



# Enhancing Inclusive Education in India through Effective Teacher Preparedness and Practice

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**Abstract:** *The concept of inclusive education is quite policy-affirmative in India, classrooms practice has been uneven. This is a review paper that looks at the teacher preparedness as one of the key factors determining inclusive practice. It contends that the primary challenge is not policy intent, but the limited ability to transform inclusion into daily teaching. The paper is based on the available literature and policy reports, as it discusses the role of teachers, the challenges encountered by the professionals and how to facilitate meaningful inclusion. The review poses five significant issues, including a lack of professional preparation, less institutional support, adverse attitudes, strict curriculum practices, and broader social inequality. It demonstrates that inclusion is frequently perceived as physical access but not active participation and learning. It is concluded in the paper that inclusive education in India would be enhanced through stronger teacher preparation, ongoing professional support, and context-sensitive pedagogy.*

**Keywords:** *Inclusive education, teacher preparedness, classroom practice, India, teacher education.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is now a key priority in education in India. Its legal core is the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and the policy course is additionally reinforced by the National Education Policy 2020 and Samagra Shiksha (Government of India, 2009, 2016; Ministry of Education, 2020). However, there is still an imbalance in transition between policy dedication and classroom actuality. It has been repeatedly documented that children being placed in mainstream schools does not necessarily imply their participation, dignity, or meaningful learning assistance. This process of inclusion is also usually restricted to placement instead of actual learning participation (Gale et al., 2022; Rai & Kanvaria, 2025).

This issue is even greater in the Indian context since it is not disability that defines exclusion. It has an intimate association with poverty, caste, gender, language, geography and inequality in access to school resources. According to Gale et al. (2022), India needs a more inclusive perspective on the topic of inclusion that accommodates multiple forms of disadvantage beyond disability concerns. The role of the teacher is particularly significant here, as teachers are supposed to serve a wide variety of students in the traditionally under-resourced and institutionally inflexible classrooms.

The main premise of this paper is that the preparedness of teachers is the most determinant of the nature of the practice of inclusive education in India. Policies can create rights and aims, yet the issue of inclusion must be worked out by the teachers who would decide whether it would be viable to introduce education to the classroom. Inclusion is symbolic, where teachers are not professionally prepared, as well as given practical support and pedagogical freedom. With well-prepared and well-supported teachers, inclusion gets more substantive and long term.



## 2. Theoretical Perspective

The present paper is informed by a rights-based and social definition of inclusion. In this view, exclusion is not due only to the impairment or limitation of a particular learner. It also comes up as a result of obstacles that arise from institutions, school patterns, attitudes, curriculum designs, and classroom behaviours. Daniel (2026) asserts that the meaning of inclusive education should be construed as the institutional adaptability, but not as an opportunity to expect the child to adjust to an unaltered school setup. The difference is significant since integration and inclusion cannot be considered synonyms. Integration can place the learner inside a typical classroom; however, inclusion necessitates the school to transform into being responsive, flexible, and participatory (Daniel, 2026).

This opinion applies specifically to India, where educational disadvantage is frequently stratified. Exclusion of a child can be due to disability, but also the location of the caste, countryside, language, poverty, or gender. It is due to this reason that the concept of inclusive pedagogy in India should be perceived as a reaction to the general social and institutional diversity. The central role in teacher preparedness is explained by the fact that teachers are the intermediaries between the policy ideals and classroom reality (Gale et al., 2022; Rai and Kanvaria, 2025).

## 3. Literature Review

### The issue of teacher preparedness

It is quite coherent in the literature that teachers are the most critical component in inclusive education. Das et al. (2013) discovered that special education training was not available to many regular school teachers, and classroom support services were not accessible. Their research had also demonstrated that teachers expressed their abilities in inclusive settings as low or limited. This has been one of the best examples of how teachers are supposed to perform and what they are truly willing to perform.

Das et al. (2013) add this argument by explicating that inclusive education has greatly increased the tasks of the regular teacher. The role of teachers has changed as they are no longer expected to impart information traditionally. They are also supposed to determine the needs of the learners, make adaptations in instruction, engage in individual planning, partner up with parents and specialists, as well as establishing classroom environments that accommodate different learners. They play a significant role in the sense that inclusion transforms the essence of teaching. It does not involve any additional tasks to be performed in a classroom. It redefines the aspects of effective teaching (Das et al. 2013).

This difficulty is still present, as observed in more recent studies. The qualitative meta-synthesis of Daniel has the conclusion that teacher preparation in India is uneven and, in most cases, inadequate where it exists. A rural South Indian study by Boniface et al. (2025) also reported that teachers needed greater disability awareness, better definitions of individualised education and more feasible ways to encourage inclusion (Daniel, 2026; Boniface et al., 2025).

### Inadequate professional preparation;

One of the central themes in the literature is the ineffectiveness of pre-service and in-service preparation. In many cases, teachers are expected to handle the diversity among learners without sufficient background knowledge in differentiated instruction, adaptive assessment, inclusive classroom management, or disability-responsive pedagogy. According to Grewal (2019), a significant proportion of educators, particularly in rural academic institutions, did not receive the specialised training necessary to assist different learners. It is not the issue of access to the training, but also the quality and the relevance of that training.

According to Daniel (2026), despite the existence of training, it is, in most cases, too general and not well related to classroom realities. Educators can also get general theoretical exposure without the practical instructions on how to alter the materials, facilitate participation, and multi-level planning.

Similar findings are reflected by Boniface et al. (2025), who state that teachers require specific and evidence-based assistance, but not a general improvement. According to Rai & Kanvaria (2025), teacher preparedness will continue to be one of the primary points of weakness in the NEP 2020 era, as the language of the policy on inclusive reform is rather strong.

This brings about the fact that teacher preparation cannot be a one-time certification experience. Through ongoing professional learning, school-based mentoring and continuing reflective practices, inclusive classrooms need to be sustained. In the absence of such support, training does not take on a transformative approach but is formal.

### Weak institutional support systems:

It is also indicated in the literature that meaningful inclusion cannot be maintained solely on the efforts of teachers. According to Gale et al. (2022), the key to successful inclusive education rests in the involvement and mobilisation of teachers and school leaders, their training and provision of resources, the creation of support and



monitoring and evaluation systems. This work is particularly significant due to the fact that it no longer focuses on the blame of teachers, but on the broader school systems, which enable good teaching to occur.

Rai and Kanvaria (2025) also claim that a significant portion of schools do not have the infrastructure, pedagogic assistance, and institutional follow-through available. Soratha (2025) also underlines that inclusive education presupposes enhanced cooperation between schools and communities as well as an appropriate level of general school preparedness. Combined, these studies indicate that inclusive education relies on systems, and not merely teacher willingness.

Boniface et al. (2025) also indicate that inclusion initiatives get more powerful as they become associated with teacher-defined needs and local support systems. Their results indicate that institutional support must be construed broadly to refer to school leadership, specialist support, rehabilitation connections and community involvement. Teachers can play a central role, yet they cannot do it in isolation.

#### **Attitudes and stigma of disability:**

Teacher preparedness is not solely technical; it is also attitudinal. Another study by Boniface et al. (2025) discovered that the perceptions of teachers towards disability influence inclusion in the classroom to a great extent. In an environment where disability is treated with stigma, pity, or low expectation, meaningful involvement becomes less probable. Grewal (2019) also mentions attitudinal barriers between teachers, parents, and peers as a significant impediment, with particular reference to the limited understanding of awareness and limited support systems.

Daniel (2026) provides a valuable addition by demonstrating that even teachers who advocate for inclusion verbally might be processing assumptions in a deficit manner. That is, inclusion in policy does not necessarily result in inclusive pedagogy. Teacher education should thus be in touch with ideas about ability, normalcy, and difference. In the absence of such a reflective aspect, training can enhance the formal language, but the classroom expectations and relationships can remain in the same manner. This more widespread issue finds representation in Indian conceptual work as well.

According to Sanjeev and Kumar (2007), segregation is educationally constraining and even indefensible, whereas Sarkar (2021) focuses on inclusion being participatory, belonging, and flexible instead of being placed.

#### **Curriculum rigidity and contingency inequality:**

The struggle between inclusion objectives and strict school organisation is another common theme. The teachers sometimes have to operate in a test-based system, a standardised curriculum, and highly timetabled schedules that have little space to spare. According to Grewal (2019), the conventional learning activities and evaluation systems fail to support the requirements of a diverse population. This leads to a contradiction: teachers might be attracted to inclusion in ideology, but feel wedded to institutional practices, which prefer homogeneity and coverage of the syllabus.

According to Gale et al. (2022), inclusive practice can be enhanced when the teaching can be more responsive, flexible, and collaborative about the context of the learner. Nevertheless, this is hard to achieve in the under-resourced schools, and in the rural districts, in particular. Boniface et al. (2025) demonstrate that in South India, teachers working in rural areas are commonly exposed to greater social stigma, less specialist support, and a reduced number of opportunities to be trained inclusively. Grewal (2019) also emphasises that rural educational institutions do not always have the necessary infrastructure and other specialised resources. These results depict that it is not possible to decouple inclusive education in India in a wider context of structural inequality. Rai & Kanvaria (2025) also assert that the NEP 2020 promise will be incomplete without providing more support to schools in terms of infrastructure, preparation of teachers, and capacity to implement.

#### **4. Objectives of the study:**

1. To look into the relevance of teacher preparedness in influencing the quality of inclusive education in India first.
2. To find out the key obstacles that limit successful inclusive classroom practice.
3. To find out and recommend effective policies for preparing teachers for inclusive education in the Indian school environment.

#### **5. Research questions:**

1. How does teacher preparedness influence the quality of inclusive education in India?
2. What are the key obstacles that hinder effective inclusive classroom practices in Indian schools?
3. What policies can be identified and recommended to enhance teacher preparedness for inclusive education in the Indian school context?



## 6. Research Design

This study adopts a systematic literature review approach guided by the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework. The purpose is to critically examine existing research on teacher preparedness and inclusive classroom practices in India.

## 7. Data Sources and Search Strategy:

Relevant literature was identified through academic databases such as:

- Google Scholar
- Scopus-indexed journals
- ERIC and other education databases

### Keywords used included:

- Inclusive education in India
- Teacher preparedness for inclusion
- Inclusive classroom practices
- Barriers to inclusive education
- NEP 2020 and inclusion

### Selection Criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to ensure relevance, quality, and alignment with the study objectives.

**Table 1: PRISMA Flow of Study Selection Process**

Stage	Description	Number of Studies
Identification	Records identified through database searching	45
Identification	Additional records from references and manual search	10
Screening	Records after duplicates removed	48
Screening	Records screened based on title and abstract	48
Exclusion	Records excluded (irrelevant focus, non-Indian context, etc.)	25
Eligibility	Full-text articles assessed for eligibility	23
Exclusion	Full-text articles excluded (lack of relevance, insufficient data)	11
Included	Studies included in the final review	12

### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria Table:

**Table 2: Inclusion Criteria**

Criteria	Description
Geographical Scope	Studies conducted in India
Focus Area	Teacher preparedness, inclusive classroom practices, barriers, and policies
Participants	Teachers and students in school education
Study Type	Empirical, review, and conceptual studies
Time Frame	2007–2026
Language	English
Source	Peer-reviewed journals

**Table 3: Exclusion Criteria**

Criteria	Description
Geographical Irrelevance	Studies outside India without contextual relevance
Thematic Irrelevance	Studies not focused on inclusive education
Population Mismatch	Studies not involving teachers or school settings
Publication Type	Non-academic or non-peer-reviewed sources
Language	Non-English publications
Data Limitation	Incomplete or inaccessible studies



## 8. Findings and Discussion

Current investigations of the challenges related to inclusive education in India trace the roots of a lack of effective solutions to one of the key gaps in educator preparedness. Throughout the chosen sources, there is always an exemplar of a teacher, who plays the main role of inclusion, yet, in most cases, the educator fulfils his or her work without proper professional training, mentorship, classroom instruction, and instructional reinforcement. Such disconnection places a major constraint on the successful practice of inclusiveness in actual classrooms.

One of the major conclusions of the review is that the preparedness of teachers has historically been considered as the peripheral input, but not a vehicle of transformation. The lack of systematic support and independent training was also identified by Das A. K. et al. as the key impediments (2013). Other more recent works, like Daniel S. (2026), ensure that these problems still exist, which proves that there is no significant improvement in the problem over the years. Additionally, Boniface et al. (2025) also note that there are still contextual and locally-relevant issues in teacher training that require specialised training in schools based on their resources and diversity. The fact that these results have been consistent over a period of time shows that teacher preparedness is not an issue at the systems level, but a systemic issue.

The other significant conclusion is that teachers cannot be prepared to administer inclusive classrooms with short-term or one-time training programs. Inclusive education needs continuous professional development, cooperative learning conditions, reflective practices in pedagogy and long-term support by the institution. The review notes that the teacher readiness in itself is not sufficient to accomplish the successful inclusion unless it is integrated into a supportive school ecosystem. Factors like leadership dedication, available infrastructure, flexible curriculum practices and viable policy implementation mechanisms are equally imperative.

The point of the further elaboration is that this is not a question of policy absence anymore in India, but of statute and action. As programs such as NEP 2020 promote inclusive education, the problem is with institutional follow-through and implementation. Schools are institutional in ways that they do not have the structural and administrative capability to bring policy ideals to life in classrooms.

Another important lesson that can be learned after reading the review is the need to abandon access- based conceptions of inclusion. Although there has been an increase in enrolment of students with diverse needs, authentic inclusion entails participation, engagement and learning outcomes. Teachers are strategic in this change, since they influence classroom cultures, teaching practices and peer relations. An effectively prepared and supported teacher rendition makes inclusion pedagogically significant and transformative. In the event of such a lack of preparation, inclusion will end up as a symbolic or procedural feature instead of a serious educational activity.

Summing up, the results indicate that enhancing inclusive education in India demands a systemic change in the policy formulation process and the central concern of its implementation through the constant and ongoing teacher training, institutional backing, and situation-specific strategies.

## 9. Conclusion

This review paper discussed teacher preparation and the inclusive education practice in India. It was observed that India has built a strong legal and policy commitment to inclusion, which is, however, unequally fulfilled in the classroom. Teachers have been labelled by the literature as the most significant participants in the process of translating inclusive commitments into practice. Nonetheless, there are a lot of those who do the job without being properly prepared, under mentorship and lack of resources and proper institutional frameworks.

It is observed that a classroom gap remains the greatest weakness of inclusive education in India, as it is concluded in the paper. Such disparity is evident in cases where students are introduced to the regular mainstream schools without any actual pedagogical assistance, and teachers are left to meet the needs of various students without the course and support they are supposed to possess to handle the same. The key to this gap is to make teacher preparedness one of the primary reform areas. It is necessary to have practical pre-service education, ongoing in-service growth, flexible pedagogy, support in school and enhanced collaboration with families and communities. The policy language will not be enough to empower inclusive education in India, but equipping the teachers to teach through diversity in a competent, confident, and supportive manner will make a difference.

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