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Teacher Training for Inclusive Education: Challenges and Best Practices

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Abstract

In the context of an increasingly diverse educational landscape, the role of teachers extends beyond instruction to fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments. This paper explores the critical importance of teacher training in promoting inclusive education, focusing on the skills, mindset, and systemic support required to address the diverse needs of all students. Despite the growing recognition of diversity as a strength, educators face numerous challenges, including limited resources, outdated pedagogical models, and a lack of targeted support. Through an examination of both obstacles and emerging best practices – such as differentiated instruction, universal design for learning, and culturally responsive pedagogy – this study highlights the transformative potential of effective teacher preparation. It argues that comprehensive, reflective, and ongoing professional development is essential for creating classrooms where every student feels valued and has the opportunity to thrive. The findings underscore the need to rethink teacher education programs to ensure that inclusivity becomes an integral part of the educational system.

Keywords: Inclusive education, teacher training, classroom diversity, teacher preparation, pedagogical strategies.

1. Introduction and background

In a world where diversity is the norm, the classroom is no longer just a space for academic learning; it is a microcosm of society's rich variety. Teachers are no longer simply educators but also architects of an inclusive environment where every student, regardless of ability, background, or need, has the opportunity to thrive. However, creating such an environment is not without its challenges. For educators, the journey toward inclusive education requires more than just pedagogical knowledge;

it demands empathy, adaptability, and a willingness to embrace the complexities of human difference. This exploration into teacher training for inclusive education uncovers both the obstacles' educators face and the best practices that can transform classrooms into true spaces of belonging and equity.

The landscape of education is evolving, with an increasing recognition that every child brings a unique set of strengths and challenges to the classroom. However, the path to truly inclusive education remains riddled with hurdles. Teachers are expected to cater to an increasingly diverse student population, encompassing a wide spectrum of learning abilities, cultural backgrounds, and emotional and behavioral needs. But how can educators navigate this complexity effectively?

Effective teacher training is at the heart of this shift. It is not just about equipping teachers with strategies for accommodating special needs or diverse learning styles, but also about fostering an inclusive mindset that values difference as a strength rather than a challenge. Yet, the training process itself is fraught with obstacles: limited resources, insufficient support, and outdated teaching models are just a few of the systemic issues that hinder progress.

2. The Importance of Inclusive Education in the Education System

Inclusive education is a concept that has gained great importance in the education system, focusing on the inclusion of all students, regardless of their abilities, in a common educational environment. This approach promotes equity and helps develop a more just and equal society. The importance of inclusive education is evident in many aspects, including improving the quality of education, developing students' social and emotional skills, and creating a better environment for learning. One of the main aspects of inclusive education is classroom management and its impact on a positive classroom climate. Potera emphasizes that effective classroom management helps create an environment where all students feel included and supported, thus contributing to more successful learning (Potera, 2024). This is important for students with special needs, who often face numerous challenges in a traditional educational environment. Mehmeti also emphasizes the importance of inclusive standards in education, analyzing how study programs at the Faculty of Education should comply with these standards to ensure an equitable education for all students (Mehmeti, Selim, 2024).

3. Challenges in Teacher Training for Inclusive Education

The implementation of inclusive education presents numerous challenges for teacher training programs across various contexts. A significant body of literature highlights the multifaceted nature of these challenges, which include inadequate training, negative attitudes, and insufficient resources.

One of the primary challenges identified is the lack of adequate training for teachers regarding inclusive education. Many studies indicate that teachers often feel

unprepared to implement inclusive practices due to insufficient training during their pre-service education. For instance, Shadreck notes that in Zimbabwe, a majority of teachers perceive themselves as unprepared for inclusive education, attributing this to a lack of appropriate training, which subsequently affects their confidence and attitudes towards inclusion (Shadreck, 2012). Similarly, Villalobos et al. emphasize that teachers frequently lack the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively implement inclusive education policies, leading to feelings of unpreparedness (Villalobos, Martín, & Wyman, 2017). This sentiment is echoed by Kurniawati et al., who assert that the readiness of teachers to accommodate students with special educational needs (SEN) is closely linked to the quality of their training (Kurniawati, Boer, Minnaert, & Siahaan, 2014). Moreover, the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education significantly influence its successful implementation. Research by Boer et al. highlights that teachers' attitudes are critical for the effective integration of students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms (Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011). Negative attitudes can stem from inadequate training, as noted by Van Reusen et al., who found that teachers lacking training in inclusive practices often exhibit unfavorable attitudes towards inclusion (Shadreck, 2012). This correlation suggests that enhancing teacher training could foster more positive attitudes, ultimately leading to better outcomes in inclusive settings (Krischler & Cate, 2019).

4. The role of educational institutions in supporting inclusive education

The role of educational institutions in supporting inclusive education is an important topic that requires an in-depth examination of educational history and practices. Educational institutions, in addition to providing knowledge and skills, have an important role in promoting equality and social inclusion, contributing to the development of a more just and equal society.

Historically, educational institutions in Albania have played an important role in the development of culture and national identity. According to Mehmeti, Albanian cultural elites have contributed to the establishment of educational institutions, which served as centers of culture and education (Mehmeti A. , 2020). These institutions were important for the development of a national identity and for the spread of ideas of social emancipation (Bexheti, 2023). Bashaliu emphasizes that educational reforms of different historical periods have influenced the transformation of the Albanian education system, contributing to the improvement of educational practices and supporting a more inclusive education (Bashaliu, 2021).

Another important aspect is the role of educational institutions in promoting cultural and religious values. As Mustafi points out, language and religious values are closely linked to the education and formation of individuals in society (Mustafi, 2021). This connection is important in helping to build a society that respects diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, Duro argues that arts and cultural institutions contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage and the development of a shared identity (Duro, 2023).

In the context of inclusive education, it is important to emphasize that educational institutions must adapt their teaching methods to include all students, regardless of the challenges they may face. Mintii (2023) discusses the concept of “blended learning”, which offers opportunities to integrate new technologies into the learning process, making it more accessible and more suitable for the diverse needs of students. This approach is particularly important to ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, have access to quality education.

5. Building teacher capacity for inclusive education: challenges and best practices

The capacity building of teachers for inclusive education is a crucial area of research, particularly as educational systems aim to create environments that cater to diverse learning needs. This literature review synthesizes key challenges and best practices identified in recent studies, highlighting the importance of teacher training, self-efficacy, and collaborative practices in fostering inclusive educational settings.

One of the significant challenges in building teachers’ capacity for inclusive education is the lack of adequate training and professional development opportunities. Many teachers report feeling unprepared to implement inclusive practices effectively due to insufficient training during their initial teacher education programs. For instance, Zaborniak-Sobczak (2022) emphasizes the need for systematic development of teachers’ competencies in inclusive education through both basic and ongoing education. Similarly, Pinar’s research indicates that in-service training needs related to special education are high among inclusive education classroom teachers, highlighting a gap in their preparedness to address the needs of students with special educational needs (SEN) (Pinar, 2014)). This lack of preparation can lead to negative attitudes towards inclusion, as noted by Sosu et al., who found that initial teacher education significantly impacts student teachers’ attitudes towards educational inclusion (Sosu, Edward ; Mtika, Peter; Gray, Laura Colucci, 2010).

6. Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological framework adopted for this research, aiming to ensure a comprehensive and rigorous investigation into the challenges and best practices associated with teacher training for inclusive education. It discusses the research purpose, research questions, the methodological approach, sampling strategy, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques used. The mixed-methods design enables the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data to deepen the understanding of inclusive education practices in primary and secondary schools.

6.1 Research Questions

To fulfill the research objectives, the following research questions guide the investigation:

1. What are the main challenges teachers encounter in implementing inclusive

education in their classrooms?

2. How do teachers perceive the quality and relevance of training programs for inclusive education?
3. What are the most effective practices and strategies used in teacher training programs that support inclusive education?
4. What contextual factors (e.g., school leadership, institutional support, teaching resources) influence the successful implementation of inclusive education?
5. How can existing training programs be improved to better prepare teachers for inclusive practices?

Hypotheses

Based on these questions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- **H1:** Teachers face significant challenges in implementing inclusive education due to lack of practical training and limited resources.
- **H2:** Teachers perceive the current training programs for inclusive education as insufficient in addressing real classroom needs.
- **H3:** There is a positive correlation between teachers' satisfaction with training and their confidence in applying inclusive practices.
- **H4:** Institutional support and leadership play a critical role in the successful implementation of inclusive education.
- **H5:** Schools that engage in continuous professional development and mentoring exhibit more effective inclusive practices.

These research questions were developed based on an extensive review of literature and international frameworks, including the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994), the CRPD (2006), and recent empirical studies in the field of inclusive education.

6.2 Methodology and Methods Used

The study follows a mixed-methods approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This design allows for triangulation of data and enhances the validity and reliability of the findings.

6.2.1 Quantitative Method

A structured questionnaire was distributed to primary and secondary school teachers who had previously participated in inclusive education training. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions focusing on teachers' experiences, perceptions, and levels of preparedness in inclusive teaching.

6.2.2 Qualitative Method

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a smaller sample of participants, including experienced teachers, school principals, and training program facilitators. These interviews allowed the researcher to collect in-depth data on personal experiences, challenges, and opinions regarding inclusive education training. This mixed-methods design not only allowed for the collection of broad-based statistical data but also enabled the exploration of complex, contextual insights

through narrative responses.

7. Results

Section A: Perceptions of Transformational Leadership

Item 1: The school principal encourages collaboration among staff.

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 – Strongly Disagree	10	4.0%
2 – Disagree	25	10.0%
3 – Neutral	45	18.0%
4 – Agree	100	40.0%
5 – Strongly Agree	70	28.0%
Total	250	100%

Interpretation:

A significant majority of respondents (68%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the school principal fosters collaboration among staff. This indicates a generally positive perception of the school leader's efforts to promote teamwork. Only 14% expressed disagreement, while 18% remained neutral—possibly reflecting either limited direct experience with collaborative initiatives or a perception that such efforts are not consistent across the school.

Item 2: The leader of the institution is an inspirational role model for the staff.

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 – Strongly Disagree	15	6.0%
2 – Disagree	30	12.0%
3 – Neutral	55	22.0%
4 – Agree	90	36.0%
5 – Strongly Agree	60	24.0%
Total	250	100%

Interpretation:

Approximately 60% of teachers perceive the school leader as an inspirational role model, which is a key characteristic of transformational leadership. However, the notable proportion of neutral responses (22%) and negative responses (18%) suggests variability in leadership practices across schools or a need for more visible and consistent inspirational leadership behavior.

Item 3: New ideas and initiatives are supported at my school.

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 – Strongly Disagree	8	3.2%

2 – Disagree	20	8.0%
3 – Neutral	60	24.0%
4 – Agree	100	40.0%
5 – Strongly Agree	62	24.8%
Total	250	100%

Interpretation:

The majority of respondents (64.8%) believe that their schools support new ideas and initiatives, reflecting a culture of innovation. A relatively small portion (11.2%) disagreed, while one-quarter of participants remained neutral. The neutral stance might indicate that while innovation is encouraged, it may not be uniformly practiced or that teachers are not always directly involved in those initiatives.

Item 4: The school leader is sensitive to the needs of the staff.

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 – Strongly Disagree	12	4.8%
2 – Disagree	18	7.2%
3 – Neutral	70	28.0%
4 – Agree	90	36.0%
5 – Strongly Agree	60	24.0%
Total	250	100%

Interpretation:

A combined 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the school leader is sensitive to staff needs. However, the relatively high neutral response rate (28%) suggests that either this sensitivity is not clearly communicated or practiced consistently. Leadership training focused on empathy and staff support could be beneficial in addressing this gap.

Item 5: Transformational leadership improves professional performance.

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 – Strongly Disagree	5	2.0%
2 – Disagree	12	4.8%
3 – Neutral	40	16.0%
4 – Agree	100	40.0%
5 – Strongly Agree	93	37.2%
Total	250	100%

Interpretation:

An overwhelming majority (77.2%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that

transformational leadership enhances professional performance. This finding strongly supports the theoretical framework of the study, highlighting the practical benefits of transformational leadership in improving teacher motivation, engagement, and effectiveness. The small percentage of disagreement (6.8%) could reflect differing leadership styles or a lack of transformational leadership in certain schools.

Section B: Collaboration with Psychologists and Pedagogues

Item 6: The psychologist/pedagogue is accessible and cooperative.

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 – Strongly Disagree	12	4.8%
2 – Disagree	28	11.2%
3 – Neutral	65	26.0%
4 – Agree	90	36.0%
5 – Strongly Agree	55	22.0%
Total	250	100%

Interpretation:

58% of teachers agree or strongly agree that psychologists and pedagogues in their schools are accessible and cooperative. However, 26% remained neutral, and 16% disagreed, suggesting that availability and collaboration may vary depending on the school's organization or the workload of the psycho-pedagogical staff. This indicates room for improving professional availability and cross-functional communication.

Item 7: The school leadership actively supports the work of psychologists and pedagogues.

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1 – Strongly Disagree	10	4.0%
2 – Disagree	20	8.0%
3 – Neutral	55	22.0%
4 – Agree	95	38.0%
5 – Strongly Agree	70	28.0%
Total	250	100%

Interpretation:

A majority (66%) of respondents perceive strong support from leadership toward psychologists and pedagogues. This reflects a positive alignment between school administration and the psycho-pedagogical services. Still, the presence of neutral responses (22%) suggests that some teachers may not directly witness this support or may experience limited communication on related decisions.

7.1 Hypotheses Testing and Verification

Hypothesis 1 (H1):

Teachers face significant challenges in implementing inclusive education due to lack of practical training and limited resources.

Verification:

Quantitative data revealed that 73% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they feel unprepared to handle diverse student needs in inclusive settings. Furthermore, 68% indicated a lack of teaching aids and inclusive materials. The interviews supported this, with many teachers emphasizing the absence of hands-on strategies in their training and inadequate classroom support. One participant stated: "We receive a lot of theory, but very few tools or techniques to use when a child with special needs joins our classroom."

Conclusion:

Hypothesis H1 is supported. The findings confirm that both the lack of practical training and insufficient resources are significant barriers to inclusive education.

Hypothesis 2 (H2):

Teachers perceive the current training programs for inclusive education as insufficient in addressing real classroom needs.

Verification:

Survey responses showed a mean score of **2.4/5** regarding satisfaction with current training programs (on a scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Over 60% of teachers expressed that trainings are too general and not tailored to real classroom contexts. In interviews, teachers often described the training sessions as "surface-level" or "outdated." A pedagogue explained: "We need workshops with real-life simulations, not lectures. We need case studies from our schools."

Conclusion:

Hypothesis H2 is strongly supported. Teachers express a clear need for more contextualized, practical, and updated training programs.

Hypothesis 3 (H3):

There is a positive correlation between teachers' satisfaction with training and their confidence in applying inclusive practices.

Verification:

SPSS correlation analysis between the variables "training satisfaction" and "confidence in inclusive teaching" revealed a **moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$)**. This indicates that teachers who reported higher satisfaction with their training also reported higher confidence in implementing inclusive strategies. This correlation was

reinforced by several interviewees who credited effective training for their confidence in facing diverse classroom situations.

Conclusion:

Hypothesis H3 is statistically and qualitatively supported. Improved training quality is linked to increased teacher self-efficacy in inclusive education.

Hypothesis 4 (H4):

Institutional support and leadership play a critical role in the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Verification:

According to the Likert-scale responses, 71% of teachers agreed that support from school leaders (e.g., facilitating collaboration, resource allocation) significantly influenced their success with inclusion. Interviews with psychologists and pedagogues emphasized the role of principals in promoting inclusive culture. One school psychologist stated:

“Where leadership is proactive, inclusion works. Where it’s passive or uninterested, we struggle alone.”

Conclusion:

Hypothesis H4 is validated. Effective leadership and institutional support are essential components of successful inclusion.

Hypothesis 5 (H5):

Schools that engage in continuous professional development and mentoring exhibit more effective inclusive practices.

Verification:

Survey data showed that schools offering ongoing training and peer mentoring reported significantly higher scores in areas like teacher preparedness, student engagement, and accommodation of diverse needs. Interviews confirmed this: teachers involved in continuous development initiatives expressed higher levels of satisfaction and shared examples of inclusive success. For example:

“In our school, every term we have a peer-learning circle. It has transformed how we understand and apply inclusion.”

Conclusion:

Hypothesis H5 is well supported. Ongoing professional development and structured mentoring contribute meaningfully to inclusive teaching outcomes.

8. Discussion and Conclusions

Inclusive education represents an approach that aims to integrate all students, including those with disabilities, into the regular school environment, providing equal opportunities for learning and development. This process requires a profound transformation in the way teachers are trained and prepared to meet the needs of

diverse students. The challenges in training teachers for inclusive education are numerous and often interrelated. One of the main challenges is the lack of resources and specialized training for teachers. Many times, teachers do not have sufficient knowledge on how to adapt teaching for students with special needs, which can create a large gap between theory and practice in the classroom.

In addition, school infrastructure, lack of psychological support and professional assistance for teachers are also important obstacles. In many cases, teachers face a heavy workload and lack of time to develop inclusive practices, making them feel insecure and unable to cope with diversity in the classroom.

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