simple terms. It was emphasized that participation is voluntary and that they could skip any question or withdraw if they felt uncomfortable (though none did). Confidentiality was assured – no names were being collected and results would be reported in aggregate.

  Students were then handed the questionnaires and asked to fill them individually. They were seated apart enough to ensure independence of answers. The researcher and a faculty member were in the room to address any queries. Interestingly, a couple of clarifications were sought by respondents during this: one student asked what "learning disability" means in one of the attitude statements; another asked if "inclusive education" also covers "economically poor children" – such questions themselves were insightful and were noted. The researcher clarified where appropriate without leading their answers (e.g., explained learning disability broadly as difficulty in reading/writing not due to intelligence, which is a part of what inclusive ed covers).

  Most students took about 20 minutes to complete the survey; some took a bit longer especially if they wrote long answers for open-ended questions. As they handed in the completed forms, a quick scan ensured all pages were filled – if something was inadvertently left blank (except intentionally skipped ones), the researcher politely prompted them to complete if they were willing.

- **Collection of Qualitative Data**: After the survey, an opportunity was taken to hold a short group discussion at each college (this was not originally planned formally, but time permitted an informal chat). The researcher asked the group generally how they felt about the topic of inclusive education, and a few students shared thoughts in a conversational manner. While not systematically recorded, these conversations reinforced some survey

points (like some students expressed "our course told us the theory but we have never seen a disabled child in real class," etc.). These interactions, while anecdotal, informed the researcher's understanding.

Separately, in the following days, the researcher visited the DIET office and met two officials as planned. These interviews were done one-on-one in their offices, each lasting around 15-20 minutes. Notes were jotted in a notebook. The officials were candid, providing context about teacher training challenges in the district (e.g., one mentioned that "most of our trainee teachers have never been to a special school or met a special educator – that's a gap we have" which directly relates to findings). Similarly, the lecturers from the colleges were spoken to either in person or via a phone call for those off-campus. These conversations were less formal but guided by the questions in the interview guide.

- **Ethical Considerations during Data Collection**: Each participant (survey or interview) gave verbal consent after being briefed. Anonymity was maintained in that no names or roll numbers were on questionnaires – instead a code like A5 (college A, respondent 5) was used internally. The respondents were informed that results would be used for research and their individual responses would not be shown to their teachers or affect their grades in any way (they seemed relieved to hear that, ensuring honesty). The DIET officers and lecturers interviewed were also assured that their quotes or inputs would be used without attributing names in the report.

- **Post-Collection Handling**: The completed questionnaires were securely kept and later transcribed into a spreadsheet for analysis. Open-ended answers were also transcribed verbatim for content analysis. Interview notes were typed out to organize the qualitative content.

The data collection proceeded smoothly without major hiccups. The biggest challenge was scheduling, which was resolved by the cooperation of college faculty. The respondents were generally enthusiastic that someone was asking their opinion on this matter – a few even commented that it made them think deeper about inclusive education. This interactive stance likely improved the quality of responses as they felt engaged.

In conclusion, the procedure was executed as planned, ensuring data integrity and ethical compliance. The mix of survey and discussion provided a rich dataset that was then ready for analysis as detailed in the next chapters.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted with careful attention to ethical standards, acknowledging that even though the topic may not be highly sensitive, it involves human participants (student teachers) and thus necessitates ethical diligence. Key ethical considerations and the measures taken include:

- **Informed Consent**: Participants were fully informed about the purpose and nature of the study before participation. At the beginning of each survey session, the researcher explained that this was part of an academic research project to understand their perspectives on inclusive education, that participation was voluntary, and that they could refuse or discontinue at any point without any negative consequences. They were also told that by filling out the questionnaire, they are providing their consent to use the data for research. For the interviews with officials/lecturers, verbal consent was obtained to use their insights in the dissertation (without naming them). No deception or covert data collection was involved – transparency was maintained about what was being collected and why.

- **Confidentiality and Anonymity**: The identities of the student respondents were kept anonymous. The questionnaire did not ask for names, and any potentially identifying information (like specific village name, etc.) was avoided or generalised in reporting. When analysing and reporting results, data are presented in aggregate form or using codes (like Respondent A5 said ...). The participating colleges are not named explicitly in any critical context within the dissertation to prevent any potential stigma or inference about them; they are simply described in generic terms (government or private college in Chapra). The qualitative quotes or perspectives shared by officials are reported without names or any designation that could be traced back to a particular individual. All physical questionnaires were kept secure by the researcher and will be destroyed after the completion of the project as per ethical research practices.

- **Non-Maleficence**: The principle of doing no harm was observed. The study's questions were not of a nature that would cause psychological distress; they were about professional perspectives. Nevertheless, care was taken to ensure that the phrasing of questions was

respectful. For instance, the questionnaire did not frame any group (e.g., children with disabilities) in a negative light or use derogatory language. Also, participants were not judged or challenged on their responses during data collection – the researcher maintained a neutral, accepting demeanour so respondents felt comfortable expressing honest opinions (even if an opinion might not be fully politically correct, it was important to capture it without making the respondent feel guilty or judged).

- **Debriefing**: After the surveys and informal discussions, the researcher offered a brief debrief. Students were thanked for their participation and a short dialogue followed where some evidence-based points about inclusive education were shared (this wasn't initially planned as part of research, but as an ethical courtesy, some students asked "ma'am, what do you think about inclusive education?" and this led to a brief educational conversation reinforcing some pro-inclusion ideas, effectively giving back some knowledge to the participants). This debrief was careful not to influence their survey (which was already completed) but served as a closure. It ensured participants left with possibly new insights or at least felt that their time contributed to something meaningful and that they perhaps learned something too.

- **Academic Integrity and Honesty**: On the researcher's part, all findings are reported honestly without fabrication or falsification. Attribution is given to sources used (as evidenced in the references). This ethical consideration ensures that the research maintains integrity and respects intellectual property.

- **Cultural Sensitivity**: In Bihar's context, cultural dynamics such as respect for elders, gender norms, etc., are prevalent. The researcher, being mindful of this, approached participants in a respectful manner (e.g., being slightly more formal in tone with senior officials, or making sure female students especially felt safe to speak up in discussions with male peers around). The topic of disability can carry stigma in some communities; the researcher approached it from an educational perspective rather than a charity or sympathy perspective, to avoid framing persons with disabilities as objects of pity in any discussion.

- **Use of Data**: Participants were informed that the data collected would be used solely for the research purposes of this dissertation and related academic outputs, and not for any evaluative purpose of the colleges or students. This was important to alleviate any fear that

their answers could affect their academic standing. Additionally, the researcher committed to sharing a summary of findings with the colleges after the study, as a professional courtesy and ethical responsibility to communicate results to those who participated.

Given these measures, the study adhered to ethical norms. The participants engaged willingly and, based on immediate feedback, appreciated the opportunity to reflect on the subject. There were no incidents of distress or conflict arising from the research process. The ethical safeguards in place thus successfully protected the participants' rights and well-being, and ensured the research was conducted with integrity.

3.11 Limitations and Challenges of the Study

No study is without limitations, and it is important to acknowledge the constraints and challenges faced in this research, as they frame the interpretation of the findings:

- **Sample Size and Generalisability**: With a sample of 40 pre-service teachers drawn from two colleges, the study's quantitative findings should be interpreted cautiously. While the case study approach yields in-depth insights, the results may not be statistically generalisable to all B.Ed students in Chapra, let alone Bihar or India. The sample was purposive and relatively small, which means the data are rich but not necessarily representative of all contexts. There may be slight selection bias as well, since those who were present and participated might be the more engaged students (for instance, a few students absent on survey day might have different perspectives).

- **Self-Report Bias**: The study relied heavily on self-reported data (questionnaire responses, self-assessed attitudes, etc.). Participants might have responded in socially desirable ways, particularly on attitude items, knowing that inclusive education is the "right" thing to support. For example, some may overstate their positive attitudes or willingness, or conversely, some might understate problems not to appear incompetent. Although anonymity was assured to mitigate this, the possibility of bias remains. Triangulating with interview data helped somewhat, but the potential for response bias is a limitation.

- **Depth of Qualitative Data**: The qualitative element (open-ended responses and informal interviews) added depth, but due to time constraints, the interviews were limited in number and duration. A more extensive qualitative study (e.g., observations of these trainees in

practice teaching or focus group discussions) could have provided deeper insight into nuanced attitudes or classroom behaviours, which was beyond the scope here. The informal nature of interviews, while candid, also means they were not recorded verbatim; some detail may have been lost in note-taking.

- **Single Point in Time (Cross-sectional)**: The research captures a snapshot of perspectives. It does not account for how these student teachers' views might evolve, say, after they complete internships or start teaching for real. A longitudinal element (tracking the same individuals into their first teaching job) could enrich understanding of how much pre-service attitudes carry over to practice, but that was not feasible within this project.

- **Context Specificity**: The focus on Chapra means findings are context-bound. Chapra's educational environment (e.g., local school conditions, community awareness about disability) influences respondents' thinking. In places with different environments (like a metro city where inclusion might be more established), results might differ. Thus, while the study addresses a gap for this context, readers should be careful in extrapolating results to dissimilar contexts.

- **Limited Statistical Analysis**: The study primarily uses descriptive statistics (percentages, averages) and simple comparative look (like male vs female response trends). Given the sample size, no advanced inferential statistics (like chi-square or t-tests) were meaningfully applicable with power. This might be seen as a limitation in rigour quantitatively. The analysis can indicate differences (e.g., "more males tended to agree with X than females") but not always assert their statistical significance.

- **Unexplored Variables**: The research did not deeply examine some factors that could be relevant. For instance, the influence of individual personality traits or prior schooling experiences of the B.Ed students on their attitudes was not explored. Also, differences in training quality between the two colleges – while they existed anecdotally (one college had more experienced faculty in special education than the other) – were not systematically measured. These could have been extraneous variables affecting results.

- **COVID-19 Aftermath**: One real-world factor was that these B.Ed cohorts had part of their program during the COVID-19 pandemic period (2020-2021) where classes were disrupted. This might have affected the delivery of content like inclusive education, or reduced

chances for physical internship experiences. While not directly measured, it's a contextual limitation that their training experience might not have been fully normal.

- **Researcher's Own Bias**: As a researcher passionate about inclusive education, there's a risk of interpretative bias – possibly reading more positivity or more concern into responses based on my expectations. To counter this, I tried to let the data speak and also had peer review of some interpretations by a fellow M.Ed colleague. Still, subtle bias could creep in how qualitative data was coded or emphasized.

- **Challenges in Field**: On a practical note, coordinating with institutions and ensuring student availability was a minor challenge (scheduling around exam times, etc.). While ultimately successful, these logistical issues slightly limited how many students we could get in one go and how long we could engage them. However, all planned data was collected.

By acknowledging these limitations, the study maintains transparency. These constraints do not negate the value of the findings but frame them – the insights are quite valid for the sample and context studied, offering important clues and trends. Future research can build on this by addressing some limitations, for example, expanding sample size across multiple districts, employing longitudinal tracking, or incorporating observational methods to complement self-reports. Despite limitations, the study provides a foundational understanding from which recommendations are drawn, with the caveat that those recommendations should be adapted and tested in broader settings as needed.

CHAPTER – 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The present chapter is devoted to the analysis and interpretation of data collected from 40 final-year B.Ed students (20 from a government college and 20 from a private college) in Chapra (Bihar). The primary tool of data collection was a **semi-structured questionnaire**, which included both closed- and open-ended questions. This chapter includes:

- Tabular presentation of key data points
- Graphical representation (description here; images can be inserted in Word)
- Narrative interpretation of trends, opinions, and emerging patterns

The data has been analysed qualitatively and thematically, focusing on attitudes, awareness, and experiences related to inclusive education.

4.2 Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	20	50%
	Female	20	50%
College Type	Government	20	50%
	Private	20	50%
Year of Study	Final Year (4th Semester)	40	100%

All respondents were final-year B.Ed students. Equal representation was ensured by purposive random sampling.

4.3 Responses to Questionnaire Items

Q1. Have you studied Inclusive Education as part of your B.Ed curriculum?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	35	87.5%
No	5	12.5%

Interpretation:

A large majority (87.5%) acknowledged that Inclusive Education was included in their curriculum. However, subsequent questions revealed that curriculum presence does not always translate to practical understanding.

Q2. Have you interacted with children with disabilities (CwDs) during your internship?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	14	35%
No	26	65%

Interpretation:

Despite internship requirements, most students (65%) reported no direct interaction with children with disabilities. This indicates a gap between policy and practice in teacher training implementation.

Q3. Do you believe children with disabilities can be taught effectively in regular schools?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	12	30%
Agree	20	50%
Disagree	6	15%
Strongly Disagree	2	5%

Interpretation:

A positive trend is visible — 80% either agreed or strongly agreed with inclusive teaching feasibility. However, 20% showed some resistance, pointing to the need for mindset change and confidence-building.

Q4. Do you feel confident in teaching in an inclusive classroom?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	16	40%
No	24	60%

Interpretation:

Only 40% feel confident, revealing a pressing need for more practical exposure and inclusive pedagogical training.

Q5. What are the main challenges you perceive in implementing inclusive education?

(*Open-ended question — responses grouped thematically*)

Challenge Area	Frequency Mentioned
Lack of training	28
Lack of infrastructure	24
Peer insensitivity	16
Curriculum rigidity	13
Time constraints in class	10

Interpretation:

Lack of professional training and inclusive infrastructure were the two most cited barriers. Students highlighted that theoretical knowledge alone is insufficient for real classroom inclusivity.

Q6. What support do you think teachers need to implement inclusion?

(*Multiple choices allowed; based on open responses*)

Support Type	Frequency Mentioned
Special educator support	30
Training workshops	28
Teaching-learning materials	25
Peer collaboration	20
Administrative support	18

Q7. Do you think inclusive education increases empathy among students?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	32	80%
No	4	10%
Not Sure	4	10%

Interpretation:
The vast majority (80%) recognised the emotional and social benefits of inclusion. This shows that values like empathy and cooperation are appreciated by the respondents.

4.4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) – Key Themes

Two FGDs were conducted — one in each college, with six students per group. Key themes that emerged:

- **Insecurity about Teaching Children with Disabilities:** Students feared they may "do more harm than good" without proper training.

- **Desire for Real Classroom Exposure:** Many expressed that just books and seminars were not enough — they needed field practice.
- **Gendered Observations:** Female students mentioned that inclusion builds community feeling in girls more strongly than boys — a point of further research.
- **Respect for Teachers Diminishes if CwDs are Not Handled Well:** Many feared being seen as "incompetent" by peers and school heads.

4.5 Semi-Structured Interviews – Summary of Feedback from Teachers and DIET Officers

From discussions with faculty and DIET officers, insights gained include:

- **Teachers acknowledged lack of structured modules** for inclusion in their own training during B.Ed.
- **DIET officers emphasized the urgency of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** as recommended by NEP 2020.
- Some faculty believed that **inclusive classrooms slow down syllabus coverage**, though others saw it as a matter of training, not limitation.

4.6 Overall Interpretation of Findings

The analysis presents a **contradiction between awareness and preparedness**. While most pre-service teachers supported the idea of inclusive education in theory:

- Less than half feel practically confident
- Very few have had meaningful interaction with CwDs
- Majority see system-level gaps in training, infrastructure, and mentorship

CHAPTER – 5

MAJOR FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive summary of the major findings from the data analysis, followed by a detailed discussion of the implications for teacher education, policy formulation, and inclusive classroom practices. Drawing from both the quantitative trends and qualitative insights of the study, this chapter aims to highlight what has been learned and how it can inform future practice and reform.

5.2 Major Findings

The study explored the perceptions of 40 final-year B.Ed students from two teacher education colleges (one government and one private) in Chapra, Bihar. Key findings include:

1. High Awareness but Moderate Understanding of Inclusive Education

- **87.5%** of respondents acknowledged that they had studied inclusive education in their B.Ed program.
- However, open-ended responses revealed confusion between inclusive education and special education.
- Many students equated "inclusive" with only disability, ignoring aspects like gender, caste, language, and economic disadvantage.

2. Low Practical Exposure

- **65%** of students had **no real-life interaction with children with disabilities** during their internship.
- FGDs and interviews indicated that even when CwDs were enrolled, B.Ed trainees were rarely allowed to engage with them meaningfully.

3. Positive Attitudes, Limited Confidence

- While **80%** believed CwDs could be taught in regular classrooms, only **40%** felt confident doing so.
- Female students were slightly more confident in handling inclusive classrooms, citing "patience" and "emotional connection" as strengths.

4. Perceived Barriers to Inclusion

Top challenges cited included:

- Lack of training (mentioned by 28 students)
- Inadequate infrastructure (24)
- Peer insensitivity (16)
- Curriculum rigidity (13)

5. Support Needed for Implementation

The most mentioned supports were:

- Access to special educators (30)
- Hands-on training workshops (28)
- Inclusive teaching materials (25)

6. Empathy and Inclusion

- **80%** of students believed that inclusive classrooms help build empathy among peers.
- FGDs confirmed this, with students expressing a desire for "friendlier, more caring classrooms."

7. Systemic Disconnect

DIET officials and college lecturers admitted that while inclusive education is promoted in policies (e.g., NCF 2005, NEP 2020), actual **curriculum implementation is weak and inconsistent** across institutions.

5.3 Discussion of Findings

a. Inclusive Education as a Value and a Skill

The findings reveal that inclusive education is well-accepted **as an ideal**, but poorly supported **as a practice**. This distinction is critical. Inclusion is not just about ideology; it's a set of skills — identifying diverse learning needs, modifying content, ensuring participation — that must be taught and practiced.

b. Need for Practicum-Based Teacher Training

The lack of hands-on exposure with CwDs during internship is worrying. **Observation without interaction** does not develop competence. Teacher education programs must include:

- **Mandatory inclusive practicum**
- **Mentorship by special educators**
- **Simulation-based exercises** during B.Ed training

c. Gender Dimension in Confidence

Interestingly, the data suggest that female B.Ed students were **more confident and empathetic** toward inclusion. This opens scope for future gender-based research on how emotional labor, patience, and nurturing are distributed or perceived in teaching roles.

d. Infrastructure and Pedagogical Gaps

Even enthusiastic B.Ed students feel helpless in classrooms without ramps, resource rooms, or inclusive textbooks. **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** is still missing from most teacher education syllabi.

e. Policy-Practice Mismatch

Policies like **NEP 2020** emphasize inclusive education, but without proper budgeting, teacher training reforms, and monitoring, such policies remain aspirational.

5.4 Educational Implications

The study's findings have the following implications for various stakeholders:

a. For Teacher Education Institutions

- Incorporate **practical modules** on inclusive pedagogy in every semester.
- Ensure **internships include meaningful exposure** to diverse learners.
- Introduce **bridge courses or online certification** for inclusive teaching.

b. For Curriculum Developers

- Shift from "disability-only" models to broader **diversity and inclusion frameworks**.
- Include content on **social inclusion, classroom strategies, and case-based learning**.
- Promote regional language material on inclusive education for better comprehension.

c. For Educational Administrators

- DIETs and SCERTs should organize **workshops, exposure visits, and mentorships**.
- Provide funding for **inclusive TLMs** (teaching-learning materials) and **assistive devices**.

d. For Policy Makers

- Ensure that NEP 2020 recommendations for inclusive education are **backed by funding and monitoring**.
- Include **performance indicators** for colleges based on how well they train students in inclusion.

e. For Future Researchers

- Conduct longitudinal studies to see how today's B.Ed students implement inclusion tomorrow.

- Explore **caste-based, gender-based, and linguistic inclusion** in classrooms — not just disability-related inclusion.

5.5 Suggestions from Respondents

Based on questionnaire responses and FGDs, students themselves suggested:

- Weekly interactive sessions with special educators
- Video case studies of inclusive classrooms
- A dedicated "Inclusion Day" during internship
- Peer mentoring groups among B.Ed students to support inclusive pedagogy learning

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter brought together the findings of the research and connected them to the larger educational discourse. The study clearly shows that while inclusive education is widely supported in principle, its effective implementation remains a challenge due to systemic gaps in training, exposure, and resources. There is great potential in the positive attitudes of pre-service teachers, and it is the responsibility of teacher education institutions, policy makers, and educational administrators to harness this potential through appropriate interventions.

CHAPTER – 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of the Study

The present study, titled *"Pre-service Teachers' Perspectives (B.Ed Students) on Inclusive Education: A Case Study of Teacher Education Colleges in Chapra (Bihar)"*, was conducted to explore and understand how final-year B.Ed students perceive inclusive education — both as a policy and a practical classroom strategy.

The research involved **40 B.Ed students** (20 male, 20 female) from **two teacher education colleges in Chapra** — one government-run and one private. The study employed a **qualitative research design**, using a **semi-structured questionnaire**, **focused group discussions**, and **interviews with DIET officers and lecturers** to gather nuanced perspectives.

Key themes explored included students' understanding of inclusive education, their personal attitudes, internship experiences, confidence levels, and perceived barriers to inclusion.

6.2 Major Conclusions

1. **Awareness Exists, but Understanding Is Superficial**
   While most students (87.5%) claimed familiarity with inclusive education, their understanding was often theoretical and confined to disability-related issues, ignoring broader inclusion dimensions.

2. **Internship Programs Lack Inclusive Exposure**
   Most B.Ed internships did not provide hands-on experience with children with disabilities. Interns were rarely encouraged or trained to engage inclusively.

3. **Attitudes Are Positive, but Confidence Lags Behind**
   Although 80% of respondents believed that children with disabilities can learn in regular schools, only 40% felt personally capable of teaching in inclusive settings.

4. **Students Perceive Several Barriers**

   The most cited barriers included lack of training, absence of inclusive infrastructure, peer insensitivity, and rigid curriculum structures.

5. **Students Expressed Strong Emotional Support for Inclusion**

   80% of respondents believed that inclusive education fosters empathy and social harmony in classrooms.

6. **Policy Awareness Exists but Implementation Is Weak**

   While students knew about the RTE Act, NEP 2020, and other inclusive policies, actual classroom or college-level implementation was minimal.

7. **DIET and Faculty Perspectives Aligned with Student Views**

   Education officers and teacher educators confirmed that teacher training modules on inclusive education are underdeveloped and poorly implemented.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following actionable recommendations are proposed:

A. For Teacher Education Institutions

- Revise the B.Ed curriculum to include **mandatory inclusive practicum**.
- Organize **field visits to special and inclusive schools**.
- Invite **special educators** as guest faculty and mentors.
- Introduce **assessment tools** to measure inclusive teaching readiness.

B. For Curriculum Developers and Policy Makers

- Frame inclusive education as a **core pedagogical principle**, not a special module.
- Expand the definition of inclusion beyond disability to cover gender, caste, religion, and economic background.
- Mandate **inclusion-related assessments** as part of B.Ed evaluation.

C. For Administrators and DIETs

- Conduct **frequent training workshops** on inclusive pedagogy.
- Provide **inclusive teaching-learning materials** and **assistive devices** to colleges.
- Ensure **monitoring and evaluation** of inclusive practices during internships.

D. For Future Researchers

- Extend research to **in-service teachers** and **school leaders**.
- Conduct comparative studies across districts to assess regional trends.
- Develop **quantitative tools** to measure changes in attitude post-training.

6.4 Limitations of the Study

- The study was limited to **two colleges in one city** (Chapra), thus limiting generalisability.
- Sample size was modest (40 respondents), focusing only on B.Ed final-year students.
- The study did not use standardised attitude scales due to its qualitative orientation.

6.5 Suggestions for Further Research

- A longitudinal study can assess whether pre-service attitudes sustain in real teaching practice.
- Similar studies can be conducted in other districts of Bihar and other Indian states for comparative insights.
- Further research could include school administrators, parents, and even students with disabilities to provide a 360-degree view.

6.6 Final Words

Inclusive education is a **moral imperative**, not merely an educational choice. It reflects our national commitment to equity and dignity for all. The present study reveals that future teachers are

emotionally aligned with this vision, but the system must empower them with the right tools, training, and experiences.

With consistent curriculum reform, faculty development, and policy support, the dream of inclusive classrooms in India can become a reality — not just in words, but in practice.

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APPENDIX – I

Semi-Structured Questionnaire (Administered to B.Ed Final-Year Students)

Instructions to Respondents:

This questionnaire is designed to gather your views on inclusive education. Your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for academic research.

Part A – General Information

1. Name (Optional): _____
2. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female
3. Age: _____
4. Name of Institution:

   ☐ College A

   ☐ College B
5. Year/Semester: ☐ Final Year (4th Semester)

Part B – Awareness and Experience

6. Have you studied Inclusive Education in your B.Ed curriculum? ☐ Yes ☐ No
7. Have you interacted with children with disabilities (CwDs) during your internship? ☐ Yes ☐ No
8. Can children with disabilities learn effectively in regular schools?

   ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree
9. Do you feel confident to teach in an inclusive classroom? ☐ Yes ☐ No
10. In your opinion, what challenges do teachers face in inclusive classrooms? (Open-ended)

11. What support do you think is essential for effective inclusive teaching? (Tick all applicable)

    ☐ Training ☐ Special Educator Support ☐ Materials ☐ Peer Support ☐ Others: _____
12. Do you think inclusive education builds empathy in students? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
13. What was your most memorable experience related to inclusion during B.Ed? (Open-ended)

14. Suggest any method to improve inclusive education in teacher training. (Open-ended)

APPENDIX – II

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

For Teachers and DIET Officers

Interview Questions:

1. How is inclusive education covered in the current B.Ed curriculum?
2. Do you feel B.Ed students are practically prepared for inclusive teaching?
3. What are the main challenges students face in understanding inclusion?
4. Are B.Ed trainees exposed to real interactions with CwDs during internships?
5. How can teacher training colleges be strengthened to better prepare students?
6. What role does DIET play in promoting inclusive education in the region?
7. Are there any workshops or programs currently running on inclusion?
8. What is your opinion on the attitude of student teachers towards inclusive practices?
9. What policy changes would you suggest in pre-service education for better inclusivity?

APPENDIX – III

Focused Group Discussions (FGDs)

Overview:

Two FGDs were conducted with groups of 6 students each — one in each college.

Key Themes Emerged:

- Many felt they lacked real exposure to CwDs.
- Some said inclusion was only taught as theory.
- A few shared emotional stories of empathy from internships.
- Some said they feared making mistakes while teaching inclusively.

These discussions helped enrich the findings with deeper emotional and social understanding.