

# Inclusive Education Strategies for Knowledge Development of Teachers Enrolled in the Advanced Vocational and Training Education Program

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## Abstract

*Diversity and inclusivity in the modern-day classroom is important as students coming from different backgrounds are bringing a variety of learning experiences, knowledge values, abilities, and skills to each course. This study looked into inclusive education strategies that can be used in the teaching and learning space by teachers who are enrolled in the advanced diploma program in Technical and Vocational Teaching (TVT). A quantitative research approach was used to bolster the interpretative research paradigm. With this approach, data collections method such as closed-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to collect relevant data. In terms of sampling, 45 teachers were purposefully sampled among teachers enrolled in three South African universities. This study discovered that teachers had an alarming low level of awareness on how to teach in a diverse classroom. They somehow had linear effective pedagogical know how into dealing with a diverse class with multicultural and varied range age groups. This study in on recommendation that teachers pedagogical capital be further developed to boost their willingness to teach in inclusive classrooms.*

**Keywords:** Inclusive Education Teachers, TVET

## INTRODUCTION

Since the idea of "inclusive education" has gained momentum, students who were formerly placed into special education programs because they were thought to be "less able" are now considered to belong in the general education classrooms. Because of this, an alternative viewpoint on inclusive education has emerged in the field of education. Currently, inclusive education is considered to be an education that encapsulate various learning needs, multi-cultural inclusion, education for those with physical impairments and education for different age groups collated in one (Regmi, 2019). To the greater expansion, the idea of inclusive education may as well be considered an education specific to a certain knowledge and skills development (Kekana, Mtshali & Ramaligela, 2023). It is a knowledge that augments the existing in order to meet the variety of needs of all students by promoting their involvement in learning, cultures, and communities and minimizing their exclusion from and within the educational system. While this is a multi-faced definition of inclusive education, one could ponder on the idea of inclusive education when a certain skill needs to be mastered by a certain group. In this study we entertain the multifaced approach to the concept of inclusive education to explore inclusive education strategies to enhance teaching and learning of teachers enrolled in the advanced vocational and training education program.

It is sentimental to draw the attention of readers that this study looks into a group of teachers who were previously not professionally qualified to teach most of the subjects under Technical and Vocational Education (TVE). These are groups of teachers who have been teaching in the TVE space using their pedagogical intuition. This sometimes, created a problem for them as teaching at TVET institution needs someone compatible to teach an inclusive classroom. In general, their pedagogical intuition was not enough to teach smoothly in a class with various age groups, multi-cultured and learners with special learning needs (Kekana, Mtshali & Ramaligela, 2023). According to Nkwanyane (2023), for the longest time in South African education system, there has been no direct qualification that trains TVE teachers until recently. And now that this program is in place and running, the was a need to train teachers how to cope in an inclusive classroom that has interest in the built

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environment. As such, we are concerned to understand teachers experiences and their knowledge development in teaching an inclusive classroom.

According to Stenman and Pettersson (2020) supporting Sharma (2018) teachers have a challenge in invoking pedagogically sound knowledge and skills necessary to teach students in inclusive classrooms. As consequence, there is a need to upskill teachers to cope with all dynamics of inclusive classroom within a TVE space. Thus, in the next segment, we discuss issues pertain to the constitution as an apex law that safeguards the interest of all learners under the category of inclusive education amongst other things.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Supporting for Inclusive Education**

Just as it happens in many countries, there is a constitution that seeks to safeguard the interest of its population and in this case, we look into the South African constitution on the role it plays into the promotion of inclusive education. We look into this constitution because there has been a view that teachers have been somewhat neglecting the crucial role of teaching effectively in an inclusive classroom. And so, we deem it necessary to remind teachers on their constitutional role and how they should carry it in diverse classrooms. A fair argument can be that teachers have equally not been capacitated with skills to teach in diverse classrooms. However, Mtshali and Singh-Pillay (2023) puts it forward that most teachers in the TVE space lack a pedagogical capital to flourish as pedagogues to any kind of a learner. Thus, we are on premise that it is either teachers in the technical and vocational spaces do not want to examine their teaching styles just as it happens in other subjects or they simple do not know where to improve. In a study by Blose and Ndlovu (2023) it emerges that technology teachers have challenges in managing activities that are hands-on and mind-on focused. This is clear evidence of a glaring gap in using various strategies to teach. In the science subjects, we learn that grounded theory is capable to address the issues of inclusivity (Abels, 2015). However, this has not been actualised by most teachers in the technical and vocational education space.

According to Veriava and Paterson (2020) it is every teachers' prerogative to participate in the discourses on inclusive education as it is a way of opening access to appropriate methodologies for effective teaching in diverse learning groups. This aligns with the section 29 (1a) of the South African constitution which stresses that above all, treating people equally is a democratic mandate and the promotion of human dignity (Mangu, 2020). These collated together is capable towards addressing the 21<sup>st</sup> century educational goals (Sharma, 2018).

There is a commitment placed upon every teacher to ensure that people enrolled in primary and secondary education, adult basic education and higher education get equitable knowledge and skills distribution (Hodgson, 2018). According to Stenman and Pettersson (2020) along with Trujillo, et al., (2021) there should be a unified framework that will assist every teacher can cope in diverse classroom. There are many cases where teachers are found trampling on other students cultures whilst teaching. This continues in most part of the country because teachers do not have capacity to teach well in inclusive classrooms. It is evident that even while there is a whitepaper outlining guidelines on how the education and training system should change in order to support the creation of a compassionate and humane society, how it should adjust to meet the needs of all learning styles, and what policies should be in place, teachers are still struggling in inclusive classrooms (Abdulrahman, 2021). A particular emphasis will be on achieving these goals via a workable and effective implementation process that moves responsibly in the direction of building a system that values and respects diversity. To eliminate social exclusion and negative stereotypes, this strategy will involve the active participation of our social partners and communities as well as the steady application of departmental, institutional, instructional, and curriculum transformation strategies.

Fostering inclusive teaching is necessary to create a world where inclusive education is the norm (Gilor & Katz, 2019). A system of education that employs the inclusion method renders disabled students with access to equal educational opportunities as any other student (Buchner, et al., 2020). This means that the objective is to enable students with disabilities to learn in inclusive classrooms by providing them with the necessary support and resources. Thus, inclusive teaching involves recognizing the variations among learners in the classroom and adapting the curriculum to suit the learning environment requirements of all pupils (Sulamsi, 2019).

Consequently, the goal of this study amongst other things, is to explore the role of inclusive education model to enhance teaching and learning among teachers enrolled in an Advanced Diploma in Technical and Vocational teaching program.

### **Inclusion of Learners with Special Educational Needs in Classrooms**

The education of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is a key challenge in the South Africa (Robinson, et al., 2018). For example, one of the biggest obstacles is the policy's seeming lack of clarity, which creates uncertainty about inclusion goals and how to reach them. Another is the policy's inadequate implementation, which raises a number of concerns (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). Tyner (2022) posits that children needs to be supported even when people are studying to understand the policies in to ensure that they climb the ladder of opportunities. Ofcourse, the implementation of inclusion policies requires understanding that inclusive education needs daily upkeep as it entails locating and eliminating obstacles and building a solid foundation for inclusive pedagogy. However, to fully appreciate the inclusive education concept, we need to unpack varying perspectives on inclusion, and the way in which social and medical models have influenced and shaped the current thinking (Robinson, et al., 2018). Thus below, we reflect on the significant legislation that underpin current thinking in this area.

There can be no doubt that inclusive education is an ardently contested area where most research goes into theories that seeks to understand it. The Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) propagates that understanding the area of inclusivity should stem from the research index concept of disability (Imbaya, 2019). This is supported by Slee (2019) who state having such understanding of inclusivity will attract more cultural inclusion, curricula balance, and communities that are appreciative to schools advocating for inclusivity. This receives support from Valiandes, et al.,(2018) who states that restructuring the cultures, policies, and practices in schools will ensure that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality. This will in turn increase participation for all students, not only those with impairments but also for those under the category of “having special educational needs” (Buchner, et al., 2020). We must be weary that inclusive education entails viewing the difference between students as resources to support learning, rather than as problems to be overcome, acknowledging the right of students to an education in their locality and improving schools for staff as well as for students (Kwan & Hew, 2020). In the end, it emphasizes how important it is for schools to create a sense of community and instill values. It also highlights how important it is for them to raise student achievement, cultivate partnerships that benefit both schools and communities, and acknowledge that inclusion in education is a necessary component of inclusion in society (Imbaya, 2019; Buchner, et al., 2020).

Barriers to learning and participation’ provide an alternative view to the much-held concept of ‘special educational needs’, conferring that a label attached to some children can lower overall expectations of their progress. Imbaya (2019) mentioned that understanding inclusive education as reducing barriers to learning and participation as well as identifying alternatives for learning and participation for all learners, the Index for Inclusion provides an approach to developing schools and educational institutions based on inclusive values and self-review. Thus, promoting inclusion within mainstream schools, where support can be appropriately provided, should however remain the cornerstone of any strategy. Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs (Bonar, 2018). There are strong educational, as well as social and moral, grounds for educating children with SEN, and or with disabilities, with their peers. Inclusion is, however, a complex and contested concept and its manifestations in practice are countless. Views below are drawn from a variety of sources and viewpoints, from professionals working with children, government documents and organisations that campaign for rights concerning SEND, to look at a range of perspectives on what inclusive education means (Bonar, 2018).

### **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND): Social vs Medical.**

There seems to be a contention that the right to inclusion is not as straightforward as there are others who argue that exclusion is the same as discrimination and segregation, which might arise from sexism or racism (Pan, 2022). This approach when comparison is done between social and medical models promote inclusion as

comparable to those who challenge segregation policies and racist discrimination. The development of an inclusive education has been greatly influenced by the personal experiences of inclusion and exclusion that are discussed in this section. Many adults with SEND and disabilities find it difficult to reinterpret their own educational experiences. The shift onto the social model of disability has immensely contributed in redefining the social model of disability. Systematically, models are a useful pedagogical strategy to create discourses that chart a way forward about inclusive education. As a result, Lawson and Beckett (2021) subscribes to the notion that models of disability are there to simplify given information into acceptable scientific facts. This is why most organisations are accepting of both social and the medical when forming attitudes and interacting with disabled people. Such comparisons between medical and the social models are clarified by Bonar (2018) in the illustration below (Table 1).

**Table 1 Comparison of the medical and social models of disability in education**

Medical model	Social model
The child is faulty	The child is valued
Diagnosis	Strengths and needs are defined by self and by others
Labelling	Identify barriers and develop solutions
Impairment becomes the focus of attention	Outcomes-based programmes are designed
Assessment and monitoring	Resources are made available
Segregation and alternative services	Training for parents and professionals
Ordinary needs are put on hold	Relationships are fostered
Re-entry if 'normal' enough or permanent exclusion	Diversity welcomed; child is welcomed
Society remains unchanged	Society evolves

Source: (Allison & Sushil, 2019)

Even though this kind of research hinges on disability attitudes and responses, learners with special educational needs and those with disabilities are not the only ones immune from marginalizing learning situations (Allison & Sushil, 2019). A variety of variables, including social, racial, educational, and economic ones, can lead to exclusion. Certain ways of thinking can have an impact on learning chances by limiting the expectations of teacher and students, and they can also largely overlook discussions concerning educational provision for children with disabilities and special needs (Dixon, et al., 2021). Because government officials are the ones who drive legislation, the voices of the people for whom that provision is designed are frequently ignored. Hodgson (2018) shows the value of these models in a study involving forty individuals of various ages by providing a voice to those marginalized in society who were labeled as "mental retarded," "sub-normal," or "having learning difficulties" as children. These historical narratives trace the development of special education and have a significant influence on our own and other people's perspectives on inclusion. Because of this, Michelle's life has been characterized by the label of "learning difficulties," which has persisted to do so for an increasing number of kids. According to Allison and Sushil (2019), Allison's college experience reinforced her childhood perspective, which in turn justified her separation from broader society. It also suggests that Allison strongly opposed the identity that had been imposed upon her. By preventing her from situating this shift within the framework of her rights as a citizen, the intervention of professional decision-making impeded her move to adulthood.

### **Inclusion, Integration, and Exclusion**

Focusing on required provision for SEN and disabled pupils can be distracting, and that is a problem (Qu, 2021). The entire study of inclusion should focus on marginalization and its repercussions for marginalized groups such as ethnic groups, mature students, and people in economic difficulty (Buchner, et al., 2020). We cannot transform education by ignoring these populations. Inclusion definitions have expanded beyond disability to include other marginalized groups. This notion of inclusion challenges existing systems and structures that contribute to learner obstacles. Inclusion needs a reform in the educational systems to ensure all students can access educational and social opportunities. Harris and Davidge (2019) said that transformation requires systemic change and a national policy.

'Integration' implied that the student was responsible for adjusting to the school, rather than the school modifying its policies to accommodate a broader range of students (Gillet-Swan & Lundry, 2022). Therefore, inclusive education goes beyond 'integration' and necessitates a dramatic attitude shift and a commitment on the side of schools to transform assessment, curriculum, and pedagogical style. Cottom (2020) stated that the concept of inclusion does not limit types of learning problem or handicap, but rather focuses on how the school can accommodate a wide variety of requirements.

### **The Special Educational Needs Framework**

The 1944 Education Act established eleven categories of 'handicap,' including 'delicate' and the much-maligned 'educationally subnormal,' in addition to 'blind,' 'deaf,' and 'physically handicapped' (Demetriou, 2022). In addition, the SEM framework favoured a segmented approach, which was reinforced by a misreading of the law and extreme prejudice. Anne and Wolfe (2018) asserted that this was bolstered by the participation of educational institutions in executing contentious medical measures, which led to the exclusion of many children with significant impairments from the act and their labelling as "ineducable." Not until 1970, when The Education (Handicapped Children) Act was enacted, did the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) assume responsibility for children once deemed "ineducable" (Anne & Wolfe, 2018).

In 1994, the British government endorsed the UNESCO Salamanca Statement, which urged all governments to "implement as a matter of law or policy the idea of inclusive education, enrolling all children in ordinary schools, unless there are compelling reasons to do otherwise" (Allison & Sushil, 2019). The Statement firmly positioned educational reform within a broader social agenda and emphasized that mechanisms for planning, monitoring, and evaluating inclusive education provision should be "decentralized and participatory," encouraging "the participation of parents, communities, and organizations of people with disabilities in the planning and decision making" (Demetriou, 2022). The Education Act of 1996, which consolidated the Education Act of 1944 and a number of other education-related statutes, was enacted in response to this statement and broad demand to elevate individual rights to the forefront of policymaking (Dixon, et al., 2021). Additional case law and legislation, such as the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) of 2001, shortly followed (Lindsay, et al., 2021). Prior to the Special Educational Needs & Disability Code of Practice 2015, which went into effect in September 2014, there was a revised Code of Practice that aimed to reinforce the right to mainstream inclusion (Lindsay, et al., 2021). It contains assistance for disabled children and adolescents in addition to those with SEN. In addition, there is a greater emphasis on the participation of children, their parents, and young people in discussions and decisions regarding their support and provision, meaning that many children and young people with SEND will have their needs met by mainstream early years' providers, schools, or colleges.

Undoubtedly, the inclusive education debate has helped to improve awareness of SEN and impaired children in the United Kingdom and as a "global agenda" (Lindsay, et al., 2021). However, it has also brought to light the numerous challenges and tensions that arise when disability is considered a separate issue. Children with disabilities are not a homogenous bunch. They may identify more strongly with their gender, socioeconomic background, or ethnicity. Belonging to one or more of these groups raises their vulnerability greatly. The permanence of pressures that marginalize individuals or groups of students, as well as models that seek to classify them, makes the fight for inclusion a continuing one. Given the numerous take holders in education and the history of professional engagement, it is expected that cross-boundary collaboration will continue to be difficult, as will the association between measuring educational success and familial and social background. Unfortunately, the present financial austerity affecting all public services may make it more difficult to address these issues. However, education encompasses much more than the learning of skills. In order for all children to participate in teaching and learning, inclusive education seeks to advance democratic ideals and a set of values and beliefs concerning equality and social justice. Through its advocacy for marginalized communities, inclusive education has the capacity to advance these values and ideas.

A more inclusive learning method focuses on learning needs, not special needs. All learners are special, and tailored support and interventions for needs including dyslexia, autistic spectrum disorders, and attention deficit can help all learners. This helps explain inclusive behaviours. This paper reports the findings of a study of a

new model to enhance teaching and learning in Pre-service and In-service teachers enrolled in an Advanced Diploma in Technical Vocational teaching course. The question is not whether teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach in inclusive classrooms, but how to make best use of what they already know when learners experience difficulty. The course's theoretical justification is described, and instances of inclusive teaching are given.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Collecting Data**

In this study, a quantitative research approach was employed. According to Watson (2015) a quantitative research approach is a numbered centred approach used to make sense of a socially constructed event objectively. In accordance with this approach, data was collected using a questionnaire through a survey. Respondents were selected using probability sampling from three universities. A total of forty-five (45) teachers teaching at three different academic institution located in Gauteng province formed part of the study. All participants had enrolled for the Advanced Diploma in Technical and Vocational teaching program and were holders of mainstream teaching qualification (which includes the guided practicum module).

### **Data Analysis**

SEM framework was used to match questionnaire statements to research variables. The three variables of beliefs (behavioural, normative, and control) were collected using duplicate statements, therefore values and means vary. According to the concept, there should be two statements for each idea: one statement asks if the participant agrees with the statement, and the other asks if the statement is important. Here's a duplicate. In Statement 1, participants were asked if they think that include kids with disabilities in the mainstream encourages tolerance. This study's objective is to investigate inclusive education strategies to improve teaching and learning among teachers enrolled in an Advanced Diploma in Technical and Vocational teaching program. The study reported on the experiment tak Technical and Vocational teaching setting.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Before reporting on the findings, it is important to display the biographical data of the cohort that participated in this study. The cohort included 68% women ( $n = 41$ ) and 32% men ( $n = 19$ ). The age range was 19-59, with 22-28-year-old women making up the largest proportion. More than a third of the study's participants (37.5%) reported meeting a child or adolescent with disabilities before college. 20.3% of participants have no experience with teaching disabled people. Most (95.1%) who have not encountered a person with a disability are in the normal teaching program. Participants' training program choice and program progress.

### **Explaining the Willingness of Teachers to Engage in Inclusive Teaching Using the SEN Model**

The results of this study reveal a substantial positive association between the variable of behavioural beliefs and attitudes toward the practice of inclusive education ( $r = .745$ ,  $p = .003$ ). In other words, the more strongly teachers believed inclusive education to be helpful, the more positively they viewed inclusive education. There was a high positive association between normative views and subjective norms ( $r = .612$ ,  $p = .006$ ). Thus, the greater the motivation of teachers to conform to the expectations of significant others, the more likely they are to embrace their method as the societal standard. There was also a positive link between control beliefs and self-efficacy ( $r = .452$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy in teaching inclusive classrooms are those who believe they have the resources and chances to engage in inclusive teaching and the ability to control the elements that support or impede inclusion. As stated by the education model, strong positive connections were identified between belief variables and mediating variables. Next, we investigated the potential of the mediating variables (attitudes, subjective norms, and self-efficacy about inclusive teaching) to explain the readiness to engage in inclusive teaching. Using a multivariate regression analysis, this was accomplished. All three mediating variables were entered into the model in a single step, followed by the background variables (three mainstream teacher training programs were compared with the special education program) and the year

*Inclusive Education Strategies for Knowledge Development of Teachers Enrolled in the Advanced Vocational and Training Education Program* of study (years 1, 2, and 3 were compared with year 4). The results of the multiple regression model are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Willingness to teach inclusive Class.**

Indicator	B	SE. B	Beta
Attitudes towards inclusive teaching	0.49	0.04	0.36 ***
Subjective norms about inclusion	0.26	0.05	0.26 ***
Self-efficacy in teaching inclusive classes	0.61	0.04	0.42 ***
Attitudes towards inclusive teaching	0.33	0.04	0.33***
Subjective norms about inclusion	0.19	0.05	0.19***
Self-efficacy in teaching inclusive classes	0.57	0.03	0.50***
R <sup>2</sup> = 0.732 ; F = 122.835; p < 0.001			
*** p < 0.001			

According to the results presented in Table 2, the three mediating variables - attitudes toward inclusive teaching, subjective norms surrounding inclusion, and self-efficacy regarding inclusive teaching - accounted for 70.6% of the variance in the desire to teach inclusive classrooms. Each of these three variables was shown to have substantial explanatory capacity. Self-efficacy about inclusive teaching was the strongest predictor of willingness to teach inclusive classrooms among the three mediating variables ( $b = .61, p = .04$ ) The variable sense of societal norms was the least significant predictor of willingness to teach inclusive classes, but its impact was substantial ( $b = .19, p .05$ ). In other words, the mediating variables did not have the same explanatory influence on the development of the motivation to teach inclusive classes.

Thus, the positive betas in Table 2 indicate that teachers in special education programs are more reluctant than other pre-service instructors to give inclusive lessons. We can conclude that the degree to which pre-service teacher training programs foster inclusive teaching differs. The year of study variable was interpreted as three dummy variables in order to compare the fourth year to the three previous years. As demonstrated in Table 2, the number of years spent in school does not significantly explain the variation in desire to teach inclusive classes. In other words, the evolution of the training program did not significantly affect differences in teachers' propensity to offer inclusive classes. In conclusion, the data indicate that a sense of self-efficacy in inclusive teaching, attitudes toward inclusion, and subjective criteria are the key factors that determine the preparedness to teach inclusive classes. In addition, study appears that, among these three variables, teachers' self-efficacy towards inclusive education is the most significant determinant in their willingness to teach inclusive classrooms.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

This study recommends for the institution of a model to explain the factors that influence the inclination of sampled teachers to engage in inclusive teaching. The methodology can be used to evaluate the willingness of persons in various positions who are responsible for implementing inclusive education. Principals play a crucial role in the implementation of inclusion in their respective schools (Allison & Sushil, 2019). Consequently, it will be essential and fruitful to explore and comprehend how to boost their willingness to participate in inclusive education. The results of this study demonstrate the importance of including inclusive education within the various courses of the teacher education curriculum, as well as the guided experience during this time. Assimilation requires the assistance of professors of teacher education. Another study might assess lecturers' attitudes toward inclusion, perceptions of inclusion-related social norms, self-efficacy in supporting teachers to practice inclusive teaching, and capacity to serve as role models. In addition to belief variables and mediating variables, the education model recognizes the importance of additional background elements to the diversity of human behaviour (Cottom, 2020). Another study might examine the influence of background characteristics, such as age and gender, as well as pre-college interaction with a child or adolescent with special needs in their family, at work, or through volunteer work. Given that the current study was conducted in South Africa, it could be interesting to incorporate cultural context into the background components when conducting this study in other countries. The research indicates that it is crucial to establish and consistently enforce specified minimum behavioural standards. Additionally, it is vital to handle minor disruptions with care. In addition, they must be encouraged in ways that benefit all classroom kids.

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