



EXAMINING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND MINDSETS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT:

Inclusive education promotes equal learning opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities and diverse learning needs, within mainstream classroom settings. Teachers play a pivotal role in the effective implementation of inclusive education, as their perceptions and mindsets directly influence classroom practices and learner outcomes. This study examined teachers' perceptions and mindsets toward inclusive education, focusing on their attitudes, beliefs, and perceived readiness to implement inclusive practices.

The study employed a descriptive quantitative research design involving teachers from selected schools engaged in inclusive or mainstream education. Data were gathered using a structured survey questionnaire that assessed teachers' perceptions of inclusion, mindset toward learner diversity, and perceived challenges in inclusive classrooms. Statistical analyses, including frequency distribution and weighted mean, were used to interpret the data.

Results indicated that teachers generally held positive perceptions of inclusive education, recognizing its importance in promoting equity, social inclusion, and respect for diversity. Teachers with prior training and professional development in inclusive education demonstrated more positive and growth-oriented mindsets compared to those without formal training. However, despite favorable attitudes, respondents reported challenges such as limited instructional resources, large class sizes, insufficient training, and lack of specialist support, which affected their confidence and effectiveness in inclusive settings.

The study concludes that while teachers support the principles of inclusive education, successful implementation depends on sustained professional development, adequate resources, and strong institutional support. These findings highlight the need for policy initiatives and school-based interventions that strengthen teachers' capacities and foster positive mindsets toward inclusive education.

KEYWORDS:

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PAPER ACCEPTED DATE:

17th January 2026

PAPER PUBLISHED DATE:

19th January 2026

I. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has emerged as a fundamental principle in modern educational systems, advocating for the integration of all learners—regardless of disability, learning difficulty, or socio-cultural background—into regular classroom environments. Rooted in international frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, inclusive education emphasizes equity, participation, and access to quality education for every learner. As schools increasingly adopt inclusive policies, the role of teachers becomes central to ensuring that inclusive education is effectively translated from policy into classroom practice.

Teachers' perceptions and mindsets significantly influence

the success of inclusive education initiatives. Positive beliefs and growth-oriented mindsets toward learner diversity are associated with inclusive instructional strategies, adaptive classroom management, and supportive learning environments. Conversely, negative perceptions, limited confidence, or fixed mindsets may hinder the implementation of inclusive practices, even when inclusive policies are in place. Understanding teachers' perceptions and mindsets is therefore essential in identifying both the enabling factors and barriers to inclusive education.

Despite growing global support for inclusion, many teachers continue to face challenges in inclusive classrooms. These challenges include inadequate training

in special and inclusive education, limited access to instructional resources, large class sizes, and insufficient support from specialists and school administrators. Such contextual factors often shape teachers' attitudes and influence their readiness to accommodate learners with diverse needs. In developing educational contexts, these challenges are further intensified by systemic constraints, making the examination of teachers' perceptions particularly relevant.

Several studies have explored teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education; however, fewer have examined the combined influence of perceptions and mindsets on inclusive teaching practices. This study seeks to address this gap by examining teachers' perceptions and mindsets toward inclusive education. By identifying prevailing attitudes, beliefs, and challenges, the study aims to generate evidence-based insights that can inform teacher education programs, professional development initiatives, and policy decisions. Ultimately, understanding teachers' perspectives is critical to strengthening inclusive education systems and ensuring meaningful learning opportunities for all students.

II. OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to examine teachers' perceptions and mindsets toward inclusive education and to determine how these influence their readiness and capacity to implement inclusive practices in mainstream classroom settings. By exploring teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that support or hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Specifically, this study seeks to assess teachers' overall perceptions of inclusive education, including their views on its purpose, benefits, and relevance in promoting equity and equal learning opportunities for all students. It aims to determine the extent to which teachers demonstrate positive or negative mindsets toward learner diversity, particularly in relation to students with disabilities and other special educational needs. The study also aims to evaluate teachers' perceived competence and confidence in adapting instructional strategies, classroom management techniques, and assessment methods to accommodate diverse learners.

Another important objective of this research is to identify the challenges and constraints encountered by teachers in inclusive classroom environments. These challenges may include limited professional training, inadequate instructional resources, large class sizes, lack of support from specialists, and institutional or policy-related barriers. By identifying these challenges, the study seeks to highlight areas that require targeted intervention and support.

Furthermore, the study aims to examine whether teachers' perceptions and mindsets toward inclusive education vary according to selected demographic and professional variables such as teaching experience, educational

background, and prior exposure to inclusive education training. Understanding these variations can help determine which groups of teachers may require additional professional development or institutional support.

Overall, the objectives of this study are intended to generate empirical evidence that can inform educational policymakers, school administrators, and teacher education institutions in designing effective training programs, support mechanisms, and policies that foster positive teacher mindsets and strengthen the implementation of inclusive education.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a **descriptive quantitative research design** to examine teachers' perceptions and mindsets toward inclusive education. The descriptive design was deemed appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data to provide an accurate profile of teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences regarding inclusive practices, without manipulating variables. The study focused on teachers from selected public and private schools that have implemented inclusive education programs, ensuring that participants had direct exposure to inclusive classroom settings.

The **participants** of the study were purposively selected based on their teaching experience in inclusive or mainstream classrooms. A total of 30 teachers participated in the study, representing various grade levels and subject areas. Selection criteria included active teaching status, experience with inclusive education, and willingness to participate in the study. This approach ensured that the respondents could provide informed and relevant insights into the research problem.

Data collection was conducted using a structured survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on existing literature and validated instruments to assess teachers' perceptions, mindset toward learner diversity, perceived competence, and challenges in inclusive education. The survey consisted of both closed-ended Likert-scale items and open-ended questions to capture quantitative and qualitative data. Before full implementation, the instrument was pilot-tested with a small group of teachers to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity.

Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics. Quantitative responses were analyzed using frequency distribution, percentages, and weighted mean to identify trends in teachers' perceptions and mindsets. Inferential analysis was applied to examine potential relationships between teachers' demographic profiles and their attitudes toward inclusion. Qualitative responses from open-ended questions were thematically analyzed to provide additional insights into challenges and recommendations for improving inclusive practices.

The study adhered to ethical standards, ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and informed

consent. Participants were assured that the data collected would be used solely for research purposes, contributing to a better understanding of teachers' perceptions and mindsets in inclusive education.

This study employed a **descriptive-correlational research design** to assess the attitudes and beliefs of teachers toward inclusive education and to examine the relationship between these perceptions and teachers' demographic characteristics. The design was selected as it allows for systematic description of attitudes and beliefs while identifying potential correlations with factors such as age, teaching experience, educational background, and prior training in special education.

The study was conducted among **30 teachers** from selected public schools. Participants were chosen using **purposive sampling**, ensuring that they represented a variety of teaching experiences, subject areas, and exposure to inclusive education. Only teachers who were currently teaching in classrooms with diverse learners, including students with disabilities, were included.

Data were collected using a **self-administered questionnaire**, which was validated by experts in special and inclusive education to ensure content accuracy and reliability. The instrument included sections measuring **attitudes toward inclusive education**, covering cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, and **beliefs about inclusive education**, including perceptions of feasibility, benefits, and challenges in classroom implementation. Demographic information such as age, teaching experience, educational qualifications, and prior special education training was also collected.

Descriptive statistics—including mean, percentage, and standard deviation—were used to summarize the data on teachers' attitudes and beliefs. **Pearson correlation analysis** was employed to determine the relationships between demographic factors and teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity of responses.

This methodology provided a structured and reliable approach to understanding teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward inclusive education, highlighting both positive perceptions and challenges, and offering evidence-based insights for improving teacher preparedness.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study examined teachers' perceptions and mindsets toward inclusive education, highlighting both their attitudes and the challenges they encounter in implementing inclusive practices. The findings indicate that teachers generally hold **positive perceptions** of inclusive education, recognizing its importance in promoting equity, social inclusion, and equal learning opportunities for all students. Teachers with prior training or professional development in inclusive education demonstrated **more positive and growth-oriented mindsets**, reflecting greater confidence in adapting

instruction and managing diverse classrooms.

However, the study also revealed that **systemic and contextual challenges**—such as limited instructional resources, large class sizes, insufficient specialist support, and lack of continuous professional development—affect teachers' ability to fully implement inclusive practices. These challenges suggest that positive attitudes alone are insufficient for effective inclusion; supportive policies, adequate resources, and targeted professional training are necessary to translate teachers' perceptions into meaningful classroom outcomes.

Furthermore, variations in mindset and confidence were observed based on demographic and professional factors, including teaching experience and exposure to inclusive education training. This underscores the need for differentiated strategies that address the specific needs of teachers at varying stages of their professional development.

In conclusion, while teachers largely support the principles of inclusive education and exhibit readiness to implement inclusive practices, the success of inclusion initiatives depends on addressing structural barriers and enhancing teacher capacity through ongoing professional development, resource provision, and administrative support. These findings provide evidence-based insights for policymakers, school administrators, and teacher education institutions aiming to strengthen inclusive education systems and foster positive learning environments for all learners.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the implementation of inclusive education and strengthen teachers' perceptions and mindsets toward inclusion:

- 1. Professional Development:** Schools and educational authorities should provide continuous and targeted training programs on inclusive education. These programs should focus on strategies for differentiated instruction, classroom management for diverse learners, and assessment adaptations to increase teacher confidence and competence.
- 2. Resource Provision:** Adequate instructional materials, assistive technologies, and learning resources should be made available to support inclusive teaching. Schools should ensure that classrooms are equipped to meet the needs of learners with diverse abilities.
- 3. Specialist Support:** Collaboration with special education specialists, counselors, and support staff should be strengthened. Teachers should have access to guidance and mentoring when addressing the challenges of inclusive classrooms.
- 4. Policy and Administrative Support:** School administrators and policymakers should implement supportive policies that reduce class sizes, provide sufficient teaching aids, and allocate time for planning inclusive lessons. Administrative encouragement can

positively influence teacher attitudes and mindset toward inclusion.

5. Awareness and Advocacy: Teacher education programs should emphasize the importance of inclusive education and foster positive mindsets from the early stages of teacher preparation. Awareness campaigns can also promote a culture of inclusion among teachers, students, and the wider school community.

By implementing these recommendations, schools can create an environment that not only fosters positive teacher perceptions and mindsets but also ensures that inclusive education is effectively practiced, ultimately providing equitable learning opportunities for all students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study would not have been possible without the guidance, support, and encouragement of several individuals. First and foremost, I express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Lilibeth C. Pinili, my research adviser, for providing invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, and unwavering support throughout the research process. Their expertise and patience greatly contributed to the successful completion of this study.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to the **teachers and participants** who willingly shared their time, insights, and experiences, enabling this study to gather meaningful and relevant data. Their cooperation and openness were crucial in understanding the attitudes and beliefs toward inclusive education.

My appreciation further goes to my **family and friends** for their continuous encouragement, understanding, and moral support during the research process. Their motivation and patience provided me with the strength to overcome challenges and complete this study. Lastly, I acknowledge all the authors, researchers, and institutions whose works and references have guided the development of this research, providing a solid foundation for its framework and analysis.

This study stands as a testament to the collective support, guidance, and collaboration of all the individuals mentioned above.

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