

Teacher Readiness for an Inclusive English Classroom in Bhutan: Opportunities and Challenges

YANGDON

Samtse College of Education, Royal University of Bhutan, Bhutan

Author email: yangdon.sce@rub.edu.bt

Article information	Abstract
Article history: Received: 23 Feb 2025 Last revised: 27 Aug 2026 Accepted: 28 Aug 2026 Available online: 31 Aug 2026 Keywords: English Teachers Inclusive Challenges Opportunities	<i>Bhutan's education system is shifting towards inclusivity, seeking to embrace and accommodate the diverse learning needs of all students. As the country advances its commitment to inclusive education, English teachers play a pivotal role in fostering an inclusive classroom culture. Therefore, it is essential to understand how prepared English teachers are for an inclusive classroom. Since there is no research on the topic in Bhutan, the present study aimed to identify and analyse the opportunities and challenges faced by Bhutanese secondary English language teachers in creating an inclusive English classroom. The study employed a qualitative design. Data for the study were gathered from nine English teachers teaching in secondary schools in urban and semi-urban settings. Six phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2018) were employed to analyse the data. The findings highlighted that fostering inclusivity requires a multifaceted approach, including equal access to learning, activities, and resources for all students. The benefits of an inclusive English classroom included enhanced academic achievement, development of social skills, and global citizenship readiness. However, challenges such as inadequate knowledge, limited resources, and time constraints were identified, emphasising the need for ongoing professional development, access to diverse resources, and collaborative networks. It is recommended that training be provided and relevant resources be made available to English teachers to enable them to create an inclusive English classroom.</i>

INTRODUCTION

Bhutan's education system is a unique blend of tradition and modernity. Until the 1950s, education in Bhutan was confined to monasteries, and many renowned Bhutanese scholars studied Buddhist scriptures in Tibet (Ministry of Education, 2015). The monastic form of education is still prevalent in the country. The 20th century ushered in a wave of change, introducing a formal Western-style education system in the 1950s (World Bank, 2019). This marked an important moment, propelling Bhutan on a journey towards building a knowledge-based society while preserving its rich cultural heritage. Bhutan, guided by the principle of Gross National Happiness (GNH), which prioritises well-being over material wealth, places significant emphasis on education. Education is one of the nine domains of GNH (Verma, 2017). As part of this vision, Bhutan's education system aims to enhance access,

equity, and quality while fostering learning environments that accommodate the diverse needs of students across abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles (Ministry of Education, 2014). Within this inclusive education framework, secondary English language teachers play a pivotal role in cultivating classroom cultures that embrace diversity and promote equitable learning outcomes. However, despite the critical role of English teachers in advancing inclusivity, there is limited understanding of the opportunities and challenges they face in preparing for and implementing inclusive practices in the Bhutanese context. The paucity of research on this subject highlights a significant gap in knowledge, particularly regarding how secondary English teachers can be effectively prepared to navigate the complexities of inclusive classrooms. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the specific challenges and opportunities associated with preparing secondary English teachers for inclusive English education in Bhutan. The study aims to identify the barriers they encounter, analyse their experiences, and propose evidence-based interventions to enhance their preparedness. By doing so, the research aspires to contribute to the development of an inclusive educational landscape in Bhutan that ensures high-quality teaching and equitable English language learning opportunities for all students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive education

Rooted in social justice movements, inclusive education gained international recognition with the 1994 Salamanca Statement (Boyle & Anderson, 2021). This document declared it a fundamental right, emphasising removing barriers and adapting teaching to individual needs in diverse classrooms. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006 further solidified this right, aligning with Education for All initiatives seeking quality education for everyone (United Nations, 2006). UNESCO's 2017 guidelines define inclusive education as a systematic process that actively removes obstacles and creates supportive environments where all learners are valued (UNESCO, 2017). Bhutan embraces this global call for inclusion, and recognising its potential to promote social cohesion and ensure equitable access to quality education, the Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024 prioritises it (Ministry of Education, 2014). Inclusive education is described as fostering diverse learning environments that support holistic student development, aligning with Bhutan's cultural values (Jigyel et al., 2018). The Royal Government of Bhutan acknowledges its transformative power, equipping students with disabilities for successful societal integration (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2019).

The inclusive English classroom

An inclusive English classroom emphasises participation, belonging, and valuing all students (Ainscow et al., 2006). Inclusive classrooms strive to create flexible learning environments that cater to a wide range of backgrounds, abilities, and learning styles (Anderson & Boyle, 2015; Booth & Ainscow, 2002). This ensures no student is marginalised and all have the opportunity to thrive. Beyond academic matters, inclusive English classrooms also prioritise social-emotional

well-being (Florian, 2008). Teachers cultivate positive climates built on respect, empathy, and collaboration (Partridge, 2018). They employ strategies to promote positive social interactions, critical thinking, and a sense of community where students feel safe to learn from each other (Florian, 2008). Creating such classrooms requires a multidimensional approach focused on equity and access (Ainscow, 2005) by providing all students with the resources and support they need to succeed, regardless of background or ability (Tomlinson, 2001). This can involve differentiated instruction, assistive technologies, culturally relevant materials, and ongoing professional development for teachers (Tomlinson, 2001).

Opportunities for an inclusive English classroom

Research highlights the benefits of inclusive English classrooms. These environments foster a richer learning experience for all by bringing together diverse perspectives and experiences (Puspitasari, 2019). Students develop critical thinking and empathy as they learn from each other in inclusive settings (Sun, 2023). Inclusive practices also ensure equitable access to learning by accommodating different learning styles and abilities (Rose & Meyer, 2002). This facilitates collaboration and peer learning, fostering social cohesion and mutual respect (Gay, 2010). Inclusive classrooms extend beyond academic gains. They create a sense of belonging and acceptance for all students, regardless of background (Sleeter, 2011). This reduces bullying and discrimination, leading to a safer and more supportive school environment (Cornelius-White, 2007). Moreover, these classrooms challenge stereotypes and promote social justice (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Students develop critical literacy skills through diverse literature, empowering them to advocate for equity and inclusion (García & Kleifgen, 2010). Inclusive practices validate student identities and experiences, boosting self-esteem and confidence (Banks, 2012; Gay, 2010). By incorporating diverse perspectives, students develop a positive sense of self and appreciate their heritage. Importantly, these approaches empower students with disabilities or language barriers to actively participate and succeed academically (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). This empowerment fosters not only academic gains but also resilience and self-advocacy skills crucial for lifelong learning (Katz & Galbraith, 2006). Additionally, an inclusive English classroom offers several additional benefits, notably enhancing students' communication skills across listening, speaking, reading, and writing domains. Furthermore, it promotes a more inclusive and respectful environment where students from diverse cultural backgrounds feel recognised and valued. This setting also encourages positive social interactions and relationships among students, reduces barriers, and nurtures a strong sense of community (Muhammadjanovna, 2024).

Challenges of creating an inclusive English classroom

The literature on inclusive education suggests numerous challenges in creating an inclusive English classroom. These challenges include lack of knowledge (Tuzlukova et al., 2023); inadequate teacher preparation (Ainscow, 2005; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011); inadequate or insufficient emphasis on inclusive strategies for English language teaching (Chhetri, 2019); inadequate understanding of inclusion (UNESCO, 2017); limited equipment and specialised support services specifically tailored for diverse learners within English language (Ministry of Education, 2016); lack of teaching materials (Puspitasari, 2019); and large class sizes

and limited individual attention (UNICEF, 2018). Traditional teacher training often fails to equip educators with the skills needed to address the diverse needs of students with learning disabilities, language differences, or varied cultural backgrounds. Studies call for more comprehensive training in areas like differentiated instruction and cultural competency (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012). Limited access to ongoing professional development further strains teachers struggling to support their students effectively (Forlin et al., 2008). Resource limitations pose another challenge. Inclusive classrooms require a variety of materials such as audiobooks, graphic novels, and assistive technologies to cater to diverse learning styles (Tomlinson, 2001). Effective instruction is another hurdle. Teachers must balance support for struggling students with engaging activities for high achievers (Rose & Meyer, 2002). Developing differentiated lesson plans and ongoing assessments to meet individual needs places a significant burden on educators (Rose & Meyer, 2002; Tomlinson, 2001). Finally, fostering a positive classroom culture that celebrates diversity requires ongoing effort. Educators may face challenges addressing student biases and creating a safe space for all (Florian, 2008; Gay, 2010). Building a strong classroom community requires employing cooperative learning strategies and promoting positive interactions (Florian, 2008).

Strategies to create an inclusive English classroom

A cornerstone of inclusive classrooms is differentiated instruction, a framework that tailors learning experiences to cater to diverse needs and learning styles (Tomlinson, 2001). This can involve modifying content, process, product, or the learning environment to ensure accessibility and engagement for all students (Echevarria et al., 2013). Effective strategies include providing tiered assignments with varying levels of complexity, offering a variety of text formats (audiobooks, graphic novels), and incorporating choice boards that allow students to demonstrate their understanding in multiple ways (Tomlinson, 2001). For English language learners, specific strategies such as scaffolding instruction, pre-teaching vocabulary, and using visuals can be particularly beneficial (Echevarria et al., 2013). Social-emotional learning (SEL) plays a crucial role in creating a safe and inclusive classroom environment (CASEL, 2023). By integrating SEL activities, teachers can help students develop self-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Weinstein et al., 2003).

Cooperative learning tasks, such as jigsaw activities and group discussions, can foster collaboration and empathy among students from diverse backgrounds (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2023). Additionally, creating a classroom climate that celebrates differences and promotes respect through positive reinforcement and open communication is essential for fostering inclusivity (Echevarria et al., 2013). Technology can be a powerful tool for creating an inclusive English classroom by providing a range of access points for learners with diverse needs (Edyburn, 2000). Furthermore, the use of assistive technologies, such as screen readers and mind-mapping software, can empower students with disabilities to participate fully in learning activities (Edyburn, 2000). Creating a truly inclusive English classroom requires a collaborative effort from educators, students, and families (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasises the importance of social interaction in learning, highlighting the role of teachers in providing scaffolding and creating a learning environment that encourages collaboration (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2023).

Regular communication with families, understanding students' individual needs and cultural backgrounds, and involving them in the learning process are key components of fostering a sense of shared responsibility for fostering inclusion (Vygotsky, 1978).

Support mechanism in creating an inclusive English classroom

The literature outlines various strategies aimed at assisting English teachers in establishing inclusive English classrooms. A pivotal form of support identified is continuous professional development and training, as highlighted by Alshahrani and Abu-Alghayth (2023). They emphasise the substantial benefits derived by teachers from training programmes concentrating on diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies. These programmes equip teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources essential for effectively addressing diverse student needs. Furthermore, providing teachers with access to a range of resources and materials is beneficial (Cornelius & Sandmel, 2018). Access to such resources aids in enhancing the inclusivity of classroom content and activities, thereby catering to a broader spectrum of student backgrounds and experiences. Additionally, the establishment of professional learning communities (PLCs) plays a crucial role in supporting English teachers. DuFour and DuFour (2013) highlight that PLCs enable teachers to collaborate, share best practices, and collectively address challenges related to creating inclusive classrooms. Through collaborative discussions and peer support within PLCs, teachers can refine their teaching approaches and tailor them to meet the diverse needs of their students effectively. Moreover, administrative and institutional support is indispensable for sustaining inclusive practices, as underscored by Crook (2023). Such support encompasses ongoing feedback, mentorship, and recognition from school administrators, which empower teachers to continue implementing inclusive teaching practices with confidence and efficacy.

Summary of literature review

The literature on inclusive education highlights its evolution from global social justice movements to becoming a key priority in Bhutan's education system. Rooted in the Salamanca Statement (Boyle & Anderson, 2021) and reinforced by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), inclusive education seeks to remove barriers and promote equitable access to learning. Bhutan has aligned its education policies with these principles, integrating inclusive education into the Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024 (Ministry of Education, 2014).

Within this framework, inclusive English classrooms emphasise participation, belonging, and equitable learning opportunities (Ainscow et al., 2006). These classrooms foster positive social-emotional well-being (Florian, 2008), provide diverse learning resources (Tomlinson, 2001), and enhance critical thinking and empathy among students (Sun, 2023). However, despite these benefits, various challenges persist, including inadequate teacher preparation (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011), lack of specialised resources (Ministry of Education, 2016), and large class sizes (UNICEF, 2018). Studies emphasise the need for differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2001), cooperative learning strategies (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2023), and assistive technologies (Edyburn, 2000) to enhance inclusivity. Furthermore,

professional development, access to resources, and institutional support play critical roles in empowering teachers to create inclusive classrooms (Alshahrani & Abu-Alghayth, 2023; Crook, 2023).

Despite extensive literature on inclusive education and its benefits, limited research exists on how secondary English teachers in Bhutan navigate the complexities of inclusive English classrooms. While global frameworks and strategies are well-documented, there is a paucity of studies examining the specific challenges Bhutanese teachers face in implementing inclusive practices. Moreover, there is insufficient research on the effectiveness of current teacher preparation programmes, resource availability, and institutional support in facilitating inclusive English education. Addressing these gaps is crucial for developing evidence-based interventions tailored to Bhutan's unique educational context.

The study is guided by the following research questions.

1. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions of an inclusive English classroom in Bhutan?
2. What are secondary English teachers' views on the potential benefits of implementing inclusive practices in their classrooms in Bhutan?
3. What challenges are perceived in creating inclusive English classrooms in Bhutan?
4. What strategies can be employed to address the challenges of fostering an inclusive English classroom in Bhutan?

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study adopted a qualitative research design to examine secondary English teachers' perceptions related to the opportunities and challenges associated with their readiness for an inclusive English classroom. The use of this design facilitated an in-depth exploration of English teachers' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward inclusivity. Additionally, this design facilitated the identification of the unique challenges teachers face, providing richer insights compared to quantitative methods (Cohen et al., 2018). Teachers' emotional responses and attitudes, which are central to their readiness to create an inclusive English classroom but difficult to quantify, are also well-captured through qualitative approaches, providing a deeper understanding of the human aspects of inclusivity (Patton, 2015). Through semi-structured interviews, the study examined secondary English teachers' lived experiences, offering critical insights into their readiness for inclusive English classrooms.

Data collection tool

A semi-structured interview approach consisting of nineteen open-ended questions was employed to explore the research topic. The interview questions focused on participants' perceptions of an inclusive English classroom, its benefits and challenges, and strategies for

addressing the identified challenges. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The use of semi-structured interview approach provided a balance between addressing key themes and adapting to the specific context of Bhutanese classrooms. It encouraged participants to elaborate on their experiences, offering insights into their personal beliefs, professional knowledge, and contextual challenges (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Furthermore, the flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed for a deeper exploration of emerging themes, facilitating the identification of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by teachers in Bhutanese secondary English classrooms. Overall, this approach appeared to be an effective tool for capturing the complexity and context-specific nature of teacher readiness within an inclusive educational environment.

Participants and sampling procedure

The sample for the study consisted of nine secondary English teachers teaching in urban and semi-urban schools in Bhutan. The participants consisted of both male and female teachers of varying levels of teaching experience. Random sampling was used to select the participants. This sampling strategy helped capture a broad range of perspectives and experiences, thereby enhancing the richness of the data with a wider range of participants (Patton, 2015), and the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings by reducing selection bias (Miles et al., 2014).

Data analysis

The data were analysed thematically using the method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2018), employing a systematic and iterative approach. The analysis began with an in-depth review of all transcripts, which were read and reread multiple times to achieve familiarity with the data. During this process, potential codes relevant to each topic were identified and recorded. These initial codes were then rigorously refined through processes of addition, deletion, renaming, and consolidation to ensure clear differentiation and alignment with the emerging themes. Subsequently, relevant categories were developed to organise the codes, with all pertinent data segments systematically assigned to their corresponding categories. The analysis culminated in the generation of a comprehensive report that included data extracts to substantiate the findings. Although the procedure is described sequentially, the process was inherently iterative, with frequent revisiting and refinement of earlier stages to ensure accuracy and depth in the analysis.

Ethical considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were assured of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Before the semi-structured interviews, the purpose of the research was explained in detail, and participants were encouraged to ask questions or seek clarification. Permission was obtained to record the interviews, and strict measures were implemented to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Pseudonyms, such as T1 (T stands for teacher) are used to protect their identities. Therefore, all ethical guidelines were meticulously followed throughout the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings and discussion of the study are organised under four key themes related to the research questions: perception of inclusive English classroom; benefits of inclusive English classroom; challenges in creating an inclusive English language classroom; and strategies to prepare English teachers for an inclusive English classroom. The findings are analysed in conjunction with existing literature to provide a nuanced understanding of inclusive English classrooms and to propose effective strategies for its enhancement.

Perception of inclusive English classroom

The findings revealed that participants held varied perceptions of an inclusive English classroom. For some, an inclusive English classroom is characterised by equal access to learning opportunities, activities, and resources for all students, regardless of their differences or abilities. This perspective is exemplified by T8, who stated: “An inclusive English language classroom is a classroom where all the students get access to equal learning opportunities irrespective of their background or different learning abilities”. Similarly, T1 described an inclusive classroom as “An environment where all students are treated equally”. These findings align with existing research, which highlights the emphasis of inclusive classrooms on participation and belonging (Ainscow et al., 2006). Inclusive education involves recognising and valuing student diversity, encompassing factors such as socioeconomic background, language proficiency, cultural heritage, and learning styles (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). To achieve this, teachers must create flexible learning environments that cater to diverse needs and abilities, ensuring that no student is marginalised or excluded from opportunities to learn and succeed (Anderson & Boyle, 2015).

Participants also emphasised the importance of respect in an inclusive English classroom. For instance, T6 stated that in an inclusive English classroom, every student, irrespective of their unique traits, receives appreciation, respect, and encouragement throughout their language learning process. T5 highlighted the importance of inclusivity in the English language classroom, highlighting that such a setting is characterised by respectful and kind communication among all participants, including both teachers and students. This perspective is corroborated by literature that shows the importance of prioritising not only academic achievement but also the social-emotional well-being of all students in inclusive classrooms (Florian, 2008). Establishing a positive classroom climate based on respect, empathy, and collaboration is critical to fostering inclusivity (Partridge, 2018). According to T6, the ultimate goal of inclusivity in the English language classroom is to cultivate an environment in which every student feels valued, respected, and supported throughout their English learning journey. Additionally, it aims to foster the development of students’ competence across all dimensions of the English language.

Benefits of inclusive English classroom

The analysis of the data revealed several benefits of an inclusive English classroom, as identified by participants. T6 highlighted how diverse student backgrounds enrich classroom

discussions and broaden perspectives, fostering a deeper understanding of language and literature. According to T6:

In an inclusive English language classroom, diverse student backgrounds enrich discussions and broaden perspectives, fostering a comprehensive understanding of language and literature. Collaborative learning and inclusive activities enhance students' social skills, communication skills, teamwork, and ability to navigate diverse social contexts.

This finding aligns with the literature. Puspitasari (2019) and Sun (2023) contend that inclusive environments foster diverse perspectives and critical thinking skills, thereby enhancing the educational experience for all students. Similarly, Gay (2010) emphasises that inclusive classrooms promote collaboration and peer learning, leading to improved academic performance and social cohesion among students. Participants also recognised the professional benefits of inclusive classrooms for teachers. T7 noted that inclusivity encourages educators to adapt and refine their teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning needs, fostering their professional growth through continuous development and the exploration of innovative strategies. This perspective is further supported by T5, who elaborated on the comprehensive benefits of inclusivity:

In an inclusive English classroom, teachers stimulate creativity by embracing diverse perspectives and backgrounds, providing an environment where students can contribute unique insights and ideas during discussions and projects. They also customise support tailored to individual strengths and challenges, ensuring that every student can comprehend and apply concepts effectively, resulting in an overall improvement in academic performance. They also foster a deeper understanding and respect for diversity. Teachers expose students to diverse cultures and viewpoints, equipping students with the open-mindedness and cultural competence necessary for global citizenship, and facilitating their ability to navigate an interconnected world.

This finding aligns with Rose and Meyer (2002), who highlight that inclusive practices ensure equitable access to educational resources by accommodating various learning styles and abilities. Additionally, participants observed that inclusivity boosts learners' confidence and fosters a positive attitude toward learning. For instance, Banks (2012) emphasises how inclusive approaches validate students' identities and experiences, thereby enhancing self-esteem and cultural appreciation. Further supporting these findings, Artiles and Kozleski (2007) highlight that inclusive classrooms empower students to participate and succeed academically by accommodating diverse needs. Such settings foster resilience and self-advocacy skills essential for lifelong learning, as noted by Katz and Galbraith (2006). The findings also revealed that an inclusive English classroom supports the development of learners' literacy and communication skills. This is exemplified by T2's observation: "An inclusive English classroom enhances students' reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills". Similarly, Muhammadjanovna (2024) emphasised that such a classroom environment provides additional benefits, particularly in strengthening students' communication abilities

across these core domains. T6 highlighted the primary advantage of an inclusive English classroom, emphasising that such an environment ensures no child is left behind. By fostering a conducive atmosphere for learning, all students are motivated to actively participate and engage. Additionally, an inclusive English classroom cultivates a respectful and welcoming environment where students from diverse cultural backgrounds feel recognised and valued. This approach not only promotes positive social interactions and relationships among students but also breaks down barriers and fosters a strong sense of community.

Challenges in creating an inclusive English language classroom

The findings reveal several challenges in establishing inclusive English classrooms. A key challenge identified by participants is the lack of knowledge and preparedness among teachers. For instance, T3 noted: “I have encountered many challenges in creating and implementing an inclusive English language classroom since I have not attended any training or workshop”. Similarly, T9 acknowledged, “I lack the necessary exposure and preparedness to effectively work with students possessing diverse needs and abilities. To enhance my skills and knowledge, I had to consult with experts and colleagues”. These statements highlight a significant gap in professional development opportunities for teachers. T6 recommended addressing this issue by providing targeted professional development programmes, enabling teachers to acquire strategies for fostering inclusive English classrooms. Supporting these findings, existing literature suggests one of the challenges of teaching in an inclusive English classroom is a lack of knowledge (Tuzlukova et al., 2023). Moreover, traditional teacher education programmes often lack comprehensive training in meeting the needs of diverse learners, including students with learning disabilities and English language learners (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012). This highlights the critical need for ongoing professional development initiatives to equip teachers with the necessary skills and strategies for inclusive practices. Moreover, limited access to such training exacerbates educators’ feelings of being unprepared to support their students effectively (Forlin et al., 2008). In addition to insufficient training, T5 identified several other challenges, including inadequate resources and support, limited flexibility and choice, resistance and prejudice from various stakeholders, large class sizes, time constraints, and an overly extensive syllabus. These multifaceted issues align with findings in the literature, which emphasise the importance of providing differentiated resources—such as audiobooks, assistive technologies, and culturally relevant materials—to accommodate diverse learning needs (Tomlinson, 2001). Furthermore, the challenge of differentiating instruction to meet diverse learning needs, as highlighted by Tomlinson (2001), demands significant time, planning, and expertise on the part of educators. The combination of limited resources, extensive syllabi, and large class sizes intensifies these challenges, underscoring the necessity for systemic reforms to support inclusive education.

Strategies to prepare English teachers for an inclusive English classroom

The findings reveal strategies identified by participants to help them prepare for inclusive English classrooms. A critical strategy emphasised by participants is the need for professional development opportunities, including workshops and training sessions, to effectively equip teachers for inclusive teaching. T7 articulated this as follows:

The most effective strategies and approaches that will prepare English language teachers are providing inclusive pedagogy workshops that focus on inclusive teaching practices and emphasise diverse learning styles and abilities. Providing inclusive assessment practices would provide training on diverse assessment methods that consider different learning styles and abilities. Also, professional development in differentiated instruction would assist teachers in meeting the diverse needs of students, including those with different proficiency levels, learning styles, and abilities.

This finding aligns with existing literature, which underscores the importance of professional development in fostering inclusive teaching practices. Alshahrani and Abu-Alghayth (2023) highlight the benefits of training programmes centered on diversity, equity, and inclusion, noting their effectiveness in equipping teachers with essential tools to address diverse student needs. Participants also stressed the importance of access to resources in creating inclusive English classrooms. For instance, T9 stated:

To successfully implement inclusive teaching practices, English language teachers in Bhutan require several key resources and support. First, they need access to teaching materials aligned with the national curriculum and the principles of inclusive education, such as textbooks, workbooks, audio-visual aids, and online resources. Additionally, assistive technologies, including hearing aids, speech synthesisers, Braille keyboards, and magnifiers, are essential to help both teachers and students overcome challenges related to disabilities.

This aligns with Cornelius and Sandmel (2018), who emphasise the value of providing teachers with diverse resources to enhance inclusivity in classroom content and activities. Similarly, Edyburn (2000) highlights the role of technology in offering multiple access points for learners with diverse needs. Tools such as screen readers and mind-mapping software align with findings on the use of assistive technologies to empower students with disabilities in classroom participation. Another key strategy identified was collaboration among stakeholders, as noted by T3:

The collaboration between stakeholders plays a vital role in shaping an inclusive classroom, as regular communication between teachers, parents, communities, and administrators helps raise awareness about the importance of inclusive education. Engaging parents in the educational process fosters a sense of partnership. Moreover, collaboration with community leaders and members can help create a supportive network for students with diverse needs, improving the English classroom environment.

The literature corroborates this finding, highlighting the role of professional learning communities in supporting inclusive teaching. According to DuFour and DuFour (2013), PLCs facilitate the sharing of best practices and collective problem-solving, enhancing teachers' abilities to address diverse student needs. Furthermore, Crook (2023) emphasises the importance of administrative and institutional support, including feedback, mentorship, and

recognition, in empowering teachers to sustain inclusive practices confidently. Participants also noted the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration. They suggested that teachers should have opportunities to work with professionals such as special educators, psychologists, therapists, and language specialists to better identify and support the needs of diverse learners.

Mentorship programmes guided by experienced inclusive educators were also highlighted as valuable for providing insights and coping strategies for various challenges. Finally, participants underscored the role of teacher training institutions in Bhutan in equipping future educators with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for inclusive English teaching. For instance, T5 said:

Teacher training institutions can play a vital role in promoting inclusive English by providing teachers with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for inclusive teaching: Teacher training institutions can offer courses, workshops, and modules that cover the theoretical and practical aspects of inclusive education, such as the principles, policies, and practices of inclusion, the diverse needs and abilities of learners, the pedagogical strategies and methods for supporting all learners, and the assessment and evaluation of inclusive teaching and learning.

This finding aligns with the broader call for systemic reforms in teacher education to ensure the development of inclusive pedagogical competencies.

CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to study the opportunities and challenges of preparing English teachers to create an inclusive English classroom. Data for the study were gathered from nine English teachers teaching in secondary schools in both urban and semi-urban settings. Based on the findings discussed above, it is evident that creating an inclusive English classroom requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses various strategies and support mechanisms. The perception of an inclusive classroom as highlighted by the participants underscores the importance of providing equal access to learning, activities, and resources for all students, regardless of their differences and abilities. This aligns with existing literature emphasising the significance of inclusivity in promoting participation, belonging, and appreciation of diversity among students. The benefits of an inclusive English classroom, such as enhanced academic achievement, social skills development, and preparation for global citizenship, are well-supported by scholarly research. However, challenges in creating and implementing inclusive practices were identified, including inadequate support, administrative shortcomings, limited resources, and time constraints. These challenges resonate with the literature, emphasising the need for ongoing professional development, access to resources, and inclusive teaching strategies to address the diverse needs of students effectively.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While this study provides valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges of preparing English teachers to create inclusive English classrooms, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted with a small sample of nine secondary English teachers from urban and semi-urban settings, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts, such as rural schools with distinct challenges and resource constraints. Additionally, the study relied on qualitative data, which, while rich in detail, may not fully capture broader trends and patterns that a larger-scale, mixed-methods study could provide. Another limitation is the focus on teachers' perspectives, without incorporating students' experiences and viewpoints, which are crucial in assessing the effectiveness of inclusive practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Future research could address these limitations by expanding the study to include a larger and more diverse sample of teachers, incorporating rural schools to examine variations in challenges and strategies across different settings. A mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of inclusive education in English classrooms. Additionally, exploring students' perspectives on inclusive practices could offer valuable insights into their learning experiences and identify further areas for improvement.

To support and prepare English teachers to create inclusive classrooms, it is recommended that continuous professional development opportunities be provided, such as workshops and training sessions, focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies. These opportunities will equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to address the varied needs of students from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, ensuring access to a wide range of resources and materials that promote inclusivity in classroom content and activities is crucial. These resources help teachers incorporate diverse perspectives and create a more welcoming environment for all students. Establishing professional learning communities also plays a significant role by facilitating collaborative sharing of best practices and enabling teachers to engage in collective problem-solving. This kind of collaboration fosters a supportive network where teachers can learn from one another and develop inclusive strategies together. Finally, offering administrative and institutional support through ongoing feedback, mentorship, and recognition is vital. Such support empowers teachers to implement inclusive teaching practices with confidence, knowing they have the backing of their institution. Together, these measures create a foundation for a more inclusive and supportive educational environment in English classrooms. Teacher training colleges can equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to create an inclusive English classroom. In conclusion, a holistic approach that integrates professional development, access to resources, collaborative networks, and institutional support is essential for English teachers to create inclusive classroom environments that promote the academic, social, and emotional development of every student.

THE AUTHOR

Yangdon, PhD, is a lecturer at Samtse College of Education, Royal University of Bhutan, Bhutan. She received her Masters from the University of New Brunswick, Canada and her PhD from the University of New England, Australia. As a teacher educator for more than a decade, she has taught both English and professional modules. She also supervises M.Ed. English students' dissertations. She is passionate about teaching and believes in "Being a guide for her students rather than a sage on a stage". Her research interests include education, pedagogy, literacy, inclusive education, green school, and women's issues.

yangdon.sce@rub.edu.bt

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