






Factors influencing implementing inclusive education in Chris Hani East district, South Africa

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Abstract—This study investigates factors that influence the implementation of inclusive education. It adopted a qualitative approach through an interpretive paradigm. It used a case study research design. Twenty participants were conveniently selected from the Chris Hani East district in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with teachers from diverse backgrounds across the various districts of Chris Hani East. Thematic results revealed that inadequate teacher training adversely affects the academic and social-emotional outcomes of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms, leading to lower academic performance and skill development, diminished self-esteem and confidence, heightened social isolation and bullying, and the emergence of negative behaviours such as coping strategies. It recommends that teacher training focuses on practical strategies and collaboration between general and special education teachers. Mentorship programmes and regular workshops can enhance teacher support. A positive school culture, peer support, and social-emotional learning programmes can help reduce bullying and isolation. Involving parents, implementing clear anti-bullying policies, and regularly assessing programmes based on feedback will create a safe and inclusive environment for all students.

Keywords: Inadequate, teacher training, inclusive education, learning barriers and disabilities

To cite this article (APA): Nomtshongwana, T., Aviwe, M., & Mqondiso, B. A. (2025). Factors influencing implementing inclusive education in Chris Hani East Education. *International Journal of Studies in Inclusive Education*, 2(1), 51-59. <https://doi.org/10.38140/ijisie.v2i1.1851>

I. INTRODUCTION

INCLUSIVE education supports all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, with equitable access to quality education within mainstream classrooms, which has garnered significant global attention (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2017). The "Education for All" principle underscores every child's fundamental right to learn and engage to their fullest potential (UNESCO, 2015). However, the effective implementation of inclusive education heavily depends on the preparedness and competence of teachers (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). A critical challenge confronting educational systems worldwide is the substantial gap in training provided to teachers regarding inclusive pedagogical practices (Loreman, 2007). This deficiency adversely affects teachers' confidence, skill set, and ability to effectively meet learners' diverse needs in an inclusive classroom environment (Florian & Rouse, 2009). Consequently, addressing the training needs of teachers is essential for fostering inclusivity and enhancing educational outcomes for all students. This study delves into this crucial issue, examining the problem, its theoretical underpinnings, the research methodology used, the subsequent data analysis and findings, and ultimately, recommendations for improving teacher training in inclusive education. The concept of inclusive education has emerged as a crucial framework for addressing the diverse needs of students in mainstream classrooms worldwide. Inclusive education asserts that all students, regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, or disabilities, should have equal access to high-quality education and opportunities for active participation. This movement is grounded in the 'Education

for All Children,' which emphasises that every child has the right to learn and flourish in an environment that nurtures their full potential.

Recent studies have underscored the efficacy of inclusive education in promoting social cohesion and enhancing academic outcomes for all students. For instance, UNESCO (2022) highlighted the significance of inclusive practices in enriching the learning experience within diverse classrooms. Furthermore, Tampubolon et al. (2023) revealed that classrooms embracing inclusion benefit students with special needs and improve the overall classroom atmosphere by fostering empathy and respect among peers. As teachers continue to champion inclusive education, it becomes evident that an equitable approach can lead to enhanced educational experiences and outcomes for everyone involved. It emphasises that the effective implementation of inclusive education is intricately linked to the preparedness and competence of teachers (Baker et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, a significant challenge remains as numerous teachers feel insufficiently prepared to handle the requirements of inclusive teaching methods. Studies showed that this training gap directly impacts teachers' confidence, abilities, and efficacy in catering to the varied needs of students in inclusive environments (Woodcock et al., 2022). For instance, Nind and Hewett (1988) revealed that teachers often struggle with adapting their instructional strategies to accommodate students with varying abilities, leading to frustration and inadequacy. Furthermore, teacher preparation programmes frequently fail to deliver robust training on inclusive education strategies, exacerbating this issue (Zagona et al., 2017). Moreover, integrating inclusive education into teacher training frameworks is essential for fostering an inclusive mindset among future teachers (Hattie, 2020). Comprehensive professional development programmes focusing on practical strategies, collaboration with specialists, and firsthand experience with diverse

classrooms can significantly improve teachers' readiness to implement inclusive practices (McLeskey et al., 2019).

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Problem statement

Implementing inclusive education is crucial for creating equitable learning environments for all students, especially those with diverse needs and abilities. However, the effectiveness of inclusive education often suffers due to insufficient teacher training. Some scholars indicate that many teachers feel unprepared to manage the complexities of inclusive classrooms, which can lead them to resort to traditional or exclusionary teaching methods instead of fostering inclusivity (Tampubolon et al., 2023). A significant issue to investigate is how inadequate teacher training contributes to the persistence of exclusionary practices in these settings. Studies showed a correlation between a lack of training and teachers' ineffective teaching approaches (Kheswa, 2015; Nomtshongwana & Buka, 2024). This reliance on unsuitable strategies for training diverse students, particularly those with disabilities, can hinder individualised learning and negatively impact students' academic and social-emotional outcomes (Torres et al., 2024). The research surrounding inclusive education and teacher training reveals notable gaps that warrant further exploration. Despite evidence indicating that insufficient training correlates with exclusionary practices (Forlin & Chambers, 2011), there is a lack of specific evidence-based models for training teachers in inclusive methodologies. More investigation is needed to identify effective professional development initiatives that equip teachers with the necessary skills for diverse classrooms (Makuachukwu, 2023) and practical pedagogical strategies that can be implemented consistently. Lastly, while existing literature highlights the challenges faced by students with disabilities in poorly supported inclusive environments (Yadav, 2024), there is a gap in assessing the long-term academic and social-emotional growth of these students in better-supported settings. Understanding the key factors contributing to student success could enhance future educational practices (Kassaw et al., 2024). Addressing these research gaps could significantly improve inclusive education practices, ensuring teachers are better prepared to meet their students' diverse needs.

Insufficient teacher training on using traditional or exclusionary methods in inclusive classrooms

Inadequate teacher training significantly contributes to the persistence of traditional or exclusionary pedagogical approaches within inclusive classrooms. Research has consistently highlighted that when teachers do not receive comprehensive training in inclusive education, they often feel ill-equipped to meet the diverse needs of their students. This lack of preparation frequently results in the reliance on established, conventional teaching methods, which can hinder inclusivity. For instance, Mercedes et al. (2023) emphasised that teachers with limited instruction in inclusive practices tend to utilise whole-class teaching strategies with minimal differentiation. Therefore, students with varied learning needs, particularly those with disabilities and from marginalised backgrounds, can become disengaged and alienated. This tendency not only limits the academic success of these students but also perpetuates a classroom environment that fails to embrace inclusivity. Further elucidation comes from a systematic review by Abakah et al. (2022), underscoring the necessity of ongoing professional development for teachers. This review demonstrated that teachers who engaged in comprehensive training explicitly focused on inclusive pedagogy were more adept at implementing varied teaching strategies that enhance student engagement and promote collaborative learning. Such findings suggest that continuous professional education is vital for teachers to move beyond traditional methods and actively adopt practices involving all students. Moreover, the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) (2021) highlighted a critical gap in many teacher preparation programmes concerning rigorous training in inclusive education. Many programmes still do not adequately equip future teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to address the diverse

needs of their students. This inadequacy often leaves teachers feeling overwhelmed and unprepared, reinforcing a cycle wherein they default to familiar, exclusionary pedagogical practices in classrooms designed to be inclusive. In addition, Florian and Rouse (2009) also supported the notion that insufficient training can lead teachers to misunderstand the principles of inclusive education. This misalignment can negatively impact instructional strategies and student outcomes, as teachers may not recognise the importance of adapting their teaching to create an equitable learning atmosphere. Considering these findings, it is evident that inadequate teacher training is a critical factor contributing to the continuation of traditional and exclusionary pedagogical practices in inclusive classrooms. To genuinely foster inclusivity, it is imperative to prioritise developing and implementing comprehensive training programmes. These programmes should equip teachers with the necessary skills and confidence to apply diverse teaching methods and practices that fully accommodate the varied learning needs of all students.

Poor teacher training affects the academic and social-emotional outcomes of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms

Inadequate teacher training significantly impacts the academic achievement and social-emotional well-being of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. When teachers are not adequately trained, they may lack the skills necessary to understand and address the diverse needs of their students. This can result in ineffective instructional strategies that do not accommodate the unique learning styles found in students with disabilities, ultimately hindering their academic success. Tomlinson (2014) emphasised the importance of differentiated instruction for inclusivity, noting that teachers must be equipped with various instructional techniques to support all learners effectively. Moreover, teacher expectations play a crucial role in student outcomes. Inadequate training can lead to low expectations for students with disabilities, which adversely affects their motivation and academic performance. Rubie-Davies (2015) found that high teacher expectations correlate positively with student achievement, underscoring the harm that low expectations can inflict on students' learning trajectories.

The social-emotional well-being of students with disabilities is also compromised when teachers lack training in fostering an inclusive environment. A supportive classroom atmosphere is essential for promoting social interaction among students. Research by Carter et al. (2008) demonstrates that inclusive settings that encourage engagement improve the social-emotional health of students with disabilities. Conversely, teachers untrained in inclusive practices may struggle to create this environment, leaving students feeling isolated or marginalised. Furthermore, managing behavioural challenges is critical in inclusive classrooms, and teachers need effective strategies to handle such situations. Simonsen et al. (2008) highlight that trained teacher in positive behavioural support reports fewer behavioural issues, which leads to better social-emotional outcomes for students with disabilities. Inadequate training often leaves teachers ill-equipped to handle these complexities, further affecting student well-being.

Inadequate teacher training profoundly impacts both the academic and social-emotional dimensions of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. It is essential to invest in comprehensive training programmes that prepare teachers to meet the needs of all students to create a compelling and supportive learning environment.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study explores the factors influencing the implementing of traditional or exclusionary methods in inclusive classrooms.

IV. METHODS

Research approach

This study employs a qualitative research approach to deeply understand the complexities surrounding inclusive education in the Chris Hani East Education district. Through semi-structured interviews,

the research aims to capture rich, descriptive data from diverse stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and learners with disabilities. This method aligns with the views of Creswell (2014), who emphasises that qualitative research is essential for exploring the meanings individuals attach to their experiences. Furthermore, the insights gained will contribute to the existing literature on inclusive education, highlighting the barriers and facilitators within the local context, as suggested by Smith and Deschamps (2020) in their analysis of educational inclusivity. By focusing on participants' lived experiences, this study seeks to illuminate the challenges faced and the promising practices that can enhance the implementation of inclusive education policies, thereby fostering a more equitable learning environment for all students (UNESCO, 2020).

Research paradigm

The study employs an interpretive research paradigm, which focuses on understanding the subjective meanings individuals attach to their experiences. This approach is vital as it captures the unique perspectives of teachers involved in inclusive education in the Chris Hani East district. By prioritising their voices, the research reveals the complexities of their experiences, which quantitative methods might overlook.

Research design

The case study research design is particularly suited for exploring the complexities of inclusive education implementation within the specific context of the Chris Hani East Education district, as it allows for an in-depth investigation of real-life practices, challenges, and outcomes (Creswell, 2014). This qualitative approach provides rich insights into the experiences of teachers, students, and parents, helping to uncover nuances often missed in quantitative studies. According to Stake (1995) and Yin (2016), case studies excel in answering 'how' and 'why' questions, making them valuable for understanding the systemic issues impacting inclusive education and informing policy development and best practices in the field. This case study illuminates the specific nuances of the district's educational landscape. It contributes to the broader discourse on inclusive education, offering valuable insights that may inform policy and practice in similar contexts (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Data collection techniques

The primary method of data collection involved semi-structured interviews. This approach offers a flexible structure for exploring participants' experiences while keeping the research questions in focus (Karatsareas, 2022). An interview guide outlines key themes and questions related to inclusive education, such as understanding its principles, experiences with implementation in educational settings, barriers and challenges encountered, and the supports and facilitators that enhance inclusive practices (Florian, 2014). Additionally, the guide addresses the availability and adequacy of resources designated for inclusive education, training and professional development opportunities, and collaboration among teachers, administrators, and parents (Loreman, 2007). It also explores teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education and suggestions for improving implementation (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). The interview guide remains flexible, allowing for deeper probing into themes that arise during conversations and providing richer insights into individual experiences. Interviews will be conducted in English or isiXhosa, based on participant preference, and audio-recorded with prior consent to ensure accurate transcription and analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Research setting

This study focuses on the Chris Hani East Education district in Eastern Cape Province, South Africa, chosen for its rural setting and socio-economic challenges affecting inclusive education. Scattered communities with limited access to resources such as transportation and technology characterise the district. Many schools in the area face infrastructure challenges, including inadequate classroom facilities and a lack of essential educational materials. Additionally, the region's economic constraints often impact students' ability to engage in their education fully.

Participants

Twenty participants were selected from ten schools, and two were selected from each. These participants were intentionally chosen based on their accessibility and relevance to the research context, all residing in the remote areas of the Chris Hani East district in the Eastern Cape province, South Africa. These participants were conveniently sampled and considered those who were readily available and possessed the information most pertinent to the study's objectives.

Data analysis

Data collected from the semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, a method valued for flexibility and widely used in qualitative research to identify, analyse, and report patterns or themes within the collected data. The analysis process in this study involves several key steps. First, audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim to capture the participants' words accurately. The researchers then immerse themselves in the data by reading the transcripts multiple times to understand the overall content fully. Initial codes were generated by identifying data segments corresponding to the research questions and emerging themes. These codes were grouped into potential themes, reflecting patterns across the interviews. Examining themes will ensure they accurately represent the data and align with the research objectives. Clear definitions for each theme were established, highlighting their significance in the context of inclusive education. Finally, the findings were compiled into a coherent narrative integrating participant voices and contextualising the themes within the broader literature on inclusive education.

Ethical considerations

The researchers addressed the ethical considerations associated with their study. They obtained ethical clearance from Walter Sisulu University following approval from the Eastern Cape Department of Education. During sampling, they visited the schools involved and consulted with principals and parents to secure permission to research their premises. The researchers provided valid justifications for the study, highlighting that it was conducted primarily for educational purposes. All stakeholders were informed about the real-life phenomenon being investigated. Throughout the data collection process, the safety and protection of the participants were paramount. They ensured that the identities of all participants were kept confidential. A consent form was also prepared for the participants' parents to sign.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Factors influencing implementing inclusive education

Lack of understanding of differentiated instruction

This study suggested that a lack of understanding of differentiated instruction could influence the implementation of inclusive education. Participants noted that teachers lacking sufficient training face challenges in tailoring their instruction to address the varied needs of students with disabilities. They might depend on a uniform approach for all students. The extracts from three participants stated these:

"I try to include everyone, but I do not always know how to change my lessons for struggling students. It is easier to teach how I always have" (Teacher 1, School A).

"I feel overwhelmed creating different versions of every assignment. It takes so much time, and I am already stretched thin" (Teacher 11, School F).

"I have been told to differentiate but never learned specific strategies. I give them the same worksheet and hope they can do it" (Teacher 20, School J).

This study found that teachers without adequate training often struggle to differentiate instruction to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. They may rely on a "one-size-fits-all" approach. The study indicates that teachers lacking adequate training often face significant challenges in effectively differentiating instruction for students with disabilities (Nomtshongwana & Buka, 2024). This frequently results in adopting a "one-size-fits-all" teaching approach, which does not cater to the unique educational needs of each student. Such a strategy can lead to disengagement and decreased academic

performance (Wasendorf et al., 2022).

Furthermore, recent studies emphasise the critical need for professional development focused on inclusive teaching strategies. Equipping teachers with the necessary skills to adapt their instructional methods is crucial in creating an environment where all students can thrive (Assefa, 2023). Without this specialised training, teachers may unintentionally maintain educational inequities, underscoring the importance of personalised learning approaches in fostering inclusive classroom settings (Alam & Mohanty, 2023). Therefore, the call for targeted professional development and robust support systems is essential to empower teachers and improve the educational experiences of students with disabilities (Williams, 2023). By investing in comprehensive training, we can help ensure that teachers are well-prepared to meet the diverse needs of their students.

Limited knowledge of assistive technology and universal design for learning (UDL)

This study revealed limited knowledge of assistive technology and universal learning design could influence inclusive education implementation. Participants indicated that numerous teachers lack awareness regarding the possibilities of assistive technology and UDL principles in developing more accessible learning settings. The abstracts from participants mentioned these:

"Assistive technology? I have heard of it but do not know where to start. Our school does not provide training in this area" (Teacher 6, School C)

"I have a student with dyslexia, and I am not sure what tools could help him. I tell him to try his best" (Teacher 12, School F),

"UDL sounds complicated. I do not have time to redesign my curriculum" (Teacher 15, School I).

This study revealed that many teachers are unaware of the potential of assistive technology and UDL principles to create more accessible learning environments. The study revealed that many teachers lack awareness regarding the potential benefits of assistive technology and UDL principles in fostering more accessible learning environments. This significant finding highlights a gap in teacher training and professional development. Rose and Meyer (2002) noted that UDL principles advocate for flexible approaches to teaching and learning that accommodate individual learning differences, ensuring that all students have equitable educational opportunities. Assistive technology, as defined by the Act of 1998, includes tools and devices that facilitate learning for students with disabilities (AAIDD, 2018). However, the study's findings suggest that teachers may not fully understand how these technologies can be integrated into their classrooms. This underutilisation could hinder students' academic success, who could benefit from such support. Moreover, the lack of awareness might stem from insufficient training programmes during teacher preparation courses, which often overlook the essential inclusion of UDL and assistive technology strategies in their curricula (Edyburn, 2010). To address this issue, educational institutions must prioritise including these concepts in teacher education, ensuring that future teachers can create inclusive learning environments.

Inadequate training in behavioural management strategies beyond traditional discipline

This study demonstrated that inadequate training in behavioural management strategies influences the implementation of inclusive education. Participants indicated that teachers might turn to conventional disciplinary actions (such as detention or suspension) when they do not have sufficient training in positive behaviour support and do not comprehend the root causes of challenging behaviours. Participants stated this way:

"A student constantly disrupts the class. I have tried everything, and nothing seems to work. I send him to the office" (Teacher 8, School D).
"Sometimes, I must remove a student from the classroom to maintain order. It is not ideal, but I do not know what else to do" (Teacher 10, School E).

"I was taught to be strict and maintain classroom control. I do that, even if some students get left behind" (Teacher 19, School J).

This study found that teachers may resort to traditional disciplinary

measures (e.g., detention, suspension) when they lack training in positive behaviour supports and understanding the underlying causes of challenging behaviours. Recent educational research has highlighted that teachers often rely on traditional disciplinary measures, such as detention and suspension, particularly when unprepared or inadequately trained in implementing positive behaviour supports. According to Simonsen et al. (2011), teachers who lack comprehensive training in behavioural management strategies may default to punitive measures to address disruptive behaviours in the classroom. This reliance on traditional approaches can stem from a limited understanding of the underlying causes of challenging behaviours, which are often rooted in social, emotional, or environmental factors. For instance, Horner et al. (2010) indicates that effective behaviour intervention should focus not only on consequences for negative behaviours but also on understanding and modifying the contextual factors that contribute to these behaviours. Moreover, Bradshaw et al. (2010) suggested that schools adopting positive behavioural interventions and supports significantly reduce suspension and expulsion, indicating the effectiveness of equipping teachers with the necessary training to handle behavioural issues constructively. Conversely, when teachers lack this training, the inclination to resort to outdated punitive methods can result in a cyclical pattern where students continue to exhibit challenging behaviours, ultimately resulting in adverse educational outcomes.

Lack of understanding of specific disabilities and their impact on learning

Participants highlighted that teachers might lack a thorough understanding of the unique challenges encountered by students with various disabilities, such as autism, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and learning disabilities. Participants stated:

"I have a student with autism, and I am not sure how to support him. He seems to be in his world" (Teacher 2, School A).

"I do not know how to deal with students with ADHD. They are always disruptive, they cannot focus, and I cannot tell if they are naughty or cannot focus" (Teacher 12, School F).

"I treat all the students the same. I do not think it is fair to give some students special treatment" (Teacher 13, School G).

This study found that Teachers may not have a deep understanding of the specific challenges faced by students with different disabilities (e.g., autism, ADHD, learning disabilities). Teachers may not possess a comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges faced by students with various disabilities, such as autism, ADHD, and learning disabilities. This lack of deep understanding can lead to insufficient support and accommodations for these students in the classroom. The study indicates that many teachers feel underprepared to address the needs of students with disabilities effectively. For instance, a study by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) found that teachers often lack training in special education, which can limit their ability to implement inclusive practices successfully. Similarly, a survey by the NCLD (2020) highlighted that only a fraction of teachers felt equipped to teach students with learning disabilities, suggesting a significant gap in knowledge and preparedness. Moreover, the effects of this inadequate understanding can manifest in various ways. For instance, students with autism may struggle with social interactions and communication, while those with ADHD might face challenges related to attention and impulse control. If teachers are unaware of these issues, they may misinterpret behaviours or fail to provide necessary interventions (Graham et al., 2011). Ultimately, ongoing professional development and training in special education are crucial for teachers to understand the individual needs of their students better and to foster an inclusive environment that benefits all learners (Friend et al., 2010).

Insufficient collaboration and communication with special education staff

Participants indicated that general education teachers often lack sufficient support from special education personnel, which can be attributed to inadequate collaboration and communication. The

participant said this way:

I rarely see the special education teacher. I feel alone" (Teacher 7, School D).

"I am not sure who to ask for help when I am struggling with a student with disabilities. The special education teachers are busy, and following up is sometimes very time-consuming" (Teacher 12, School F).

"The IEP meetings are overwhelming, and I do not always understand what I should do" (Teacher 13, School G).

This study found that general education teachers may not receive adequate support from special education staff due to a lack of collaboration and communication. In education, particularly inclusive settings, collaboration between general education teachers and special education staff is crucial for effectively supporting students with diverse learning needs. According to scholars, a significant barrier to this collaboration stems from inadequate communication and a lack of structured support systems (Bahrain et al., 2023). Scholars pointed out that general education teachers often feel overwhelmed and may not receive the necessary training to effectively teach students with special needs (Villa & Thousand, 2021). This can create a disconnect between the two groups, as general education teachers may not fully understand the resources available to them or the expertise that special education staff can provide (Bacharach et al., 2008).

Furthermore, effective collaboration requires ongoing communication and planning between general and special education professionals (Nomtshongwana & Manyakaza, 2025). When schools fail to establish regular platforms for discussion, such as co-planning sessions or professional development opportunities, teachers may not feel equipped to support their students adequately, resulting in a fragmented approach to education (Mastropieri et al., 2018). The lack of collaboration and communication between general education and special education staff can hinder the support provided to students. For schools to promote an inclusive environment, it is essential to prioritise structured communication channels and collaborative training efforts.

Effect of inadequate teachers' training on academic and social-emotional outcomes of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms

Lower academic achievement and skill development

Participants noted that inadequate training results in teachers failing to offer the essential support and adjustments students with disabilities need to thrive academically. Many emphasised the importance of comprehensive professional development to ensure teachers have the skills and strategies to support diverse learners effectively. Participants stated:

"I see some of my students with disabilities struggling to keep up, but I do not always know how to help them" (Teacher 1, School A).

"It is hard to get to every student. I focus on those closer to grade level" (Teacher 17, School H).

"I simplify the material, but I am unsure if it is still challenging enough for the students with disabilities" (Teacher 20, School J).

This study found that insufficient training leads to teachers not providing the necessary support and modifications for students with disabilities to succeed academically. Insufficient training can significantly impact teachers' ability to provide essential support and modifications for students with disabilities, ultimately hindering their academic success. Research indicates that teachers often feel inadequately prepared to meet the diverse needs of these students due to a lack of comprehensive training focused on special education strategies and inclusive practices. For instance, McLeskey and Waldron (2011) highlighted that teachers who receive targeted professional development related to special education are more likely to implement effective strategies in the classroom context. This training enables them to adapt lessons, modify assessments, and provide individualised support, critical for helping students with disabilities thrive academically. Moreover, a survey by the NCLD (2017) found that many teachers reported feeling unprepared to teach students with specific learning disabilities, leading to a reliance on one-size-fits-all

instructional methods that do not address individual student needs. These findings emphasise the importance of ongoing professional development and university-level teacher preparation programmes incorporating inclusive education principles. A lack of adequate training not only affects teachers' confidence in their ability to support students with disabilities but also leads to a systemic issue where these students do not receive the instructional modifications necessary for academic achievement. Continued investment in teacher education and support systems is essential for fostering an inclusive learning environment that benefits all students.

Decreasing self-esteem

Participants indicated that when students with disabilities do not receive proper support, they may feel frustrated, unsuccessful, and have diminished self-esteem. When students with disabilities lack proper support, they often experience frustration, a sense of failure, and reduced self-esteem. Participants stated:

"I can see that some of my students with disabilities are becoming discouraged" (Teacher 1, School A).

"Some students give up quickly and do not try as hard as possible" (Teacher 11, School F).

"Some students feel they are not smart enough to be in the regular classroom" (Teacher 16, School H).

This study found that when students with disabilities are not adequately supported, they may experience feelings of frustration, failure, and low self-worth. Students with disabilities who do not receive adequate support often experience a range of adverse emotional and psychological effects. Research indicates that these students may experience heightened frustration as they struggle to keep pace with their peers, which can lead to a pervasive sense of failure in their academic pursuits (Losen & Orfield, 2002). This lack of support is frequently associated with diminished self-worth, as students may perceive themselves as less capable than their classmates (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The emotional impact of inadequate support can manifest in various detrimental ways. Frustration may arise from difficulties in understanding course materials or completing assignments without the necessary accommodations, which can escalate into anxiety or behavioural issues (Youssefian, 2025). These emotional states can hinder their engagement in the classroom setting, reinforcing a cycle of academic struggle.

Furthermore, feelings of low self-worth can have significant long-term implications for a student's motivation and willingness to participate in school activities. Theoretical frameworks suggest that if students harbour beliefs about their inability to succeed, they are less likely to take academic risks or exert effort, fostering a cycle of disengagement and underachievement (Dweck, 2006). Conversely, providing tailored support and resources can significantly improve these adverse outcomes. Empirical evidence suggests that fostering a more inclusive learning environment can enhance the self-esteem of students with disabilities, helping them to feel valued and capable (Harris, 2014). This support ultimately leads to improved academic performance and personal growth, underscoring the necessity of effective intervention strategies within educational settings.

Increasing social isolation

Participants disclosed that insufficient teacher awareness and intervention may result in social isolation and bullying of students with disabilities. This lack of support can hinder their social development and academic success, exacerbating their challenges in inclusive environments. Participants said about answering the question:

"I have noticed some students with disabilities left out during group activities" (Teacher 5, School C).

"Sometimes, other students tease the students with disabilities" (Teacher 9, School E).

"I wish I had more time to help students build positive relationships with each other" (Teacher 13, School G).

This study found that a lack of teacher awareness and intervention can lead to social isolation and bullying of students with disabilities. The

study further highlights the critical issue of teacher awareness and intervention regarding the social dynamics that students with disabilities often face. Research indicates that when teachers are not adequately trained to recognise and address the needs of these students, it can lead to significant social isolation. For example, a study conducted by McKenzie et al. (2023) found that students with disabilities who were in classrooms with teachers lacking proper training reported higher instances of bullying and social exclusion. Moreover, Smith and Tyler (2019) emphasise that teachers play a pivotal role in creating inclusive environments. Without proactive measures and intervention strategies, students with disabilities may not only struggle academically but also face increased risks of loneliness and decreased self-esteem. Interventions such as peer mentoring programmes and social skills training, as discussed by McCarthy et al. (2025), can effectively mitigate these risks.

Furthermore, the study corroborates the negative impact of social isolation, which identifies a direct correlation between students' social experiences and academic performance (Edeline et al., 2021). The findings underscore the necessity for professional development programmes that equip teachers with the tools to foster an inclusive classroom culture, thereby preventing bullying and promoting positive social interactions among all students. This study advocates for a more informed and engaged teaching approach, emphasising how proactive teacher involvement is crucial in supporting the social and emotional well-being of students with disabilities.

Developing negative behaviours as coping mechanisms

Participants indicated that students with disabilities might exhibit negative behaviours as a means of managing feelings of frustration, anxiety, or inadequacy. These negative behaviours can sometimes manifest as outbursts or withdrawal, making it challenging for teachers to address their needs effectively. Understanding the underlying emotions behind these actions is crucial for developing appropriate interventions. Participants said this way:

"I have seen some students act out when they struggle with their work" (Teacher 6, School C).

"Some students try to avoid tasks that are hard for them" (Teacher 10, School E).

"I think some students use disruptive behaviours to get attention" (Teacher 16, School H).

This study found that students with disabilities may develop negative behaviours to cope with frustration, anxiety, or feelings of inadequacy. Students with disabilities often experience various challenges in their educational environments, leading some to develop negative behaviours as coping mechanisms for their frustration, anxiety, or feelings of inadequacy. Research indicates that when students face barriers to learning, whether, from a lack of resources, inadequate support, or social stigma, these experiences can lead to emotional and behavioural responses as they navigate their circumstances. For example, Helsper et al. (2025) highlighted that students with disabilities may resort to acting out or withdrawing in response to overwhelming academic demands or social pressures. These behaviours can manifest as aggression, noncompliance, or social withdrawal, often misinterpreted as lacking motivation or effort (McIntosh et al., 2010). Furthermore, a meta-analysis by Ziyen and Kadri (2025) found that students with disabilities frequently report feelings of inadequacy or being different from their peers, which can exacerbate anxiety and lead to maladaptive coping strategies. This can create a cycle; the more they struggle with these negative feelings, the more likely they will exhibit behaviours that further alienate them from their peers and teachers, ultimately hindering their academic progress (Thompson et al., 2018).

Additionally, the work of Lane (2009) supports the notion that teaching students' effective self-regulation and coping strategies can significantly reduce negative behaviours. Through positive behavioural support systems and social-emotional learning programmes, teachers can help students with disabilities learn healthier ways to cope with frustration and anxiety, thereby improving their overall well-being and

school experience (Lane & Sweeny, 2018). Overall, understanding the root causes of negative behaviours in students with disabilities is crucial for developing effective interventions and support systems that foster a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

Reducing motivation

Participants indicated that when students with disabilities frequently encounter failure or disappointment, they may lose motivation and become disengaged from learning.

"Some students with disabilities seem to have given up trying" (Teacher 11, School F).

"Some students are bored and disengaged" (Teacher 6, School C).

"It is hard to keep all students motivated, especially when struggling" (Teacher 19, School J).

This study found that when students with disabilities consistently experience failure or frustration, they may become less motivated and engaged in learning. In educational settings, students with disabilities often face unique challenges that can impact their motivation and engagement. Research indicates that persistent experiences of failure or frustration can lead to decreased motivation, subsequently affecting their overall engagement in learning activities. For instance, Deci and Ryan (2000) emphasised the importance of intrinsic motivation in the learning process, noting that when students encounter continual setbacks without adequate support, their intrinsic motivation wanes. Additionally, a meta-analysis by Wilkins (2018) highlighted how emotional and psychological barriers, such as repeated failures, can create a cycle of disengagement. These students may develop feelings of helplessness, leading to a decreased willingness to participate in classroom activities.

Furthermore, the NCLD (2017) reported that students with disabilities are at a higher risk of developing negative attitudes toward learning if they frequently experience failure. This can result in a diminished sense of self-efficacy and lower academic achievement. Teachers are encouraged to adopt inclusive teaching strategies that promote positivity and resilience to combat these challenges. By providing tailored support and celebrating small successes, teachers can help re-engage students with disabilities, fostering a more motivating and supportive learning environment (Kuyini et al., 2020).

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings underscore the crucial role of comprehensive teacher training in fostering effective inclusive education practices. A significant barrier to meeting the diverse learning needs of students lies in the widespread lack of understanding of essential strategies such as differentiated instruction, assistive technology, and universal learning design. These elements are vital for creating an environment accommodating various abilities and learning styles. Furthermore, insufficient training in behavioural management strategies detrimentally affects the classroom atmosphere, which is essential for supporting the emotional and social well-being of students with disabilities. The repercussions of inadequate training are profound; they extend beyond simple academic performance, leading to diminished self-esteem, heightened social isolation, and increased adverse behavioural outcomes among these students. It is imperative to prioritise continuous professional development for teachers to cultivate a genuinely inclusive classroom environment where all students can flourish. This should include opportunities for collaboration with special education staff, allowing for shared insights and strategies. By equipping teachers with the necessary tools and knowledge, we can not only enhance their effectiveness in the classroom but also have a lasting positive impact on the academic, social, and emotional outcomes of students with disabilities. A commitment to ongoing training and collaboration will create a supportive and enriching environment that ensures all students are valued and given the opportunities they deserve to succeed.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Comprehensive sessions on differentiated instruction and UDL are essential to enhance teacher training in inclusive classrooms. Increasing knowledge of assistive technology and modern behavioural management strategies, such as positive behaviour interventions and trauma-informed practices, will help teachers effectively meet the diverse needs of all learners. Collaboration with special education staff, mentorship programmes pairing experienced teachers with novices, and ongoing professional development are crucial. Engaging parents and the community strengthens support for students with disabilities while fostering a positive classroom environment, which can reduce bullying and social isolation. Regular assessments of training effectiveness and student outcomes, combined with feedback from all stakeholders, will drive continuous improvement in teaching strategies. By prioritising inclusive practices and creating a culture of shared responsibility, schools can better support every student's academic and social-emotional development.

VIII. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest in this study.

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