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.