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Relevance of Course Content to Real-World Teaching Challenges: Perceptions of Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. Students in Odisha

Abstract:

The 3-years Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. programme was designed to streamline teacher education by combining both B.Ed. and M.Ed. degrees into a single and continuous course, with an aim to produce highly qualified and competent teachers. The study aimed to find out the level of perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students on the relevance of their course content with reference to their academic stream and university. The study adopted descriptive survey method and included 75 Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students from three universities of Odisha by using quota sampling technique. A self-structured perception scale was developed based on dimensions like, pedagogical knowledge and teaching competency, classroom management and student engagement, assessment and evaluation skills, research and inquiry-based learning, leadership and professional ethics and use of educational technology. The collected data were analysed calculating mean, median, standard deviation, t-value and f-ratio and the findings revealed majority (66.67%) of the students shown high level of perception towards the relevance of their course content to real-world teaching challenges and no significant difference was found in the perception with reference to their academic stream and university.

Keywords: Perception, Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed., Relevance of Course Content, Real-World Teaching Challenges, Teacher Education Curriculum, Odisha

1. Introduction

The 3-years Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. programme came into force under the NCTE Regulations, 2014. It was designed to streamline teacher education by combining both B.Ed. and M.Ed. degrees into a single and continuous course, with an aim to produce highly qualified and competent teachers. The National Council for Teacher Education (2014) regulations emphasized improvements in curriculum, infrastructure, and teaching methods to better prepare teachers for active and effective classroom environments (Singh & Kapri, 2018). A key feature of the NCTE 2014 reforms was the strengthening of field engagement and internships, requiring longer and more immersive school experiences for student teachers, which has been found to present both opportunities for skill development and challenges related to support and resources (Kaur, 2024; Najmuddeen&Areekkuzhiyl, 2019). However, the implementation of these programmes has faced constraints such as faculty shortages, financial burdens on students due to extended course duration, and the need for enhanced infrastructure in teacher education institutions (Amin, 2016). While the integrated programme is seen as a step forward in teacher education reform, ongoing challenges in

attitude, resources, and practical training remain important areas for further improvement (Singh & Kapri, 2018; Kaur, 2024; Amin, 2016).

In Odisha, this programme is offered in four universities such as Fakir Mohan University, Sambalpur University, Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University, and Rajendra University, with an intake of 50 seats each. Admissions are conducted centrally through the Student Academic Management System (SAMS) portal, based on academic performances without an entrance examination. The curriculum to run this programme in these universities was initially prepared by the Directorate of TE and SCERT, Odisha in 2016 in aligning with the Norms and Standards of NCTE Regulation, 2014. Later, the curriculum is continuously being revised and modified by the universities based on their requirements. The curriculum integrates both theoretical and practical aspects of teacher preparation which includes Perspective Courses in Education, Research, Tools and Self Development courses, Teacher Education Courses, Stage Specific Courses, Pedagogy of School Subjects, Theme based Specialisation, School Internship, Community Engagement, Internship in TEIs and Dissertation (Fakir Mohan University, 2022).

Aligning teacher education course content with real-world classroom challenges is essential for preparing effective and adaptable teachers. When teacher education programmes bridge the gap between theory and practice, future educators develop the professional competencies needed to navigate diverse and evolving classroom environments. Strategies such as integrating classroom-based action research, collaborative learning, case analysis, technology integration, and reflective journaling have been shown to enhance teacher candidates' ability to connect theoretical knowledge with practical teaching skills. These approaches foster reflective practice, teamwork, adaptability, and continuous professional growth, all of which are crucial for addressing the complexities of modern classrooms (Hao et al., 2025). When pre-service teachers teach lessons that are directly aligned with their training, they are better able to use topic-specific instructional strategies and respond to students' needs, leading to more effective teaching and learning outcomes (Sæleset& Friedrichsen, 2021). Conversely, a lack of alignment can result in reliance on teacher-centred methods, rote learning, and limited student engagement, as well as challenges in implementing learner-centred approaches and formative assessments. These issues are often exacerbated by resource limitations, inadequate mentorship, and insufficient professional development (Lazarous et al., 2025). The integration of technology, such as virtual reality and simulations, further supports the alignment of teacher education with real-world challenges by providing authentic practice

opportunities and enhancing reflective practice. These tools help pre-service teachers build confidence and competence in applying their knowledge in realistic classroom scenarios (Pitura et al., 2024; Kaufman & Ireland, 2016). However, successful alignment requires ongoing curriculum review, faculty collaboration, and targeted support to ensure that course content remains relevant and responsive to the needs of both teachers and students (Lazarous et al., 2025; Banjal et al., 2025).

Given this backdrop, a central question arises: Do students nearing completion of their Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. programme feel adequately equipped by their course content for the practical demands of real-world teaching challenges? Additionally, it is important to examine whether these perceptions differ across academic backgrounds (Arts vs. Science streams) or institutions.

2. Review of Related Literature

The advancement and development of digital technologies have created new demands and opportunities for teacher education programmes. Moyo and Hadebe (2018), in their study, found that the teacher education in Africa does not integrate enough technology. Similarly, Undheim and Ploog (2023) demonstrated that digital competence and digital technology are clearly emphasized and addressed at the ideological curriculum level but less at the formal and perceived curriculum levels in Norway. In Ethiopia, Gebremeskel et al.(2017) highlighted that there is a demand of following a curriculum framework that integrates technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge.

In support of the curriculum in teacher education, Ezer, Gilat, andSagee (2010) revealed that student teachers see teaching as a rewarding job that helps them grow, find purpose, and feel fulfilled. Similarly, Niemi and Sihvonen (2009) found that the teacher education curriculum helps the student teachers to develop their teaching learning environments in a systematic way. Madhumita (2012) found strong support for the revised pre-service teacher education curriculum in Bihar. Tomora (2022) highlighted that the ‘O’ class curriculum in Ethiopia is somehow relevant, still it requires further improvement. In Odisha, Sahoo and Sharma (2018) found that the student teachers across various teacher education programmes appreciated the teacher education curriculum reform in Odisha.

The curriculum needs to be transformed and modified in a continuous manner. Cishe (2018) found that the teacher education curriculum is not relevant to basic schooling and recommended that there is need to transform the curriculum. Mpuangnan (2021) also found

that the basic teacher education curriculum in Ghana needs modification and improvement to produce competent teachers. Similarly, Irene (2023) highlighted areas for improvement of the teacher education curriculum in terms of its relevance to the licensure examinations. In India, Rasmi and Raj (2019) criticised the curriculum lacks in preparing teachers for handling challenges produced by changing social context. Ramyaprabha (2017) suggested the renovation of the elementary teacher education curriculum to strengthen its effectiveness, whileKhandagale (2016) found that most of the teacher educators are unable to follow the planning of curriculum transaction perfectly due to unavailability of time. Khamari (2013) found that the teacher educators of Chhattisgarh are of the opinion that there should be no area of specialisation in the M.Ed. curriculum and elective papers should be made compulsory.

The existing literature indicates that there is persistent gap in the perception of student teachers and teacher educators towards the relevance of teacher education curriculum. In the specific context of Odisha, despite the enrolment of students in the three years Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. programme since 2016, empirical evidence on how student teachers perceive the relevance of the curriculum of this particular course remains scarce. Therefore, this study is conducted to find out the perceptions of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students in Odisha regarding the relevance of their course content to real-world teaching challenges.

3. Objectives

1. To study the perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students on the relevance of their course content.
2. To compare the perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students from Arts and Science stream on the relevance of their course content.
3. To compare the perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students on the relevance of their course content with reference to their university.

4. Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students from Arts and Science stream on the relevance of their course content.
2. There is no significant difference in the perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students on the relevance of their course content with reference to their university.

5. Methodology

5.1 Method of the Study

Descriptive survey design was adopted to capture the perceptions of Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students in Odisha.

5.2 Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised of all final semester students studying in the Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. programme across four universities in Odisha. Each university had approximately 50 students in the final semester, making the total target population around 200 students.

For the purpose of the study, the sample consisted of 75 students drawn from three universities: Fakir Mohan University (FMU), Maharaja Sriram Chandra Bhanja Deo University (MSCBU) and Sambalpur University (SU). These universities were selected based on accessibility and availability of students willing to participate, given the online mode of data collection through google forms. A fixed number of 25 students were selected from each university by using quota sampling technique to ensure balanced representation from each of the three participating universities.

5.3 Data Collection Tool

For data collection, a self-structured perception scale was developed to assess the perceptions of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students in Odisha on the relevance of their course content to real-world teaching challenges. The tool was constructed based on a detailed review of the Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. curriculum prescribed by the Directorate of Teacher Education & State Council of Educational Research and Training, Odisha, along with relevant literature, and expert opinions from faculty members in teacher education institutions.

The scale consisted of30itemsgrouped under six broad dimensions: pedagogical knowledge and teaching competency, classroom management and student engagement, assessment and evaluation skills, research and inquiry-based learning, leadership and professional ethics and use of educational technology. Out of the 30 items, 24 were positively worded and 6 were negatively worded. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale from as strongly agree

(5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). The negatively worded items were reverse scored during the analysis.

6. Findings

Objective- 1: Perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students on the relevance of their course content

The 30 item five-point Likert scale, with possible scores ranging from 30 to 150 was administered upon 75 students of the Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. programme the descriptive statistics obtained from the collected data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Perception Scores

Statistic	Value
Mean	114.81
Median	116
Standard Deviation	13.97
Lowest Score	60
Highest Score	145

From table 1 it is evident that the mean perception score of 114.81 was substantially higher than the scale midpoint of 90, indicating that students generally perceived the course content as relevant. The median score of 116.00 closely aligns with the mean, suggesting a symmetrical distribution of scores. The standard deviation of 13.97 indicates a moderate variation in students' perceptions on their course relevance. The minimum score of 60 indicates a relatively low perception, while the maximum score of 145 reflects a very high perception of relevance.

For further interpretation of the data, the scores were categorized into three levels of perception based on equal intervals: Low Perception: 30–70, Moderate Perception: 71–110 and High Perception: 111–150.

Table 2. Distribution of Students based on Perception Level

Perception Level	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
Low	30-70	1	1.33%
Moderate	71-110	24	32%
High	111-150	50	66.67%

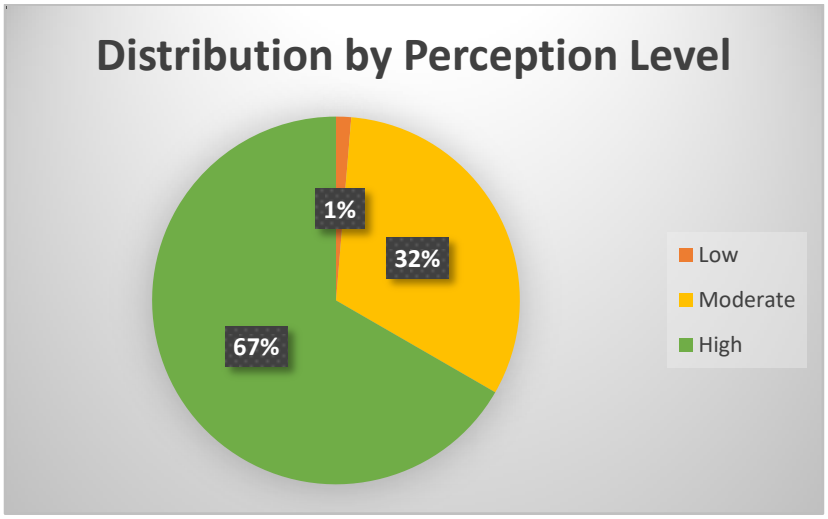

Figure 1.*Distribution of Students by Perception Level*

From table 2 and figure 1 it is revealed that **66.67%** students fell in the high perception category, reflecting strong agreement with the relevance of their course content towards real world teaching challenges. Furthermore, **32%** of students were coming under the moderate perception range, indicating a generally positive but less enthusiastic view. Only one student was of the view on low perception, suggesting minimal satisfaction with the course content.

Objective 2: Comparison of the perception of Arts and Science stream students towards course relevance.

Null Hypothesis:There is no significant difference in the perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students from Arts and Science stream on the relevance of their course content.

An independent sample t-test was performed to examine whether there was a significant difference in the perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students from arts and science streams on the relevance of their course content.

Table 3. Independent Sample t-test

Stream	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**SE**	**t-value**	**df**	***p*-value (sig.)**
Science	40	111.48	14.61	2.31	0.422	73	0.675 (Not Significant at 0.05 level of significance)
Arts	35	110.14	12.46	2.11			

Table 2 reflects that the mean perception score of Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students from the science stream (M=111.48, SD=14.61) was slightly higher than that of students from arts stream (M=110.14, SD=12.46). The independent sample t-test resulted that this difference was not statistically significant, t (73)=0.422, p=0.675. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students from Arts and Science stream on the relevance of their course content.

Objective 3: Comparison of the perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students on the relevance of their course content with reference to their university.

Null Hypothesis: *There is no significant difference in the perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students on the relevance of their course content with reference to their university.*

One way ANOVA was used to find out whether there was a significant difference in the perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students on the relevance of their course content with reference to their university.

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviation of Students' Perception Scores by University

University	N	Mean	SD
FMU	25	111.32	16.47
MSCBU	25	111.12	11.931
SU	25	110.12	12.404

Table 5. One-Way ANOVA Summary Table for Students' Perception Scores by University

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	20.667	2	10.333	0.055	0.947
Within Groups	13620.72	72	189.177		
Total	13641.387	74			

The table 3 showed close mean values of FMU (M = 111.32, SD = 16.47), MSCBU (M = 111.12, SD = 11.93), and SU (M = 110.12, SD = 12.40). Although FMU had a marginally

higher average score than the other two, the overall differences between the groups were minimal. In table 4, the ANOVA revealed no statistically significant difference among the three universities, $F(2, 72) = 0.055$, $p = .947$. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students on the relevance of their course content with reference to their university is accepted.

7. Discussion of the Results

The findings of the study revealed that majority (66,67%) of the final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students in Odisha shown high level of perception towards their course content. This resembles with Ezer, Gilat andSagee (2010), who found that student teachers see teaching as a rewarding job that helps them grow, find purpose, and feel fulfilled. This also resonates with Niemi and Sihvonen (2009), who revealed that the teacher education curriculum helps the student teachers to develop their teaching learning environments in a systematic way. In contrast, studies revealed that the teacher education curriculum is not relevant and needs transformation to meet the real-world teaching challenges (Cishe, 2018; Irene, 2023; Moyo & Hadebe, 2018; Ramyaprabha& Mohamed Saleem, 2017; Rasmi & Raj, 2019; Undheim & Ploog, 2023)

The findings further revealed that there is no significant difference in the perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students from Arts and Science stream on the relevance of their course content. This indicates to the balanced design of the Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. curriculum across academic stream. This resembles the findings of Sahoo and Sharma (2018), which revealed that the student teachers across various teacher education programmes appreciated the curriculum reform in Odisha.

The findings also revealed that there is no significant difference in the perception of final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students on the relevance of their course content with reference to their university. This corresponds to the study conducted by Mpuangnan (2021) in Ghana, which found consistency in curriculum implementation.

8. Conclusion

The findings of the study highlighted that majority of the final semester Integrated B.Ed.-M.Ed. students in Odisha rate their course content highly. No significant differences were observed across academic streams or universities, indicating balanced curriculum design. These results affirm the effectiveness of the NCTE-designed integrated programme while

also highlighting, in line with existing literature, the need for continuous curriculum renewal, greater ICT integration and enhanced practice-based learning. The study contributes empirical evidence to teacher education discourse in India and underscores the importance of student perspectives in shaping future reforms for more contextually responsive and sustainable teacher preparation.

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