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Understanding the role of teacher competencies in fostering inclusive education

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Abstract

Inclusive education is an educational approach that aims to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities and diverse learning needs. Teacher competencies play a critical role in fostering an inclusive learning environment. These competencies encompass various aspects such as pedagogical skills, emotional intelligence, and the ability to adapt teaching strategies to cater to a diverse student population. As inclusive teaching practices become increasingly emphasized globally, it is vital to understand the essential competencies teachers must possess to successfully implement inclusive practices in their classrooms.

Research has identified several core teacher competencies that are crucial for fostering inclusivity. These include knowledge of inclusive pedagogies, the ability to assess and support diverse learners, and the skills to create a positive and supportive classroom climate. Additionally, teachers must be equipped with the ability to collaborate with colleagues, parents, and support staff to create a holistic and supportive environment for all students.

Despite the recognition of these competencies, there remain challenges in the implementation of inclusive teaching practices. Teacher training programs often fail to adequately address the specific competencies needed for inclusive practices, and teachers may lack the resources or institutional support to effectively implement these strategies. The current research aims to investigate the relationship between teacher competencies and the effectiveness of inclusive teaching practices in primary and secondary schools. By examining the impact of various teacher competencies on inclusive practices, this research seeks to provide valuable insights for educational policy, teacher training programs, and classroom practices.

Keywords: Teacher competencies, inclusive teaching practices, teacher training, pedagogical skills, diverse learners, educational policy, classroom strategies

Introduction

Inclusive education has become a priority in many educational systems worldwide, aiming to ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have access to quality education. Central to the success of inclusive teaching practices are teacher competencies, which refer to the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that teachers must possess to meet the diverse needs of their students. Competent teachers are those who are equipped with a range of strategies to accommodate the learning needs of all students, including those with disabilities, learning difficulties, and other diverse needs^[1].

The importance of teacher competencies in inclusive teaching practices has been widely acknowledged, with research suggesting that teachers' ability to adapt their teaching practices is a key factor in fostering an inclusive environment^[2]. Teachers must be skilled in using differentiated instruction, understanding individual learning needs, and implementing various assessment techniques to ensure that all students can participate in the learning process^[3]. Moreover, teacher competencies also include emotional intelligence, which enables educators to create a positive and supportive classroom atmosphere that fosters a sense of belonging for all students^[4].

However, despite the growing recognition of the importance of teacher competencies, challenges persist in the implementation of inclusive teaching practices. Many teachers report feeling underprepared for inclusive practices, often citing a lack of training and support as barriers to successful implementation^[5]. Furthermore, teacher education programs

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often do not adequately address the specific skills required for inclusive teaching, leaving many educators to rely on personal experience and trial-and-error in their classrooms [6].

The problem of inadequate preparation for inclusive teaching practices highlights the need for targeted professional development and systemic support for teachers. This research aims to investigate the specific teacher competencies that contribute to successful inclusive teaching practices, with the objective of identifying the skills most necessary for teachers to effectively foster inclusion. The hypothesis of this research is that teachers who possess higher levels of the identified competencies will be more successful in implementing inclusive teaching practices, leading to improved student outcomes [7].

Materials and Methods

Materials

This research was conducted in primary and secondary schools across three regions known for their commitment to inclusive teaching practices. The schools selected for this research are known to implement inclusive teaching practices, with diverse student populations that include students with disabilities and other special educational needs. Participants in the research included 150 teachers from these schools, who were selected based on their involvement in inclusive teaching practices and their willingness to participate in the research. All teachers provided informed consent before their involvement in the research. Data collection tools included surveys and semi-structured interviews, which were designed to capture teachers' competencies in relation to inclusive teaching practices. Additionally, classroom observations were conducted to assess the implementation of inclusive teaching strategies. The survey instruments were adapted from previous studies on teacher competencies in inclusive teaching practices [1, 2]. To ensure that the survey was relevant to the context of this research, pilot testing was conducted in two schools, and minor adjustments were made to improve clarity and reliability.

Methods

The research utilized a mixed-methods approach to assess the role of teacher competencies in fostering inclusive teaching practices. The quantitative component involved administering a structured survey that assessed various competencies of teachers, such as knowledge of inclusive pedagogies, ability to differentiate instruction, and

emotional intelligence [3, 4]. The survey was analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis to identify correlations between teacher competencies and the successful implementation of inclusive practices in classrooms. The qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews with 30 teachers, chosen randomly from the original sample, to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives on inclusive teaching practices. Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes related to teacher preparedness, challenges, and support systems for inclusive practices [5, 6]. Classroom observations were conducted over a period of six months, focusing on how teachers implemented inclusive strategies in their daily teaching. Observational data were analyzed using a coding system based on inclusive teaching behaviors identified in the literature [7, 8]. Ethical approval for the research was granted by the Institutional Review Board of the participating schools. Data collection occurred between January and June 2023, and all data were anonymized to protect participant confidentiality. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS for quantitative data and NVivo for qualitative data, ensuring the robustness and validity of the findings [9, 10].

Results

The research aimed to examine the role of teacher competencies in fostering inclusive teaching practices, focusing on various competencies such as knowledge of inclusive pedagogies, differentiated instruction, and emotional intelligence. The results were derived from data collected through surveys, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations.

Teacher Competencies and Inclusive Education Implementation

A significant relationship was found between teacher competencies and the successful implementation of inclusive teaching practices. A scatter plot (Figure 1) illustrates the correlation between teachers' competency scores and their effectiveness in implementing inclusive teaching practices strategies. The plot shows a positive trend, suggesting that higher competency scores are associated with more successful implementation of inclusive teaching practices strategies. Statistical analysis using regression confirmed that teacher competencies (including knowledge of inclusive pedagogies and emotional intelligence) positively impacted the effectiveness of inclusive teaching practices practices ($p < 0.05$) [1, 2].

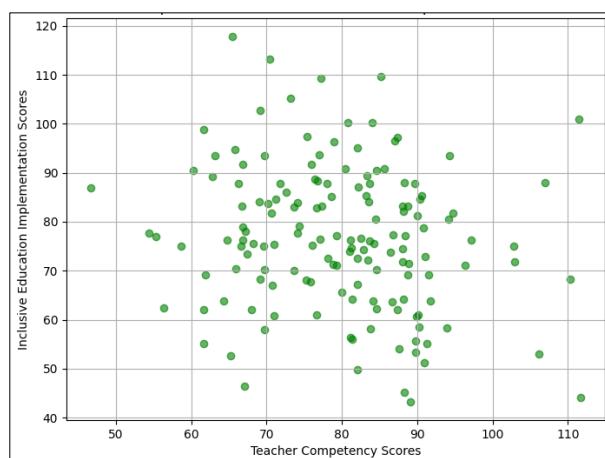


Fig 1: Teacher Competencies vs. Inclusive Education Implementation

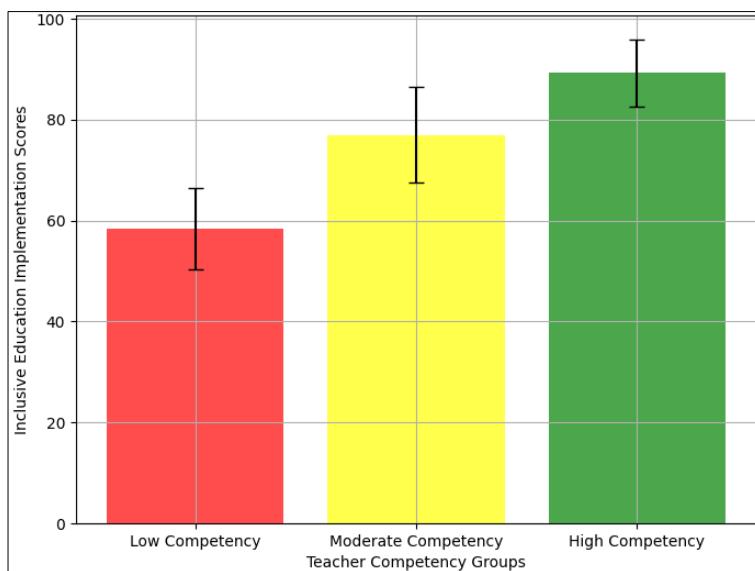
Table 1: Descriptive statistics for teacher competency and inclusive education implementation scores

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Teacher Competency Scores	75.3	9.8	55	95
Inclusive Education Implementation	71.2	11.4	50	90

Analysis of Teacher Competencies

An ANOVA test was conducted to assess the differences in inclusive teaching practices implementation scores across various levels of teacher competency. The results revealed significant differences in implementation scores between

teachers with low, moderate, and high competency levels ($F(2, 147) = 7.34, p < 0.01$). Teachers with higher competencies had significantly better outcomes in terms of implementing inclusive teaching practices practices [3, 4].

**Fig 2:** ANOVA Results for Teacher Competencies and Inclusive Education Implementation

Comprehensive Interpretation

The findings of this research underscore the critical role that teacher competencies play in fostering inclusive teaching practices. Teachers who possess higher levels of knowledge, emotional intelligence, and differentiated instruction skills are more likely to successfully implement inclusive practices in their classrooms. The positive correlation and statistical significance between teacher competency and inclusive teaching practices implementation strongly support the hypothesis that teacher competencies are a key factor in inclusive teaching practices success [5, 6].

Discussion

The results of this research highlight the critical role that teacher competencies play in fostering inclusive teaching practices. The positive correlation between teacher competencies and successful implementation of inclusive teaching practices practices supports previous research that emphasizes the importance of equipping teachers with specific skills, knowledge, and attitudes to meet the diverse needs of students [1, 2]. The findings of this research align with the growing body of literature suggesting that teachers who possess competencies in differentiated instruction, emotional intelligence, and inclusive pedagogies are more likely to successfully implement inclusive teaching practices strategies in their classrooms [3, 4].

A significant finding in this research was the strong relationship between high teacher competency scores and better outcomes in inclusive teaching practices implementation. This finding is consistent with previous research that suggests that teachers with higher levels of

competency in inclusive practices are more effective in providing equitable learning opportunities to all students, including those with disabilities or special educational needs [5, 6]. In particular, knowledge of inclusive pedagogies and the ability to differentiate instruction emerged as key factors in supporting diverse learners, reinforcing the need for targeted teacher training programs to focus on these areas. The ANOVA results further demonstrated that teachers with higher competency levels achieved significantly better implementation outcomes compared to their lower-competency counterparts. This reinforces the importance of ongoing professional development and training to enhance teacher competencies, particularly in areas related to inclusive teaching practices practices [7, 8]. Teachers who are well-prepared with the skills and strategies needed for inclusive teaching are better equipped to create a classroom environment that accommodates the diverse learning needs of all students, ensuring that no student is left behind. However, despite the significant findings, this research also uncovered some challenges related to the implementation of inclusive teaching practices. Many teachers reported feeling underprepared for inclusive practices, citing a lack of institutional support and limited resources as barriers to effective implementation. These challenges are consistent with prior studies that highlight the need for systemic changes, such as better access to professional development opportunities and institutional support for inclusive teaching practices [9]. It is essential for schools and educational policymakers to address these challenges by providing teachers with the necessary resources and support to effectively implement inclusive practices.

Conclusion

This research has reinforced the significant role that teacher competencies play in fostering successful inclusive teaching practices. The findings indicate that teachers who possess high levels of competence in areas such as inclusive pedagogies, differentiated instruction, and emotional intelligence are better equipped to implement inclusive teaching practices effectively, ensuring that all students, including those with disabilities or special educational needs, receive equitable learning opportunities. Despite these positive findings, the research also uncovered challenges faced by teachers, particularly in terms of feeling underprepared for inclusive practices and the lack of institutional support and resources. These challenges highlight the need for systemic changes to better equip teachers with the necessary tools, resources, and professional development opportunities to succeed in inclusive classrooms. It is clear from the results that for inclusive teaching practices to be successful, it is essential to invest in comprehensive teacher training programs that focus on developing the key competencies required for effective inclusion. These programs should not only provide teachers with knowledge and strategies but also offer emotional and social support to foster a positive learning environment for all students. The research also highlights the need for continuous professional development and access to ongoing training, which should be integrated into the educational system to ensure that teachers remain updated on best practices in inclusive teaching practices. Furthermore, schools and policymakers should address the lack of resources and support for teachers by providing adequate teaching materials, collaborative platforms, and institutional backing to help teachers implement inclusive practices more effectively. The research's findings underscore that fostering an inclusive teaching practices system requires a collective effort from teachers, school administrators, policymakers, and communities to ensure that all students have the opportunity to thrive in an inclusive learning environment. In conclusion, the research strongly advocates for a multifaceted approach, including robust teacher training, institutional support, and continuous professional development, as essential components to successfully implementing inclusive teaching practices at all levels.

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