

# Inclusive Education

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Inclusive educational practices demand social justice where all students with special educational needs have the same right to access education, irrespective of their special needs. Increasingly, across the world, teachers are supporting and defending the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools and classrooms.

inclusive classroom settings

mild learning disability

self-efficacy

teachers' attitudes

## 1. Inclusive Settings in Schools

The basic principle of inclusion proclaims that all individuals are distinctive in various ways and should be understood and accommodated according to their uniqueness and differences. It proposes such a setting where all students are welcome to gain access to all educational opportunities, irrespective of any learning incapacity or physical disorder <sup>[1]</sup>. Inclusive education is all about the pursuit of justice, contribution, and insight into social responsibility. It emphasizes the omission of obstacles of segregation and repression, while focusing on the happiness of all students, including disabled students <sup>[2]</sup>. Hence, inclusion is founded on an affirming conceptualization of difference where learner diversity is regarded as a positive resource and something to be celebrated. Importance is given to the quest for variation, with great emphasis on the significance of teaching how to live with one another and how to be aware of our common humanity <sup>[3]</sup>.

Adam Smith's equity theory emphasizes the importance of finding whether the distribution of resources is impartial and equal among all relational partners. Inclusion is an approach that is beyond the notion that all students should be educated in the same place. It emphasizes impartiality and the positive participation of every individual <sup>[4]</sup>. Inclusive education aims to include all the students in a regular classroom setting in mainstream schools where students with and without disabilities are accommodated based on the principles of societal impartiality and civil rights (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) <sup>[5][6][7]</sup>. An inclusive approach to the education of students with learning disabilities has often been regarded as the only way to maximize opportunities to achieve and participate in education and society <sup>[8]</sup>. Researchers have identified different studies and stated that to become an inclusive school, one needs to find and remove barriers that hinder inclusion <sup>[9]</sup>. It involves teachers recognizing how they can support students with mild disabilities. In Pakistan, the current state of inclusion is unwelcoming, especially in public schools where inclusion is nonexistent <sup>[10]</sup>. In contrast, in the private sector, inclusion is taking place, but often with hefty fees attached <sup>[11]</sup>.

## 2. Teachers' Attitudes towards Mild Learning Disabilities (MLDs)

Learning disabilities have different manifestations in different individuals and not all students with learning disabilities need to display all the characteristic features related to them [12]. Learning disability is a cognitive disability that affects how an individual comprehends information and responds to it. They might encounter difficulties comprehending intricate or convoluted knowledge, grasping new knowledge, and handling it autonomously. It is of great interest as teachers are usually reluctant to include them in mainstream classroom settings [13], and it is worthwhile studying the reasons for this reluctance. Consequently, the present research focuses on students with mild learning disabilities. The acquisition and utilization of fundamental language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, can be impeded by learning disabilities. These disabilities may affect various aspects, such as phonemic awareness, word recognition, intellectual capacity, spelling, written communication, and mathematical abilities, such as calculation and problem-solving. Additionally, learning disabilities may also impact organizational skills, social awareness, social communication, and adjustment. Experts classify learning disabilities into four types: mild, moderate, severe, and profound. Previous research suggests that IQ scores may carry less significance compared to the extent and nature of intervention needed for individuals with learning disabilities, as noted by Smith [14].

Inclusion emphasizes the revision of widely practiced approaches to teaching and learning. This requires curriculum modification, which should be the school's responsibility. According to established theory in the field of inclusive education, there are robust statistics available that all students grasp differently, for instance, by close observation or by impersonating others; explicitly, students with cognitive disorders learn speedily among their classmates, meaning these students learn more rapidly when they are in inclusive classrooms than similar students who are not in inclusive classrooms [15]. This results in the creation of a collective teaching and learning environment through which a multiplicity of students can be promoted by encouraging an empathetic attitude [15].

### 3. Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy (TSES) Facilitates Inclusive Settings in Schools

The practical implementation of inclusion in mainstream schools can be achieved when teachers and principals are willing to embrace its philosophy and unique requirements. Previous studies, including those by Kazmi et al. [1] and Kamran et al. [16] in Pakistan, have reported that teachers often have varying attitudes toward inclusive education. Additionally, teachers commonly express practical concerns that may shape their attitudes toward inclusion. These concerns may include managing individualized time demands of students with disabilities while not disrupting other students in the classroom, addressing teacher hesitance through training on inclusive practices for students with disabilities, ensuring adequate provision of resources, and enhancing competency in supporting inclusive practices, as highlighted by Gaines and Barnes [17].

Researchers have stated that teachers need to be trained to meet inclusive education demands [2]. Training can make them confident in their abilities with improved knowledge, skills, and attitudes. As a result, engaging students, developing instructional strategies, and managing classrooms can be enhanced. Furthermore, a research study indicates that teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education improved through professional development [5]. It was also suggested that workshops should be organized for the benefit of teachers working with students with

disabilities [18][19]. Another research study carried out in the Pakistani context revealed that trained teachers were more efficacious in including students with disabilities [20]. The research carried out so far in the field of teacher education with special reference to students with disabilities claims that without a professionally developed teacher, inclusion can never become a reality [21].

Bandura introduced the concept of self-efficacy three decades ago as a critical factor in human motivation. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's perception of their ability to achieve desired levels of performance, which significantly influences their actions and outcomes in life [22]. According to Bandura's social cognitive theory from 1986, an individual's self-referential beliefs act as a mediator between knowledge and actions [23]. Bandura considers self-reflection as an intrinsic human capability, through which individuals evaluate and modify their attitudes, which can play a crucial role in promoting inclusion and addressing diversity. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) described self-efficacy as a teacher's confidence in their ability to facilitate effective student performance [24]. Self-efficacy in instructional approaches, student engagement, and classroom management is crucial for successful teaching and learning. In the literature, self-efficacy belief is highlighted as a significant mediator for attitude and attitude change [25][26]. Therefore, a teacher's sense of self-efficacy can greatly contribute to successful inclusive practices.

There are limited research studies that can directly compare teachers' attitudes toward including students with MLDs; the results of this research study contribute to special education research. Educational experts must examine the results and determine policies to improve regular education instructors' willingness to have students with a mild learning disability in their classrooms. This notion clarifies that more preparation is required to facilitate disabilities as it increases self-efficacy. Especially for students with moderate learning disabilities, school management should provide opportunities for continuous professional development. Teachers need to be better informed about the most effective teaching practices to promote their educational, societal, and behavioral abilities [27].

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