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Role of Teacher Professional Development on the Implementation of Inclusive Education Practices in Djibouti

Justus Silam



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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess the role of teacher professional development on the implementation of inclusive education practices in Djibouti.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: The study found that targeted and well-designed professional development programs equip educators with the necessary knowledge, skills, and strategies to create inclusive classroom environments. These programs often emphasize understanding diverse learning needs, adapting teaching methods accordingly, and fostering a supportive classroom culture that values equity and diversity. Teachers who participate in such programs are more likely to demonstrate increased confidence in addressing diverse student needs, utilizing inclusive teaching strategies, and collaborating effectively with colleagues, families, and support professionals. Moreover, studies highlight that sustained

and ongoing professional development is essential for embedding inclusive practices into everyday teaching routines. Effective professional development initiatives often incorporate opportunities for reflection, feedback, and peer collaboration, allowing teachers to continuously refine their practices and respond flexibly to evolving student needs. By promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement, these initiatives contribute to the overall effectiveness of inclusive education efforts within schools.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Social learning theory, adult learning theory and communities of practice (CoP) theory may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the role of teacher professional development on the implementation of inclusive education practices in Djibouti. In the realm of practice, it is essential to tailor professional development programs to specific contextual factors such as school demographics, community needs, and student diversity. At the policy level, advocating for institutional support is crucial. Policies should provide sufficient resources, time, and support for implementing inclusive education practices.

Keywords: *Teacher, Professional Development, Implementation, Inclusive Education Practices*

INTRODUCTION

Teacher professional development plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of inclusive education practices within school systems worldwide. In the United States, inclusive education practices have seen a significant rise over the past decade. According to a study by Wechsler and Turiel (2018), classroom observations have revealed a 15% increase in the implementation of inclusive strategies, such as differentiated instruction and collaborative learning, in mainstream classrooms across public schools. This trend is supported by teacher self-reports, where 85% of educators reported incorporating inclusive practices regularly. Moreover, student feedback has shown a positive impact, with 75% of students expressing satisfaction with the inclusive approach, citing improved learning experiences and a sense of belonging.

Similarly, in Japan, inclusive education practices have been on the rise. A study by Sato and Takahashi (2020) indicated a 10% increase in inclusive teaching methods, including personalized learning plans and peer support programs, based on classroom observations. Teacher self-reports align with this trend, with 80% of teachers reporting active implementation of inclusive practices. Student feedback further supports these findings, with 70% of students reporting increased engagement and academic progress in inclusive classrooms.

In developing economies such as Brazil, inclusive education practices have been gaining traction. Research by Silva and de Souza (2019) demonstrates a 20% increase in inclusive strategies, such as individualized education plans and inclusive extracurricular activities, based on classroom observations. Teacher self-reports also reflect this trend, with 70% of educators indicating regular use of inclusive practices. Student feedback echoes these improvements, with 65% of students expressing a sense of inclusion and academic growth in inclusive settings.

Similarly, in India, inclusive education practices have shown progress. A study by Singh and Kapoor (2021) indicated a 15% increase in the implementation of inclusive strategies, such as peer tutoring and adaptive technology, based on classroom observations. Teacher self-reports corroborate this, with 75% of teachers reporting the incorporation of inclusive practices. Student feedback supports these findings, with 60% of students reporting enhanced learning experiences and social integration in inclusive classrooms.

In Pakistan, inclusive education practices have undergone significant advancements over recent years. A comprehensive study conducted by Khan and Ali (2021) provided insights into the evolving landscape of inclusive strategies within the country's educational framework. The research, based on meticulous classroom observations, revealed a substantial 25% increase in the implementation of inclusive methodologies. These methodologies encompassed a range of initiatives, including inclusive curricula that catered to diverse learning needs and specialized teacher training programs focused on inclusive pedagogy. The findings from teacher self-reports further substantiated this upward trend, with an impressive 80% of educators actively engaging in and embracing inclusive practices within their classrooms. Moreover, student feedback served as a testament to the positive impact of these initiatives, with 70% of students expressing not only improved academic performance but also a profound sense of belonging and inclusivity within the educational environment. These outcomes underscore the transformative potential of inclusive education in fostering a more equitable and supportive learning ecosystem in Pakistan.

In Brazil, the landscape of inclusive education practices continues to undergo dynamic evolution, as highlighted by Santos and Oliveira (2023) in their recent research endeavors. Through comprehensive classroom observations, their study elucidated a notable 20% increase in the adoption and integration of inclusive strategies across various educational settings. These strategies encompassed a spectrum of interventions, ranging from personalized and differentiated instruction to the incorporation of inclusive extracurricular activities designed to promote holistic development among students. The alignment of these findings with teacher self-reports, where 75% of educators actively embraced and implemented inclusive practices, underscores a significant paradigm shift towards inclusivity within Brazil's educational fabric. Furthermore, student feedback echoed these positive trends, with 65% of students reporting heightened satisfaction levels and enhanced learning experiences within inclusive educational environments. Such outcomes not only underscore the efficacy of inclusive education but also highlight its pivotal role in cultivating a more diverse, equitable, and enriched learning milieu in Brazil, thereby fostering greater educational outcomes and societal inclusivity.

In Mexico, inclusive education practices are on the rise. Research by Hernandez and Gonzalez (2019) demonstrated a 25% increase in the adoption of inclusive strategies, such as inclusive curricula and classroom accommodations, based on classroom observations. Teacher self-reports corroborate this, with 75% of educators incorporating inclusive practices. Student feedback supports these findings, with 65% of students noting enhanced learning experiences and peer relationships in inclusive environments.

In Indonesia, inclusive education practices have been gaining momentum. A study by Widodo and Pramono (2018) demonstrated a 15% increase in the implementation of inclusive strategies, such as inclusive pedagogy and support services, based on classroom observations. Teacher self-reports align with this trend, with 70% of teachers actively incorporating inclusive practices. Student feedback also supports these improvements, with 60% of students reporting a positive impact on their academic performance and social interactions in inclusive classrooms.

In Egypt, inclusive education practices are also showing positive developments. Research by Ahmed and Mahmoud (2022) indicated a 20% increase in the use of inclusive strategies, such as inclusive curricula and teacher training, based on classroom observations. Teacher self-reports reinforce this progress, with 75% of educators implementing inclusive practices. Additionally, student feedback underscores the benefits, with 55% of students expressing satisfaction and increased learning outcomes in inclusive educational settings.

In South Africa, inclusive education practices have shown significant progress. A study by Khumalo and Naidoo (2020) revealed a 30% increase in inclusive strategies, such as inclusive assessments and individualized support plans, based on classroom observations. Teacher self-reports also indicate this upward trend, with 80% of teachers actively implementing inclusive practices. Moreover, student feedback highlights positive outcomes, with 70% of students reporting improved academic performance and a sense of acceptance in inclusive classrooms.

In sub-Saharan economies like Kenya, inclusive education practices are steadily improving. A study by Nyaga and Muthee (2018) showed a 25% increase in the use of inclusive strategies, such as co-teaching and inclusive assessment methods, based on classroom observations. Teacher self-reports mirror this progress, with 65% of teachers actively implementing inclusive practices. Additionally, student feedback indicates positive outcomes, with 55% of students reporting increased academic confidence and peer relationships in inclusive environments.

Similarly, in Nigeria, inclusive education practices are making strides. Research by Olayinka and Babatunde (2023) demonstrated a 12% increase in the adoption of inclusive strategies, such as inclusive curricula and accessible learning materials, based on classroom observations. Teacher self-reports support this trend, with 60% of educators incorporating inclusive practices. Student feedback reflects improvements, with 50% of students noting enhanced learning experiences and a sense of belonging in inclusive classrooms.

Professional development programs focused on inclusive education are crucial for enhancing educators' capacity to implement inclusive practices effectively. One likely participation avenue is specialized workshops or training sessions that provide educators with practical strategies and tools for creating inclusive learning environments. For instance, a study by Brown (2020) highlighted the positive impact of targeted workshops on inclusive teaching methods, leading to a 20% increase in the implementation of inclusive practices, as observed through classroom evaluations. Another valuable participation avenue is collaborative learning communities or professional learning communities (PLCs) where educators engage in shared learning experiences and reflective discussions. Research by Smith (2019) demonstrated that educators participating in PLCs focused on inclusive education reported higher levels of confidence and competence in implementing inclusive strategies, aligning with positive classroom observations and enhanced student feedback on inclusivity and engagement.

Moreover, participation in mentorship programs can significantly influence the successful implementation of inclusive education practices. Mentoring relationships provide personalized guidance and support tailored to educators' needs, fostering a deeper understanding and application of inclusive strategies. A study by Johnson (2021) found that educators who engaged in mentorship programs focused on inclusive practices showed a 25% improvement in classroom implementation, as validated through teacher self-reports and positive student feedback on the inclusivity and supportiveness of the learning environment. Lastly, participation in ongoing professional development through online platforms or courses can offer flexible and accessible opportunities for educators to acquire knowledge and skills related to inclusive education. Research by White (2018) indicated that educators participating in online professional development programs experienced a 15% increase in the utilization of inclusive strategies, as evidenced by classroom observations, teacher self-reports, and favorable student feedback regarding their learning experiences in inclusive settings.

Problem Statement

The effectiveness of teacher professional development programs in facilitating the successful implementation of inclusive education practices remains a critical area of investigation in contemporary educational research (Brown, 2021; Johnson, 2019; Smith, 2018). Despite the recognized importance of continuous professional development for educators to effectively cater to diverse learning needs and create inclusive learning environments (White, 2020), there is a gap in understanding the specific mechanisms and strategies within these programs that lead to measurable improvements in inclusive teaching practices (Green, 2019; Lee, 2018). Moreover, the impact of different types of professional development, such as workshops, mentorship programs, online courses, and collaborative learning communities, on enhancing educators' capacity to implement inclusive strategies and support students with diverse needs remains underexplored (Jones, 2022; Patel, 2019; Thompson, 2023). Therefore, there is a need for comprehensive research that examines the efficacy of various professional development approaches in equipping teachers

with the knowledge, skills, and support necessary for successful inclusive education implementation.

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

Bandura's Social Learning Theory emphasizes that individuals learn through observation, imitation, and modeling of behaviors exhibited by others in their social environment. Teachers' professional development in inclusive education can be framed within this theory as it highlights the importance of role modeling and observational learning in acquiring new teaching strategies and inclusive practices (Smith, 2018). Bandura's theory is relevant to understanding how teachers' exposure to inclusive teaching models and practices during professional development programs can influence their own implementation of inclusive education practices in the classroom.

Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy)

Knowles' theory of andragogy focuses on the unique characteristics of adult learners, emphasizing self-directed learning, practical application of knowledge, and the importance of learners' prior experiences. In the context of teacher professional development for inclusive education, this theory is pertinent as it underscores the need for tailored and interactive learning experiences that allow teachers to apply inclusive strategies directly in their teaching contexts (Brown, 2021). Understanding adult learning principles can enhance the design and effectiveness of professional development programs aimed at supporting teachers in implementing inclusive practices.

Communities of Practice (CoP) Theory

CoP theory emphasizes the social nature of learning and knowledge construction within communities of practitioners who share common goals and interests. In the context of inclusive education, this theory is relevant as it highlights the value of collaborative learning environments, such as professional learning communities (PLCs), where teachers can engage in shared inquiry, reflection, and knowledge exchange regarding inclusive practices (Johnson, 2019). CoP theory provides insights into how teacher collaboration and collective expertise can play a crucial role in fostering effective implementation of inclusive education practices through ongoing professional development efforts.

Empirical Review

Johnson (2018) aimed at examining the impact of a specialized professional development program on inclusive education practices among teachers. The purpose of the study was to investigate how participating in the program influenced teachers' understanding and implementation of inclusive strategies in their classrooms. Methodologically, the study utilized a mixed-methods approach, incorporating surveys, classroom observations, and interviews with teachers before and after the professional development sessions. The findings from the study revealed a significant positive change in teachers' knowledge and application of inclusive practices following their participation in the program. Specifically, teachers reported feeling more equipped and confident in implementing inclusive strategies tailored to meet the diverse needs of their students. These findings underscored the importance of targeted and specialized professional development initiatives in equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to implement inclusive education practices effectively. The study recommended the continuation and expansion of such

programs to support teachers in creating inclusive and supportive learning environments for all students.

Smith (2019) explored the long-term effects of collaborative professional learning communities (PLCs) on teachers' adoption of inclusive practices. The study aimed to investigate how sustained engagement in PLCs influenced teachers' understanding, collaboration, and implementation of inclusive strategies in their teaching contexts. Methodologically, the study involved surveys, focus group discussions, and classroom observations conducted over a two-year period. The findings indicated that teachers who actively participated in PLCs showed significant improvements in their implementation of inclusive practices. These improvements were attributed to the collaborative nature of PLCs, where teachers engaged in shared learning experiences, reflective discussions, and collaborative problem-solving related to inclusive education. The study highlighted the value of collaborative professional learning communities in providing ongoing support, knowledge exchange, and professional growth opportunities for teachers implementing inclusive education practices. It recommended the promotion and support of collaborative PLCs as a valuable avenue for ongoing professional development in inclusive education.

Brown (2020) evaluated the impact of online professional development courses on teachers' knowledge and skills related to inclusive education practices. The study's purpose was to assess how participating in online courses influenced teachers' confidence and competence in implementing inclusive strategies in their classrooms. Methodologically, the study included pre- and post-course surveys, interviews, and analysis of classroom artifacts. The findings revealed that teachers who completed online professional development courses demonstrated increased confidence and competence in implementing inclusive practices. These teachers reported feeling better equipped to address diverse learning needs, create inclusive learning environments, and engage students effectively. The study emphasized the potential of online professional development options to complement and enhance traditional professional development approaches in equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to implement inclusive education practices successfully. It recommended integrating online professional development options into broader teacher training initiatives to support teachers in their efforts towards inclusive education.

Patel (2021) analyzed the effectiveness of mentorship programs versus traditional workshops in supporting teachers' implementation of inclusive education practices. The study aimed to investigate how different professional development approaches influenced teachers' understanding and application of inclusive strategies in their classrooms. Methodologically, the study involved surveys, classroom observations, and interviews with teachers participating in either mentorship programs or workshops focused on inclusive practices. The findings indicated that teachers who engaged in mentorship programs showed greater sustained improvement in implementing inclusive strategies compared to those who attended workshops. This difference was attributed to the personalized guidance, ongoing support, and collaborative problem-solving inherent in mentorship relationships. The study highlighted the value of mentorship programs in providing teachers with tailored support, feedback, and guidance to implement inclusive education practices effectively. It recommended the incorporation of mentorship components into professional development initiatives for inclusive education to provide ongoing support and guidance to teachers.

Green (2018) explored the role of reflective practice in enhancing teachers' implementation of inclusive education practices following professional development interventions. The study aimed

to investigate how engaging in reflective practice influenced teachers' understanding and application of inclusive strategies in their classrooms. Methodologically, the study employed reflective journals, interviews, and focus groups to gather insights from teachers regarding their reflective practices and its impact on their teaching. The findings revealed that engaging in reflective practice facilitated deeper insights into inclusive teaching practices among teachers. Teachers reported becoming more aware of their teaching practices, student needs, and the effectiveness of inclusive strategies they implemented. Reflective practice also encouraged teachers to critically analyze their teaching approaches, seek continuous improvement, and make adjustments to better meet the diverse needs of their students. The study highlighted the value of structured reflective activities in professional development programs to enhance teachers' ability to implement inclusive education practices successfully.

Thompson (2022) conducted a case study analysis of a comprehensive professional development program for inclusive education to assess its impact on teachers' implementation of inclusive practices. The purpose of the study was to evaluate how participating in the program influenced teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and application of inclusive strategies in their teaching contexts. Methodologically, the study involved surveys, classroom observations, and interviews with teachers, administrators, and students across multiple schools within a district. The findings indicated that the comprehensive professional development program positively influenced teachers' understanding and implementation of inclusive practices. Teachers reported feeling more confident and equipped to address diverse learning needs, promote inclusive environments, and engage students effectively. The study emphasized the importance of comprehensive and sustained professional development initiatives in supporting teachers' efforts towards inclusive education. It recommended scaling up successful components of the professional development program and integrating them into broader educational policies and practices to promote inclusive practices across schools.

Lee (2023) conducted a meta-analysis of existing literature on teacher professional development in inclusive education to identify best practices and common challenges. The study aimed to synthesize empirical studies and identify key themes, trends, and gaps related to teacher professional development and inclusive education. Methodologically, the study involved a systematic review and analysis of empirical studies, research articles, and reports published within the past decade. The findings from the meta-analysis revealed that ongoing, collaborative, and context-specific professional development programs were most effective in supporting teachers' implementation of inclusive practices. These programs emphasized collaboration, ongoing support, tailored strategies, and reflective practices aligned with teachers' contexts and needs. The study also highlighted challenges such as limited time, resources, and institutional support faced by teachers and schools in implementing inclusive education practices effectively. Consequently, the study recommended the development of tailored, evidence-based professional development models that address specific needs and contexts in promoting inclusive education effectively.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

RESULTS

Conceptual Gaps: While some studies, such as Smith (2019), have explored the long-term effects of collaborative professional learning communities (PLCs) on inclusive practices, there is a need for more longitudinal studies that track the sustained impact of various professional development approaches over extended periods. Understanding how professional development influences inclusive practices over time can provide insights into the effectiveness and durability of different strategies. Several studies, including Johnson (2018) and Patel (2021), have assessed the impact of professional development on teachers' implementation of inclusive practices. However, there is a gap in research focusing on standardized and validated assessment tools to measure the quality and effectiveness of inclusive practices resulting from professional development interventions. Developing robust assessment frameworks can contribute to more accurate evaluations and comparisons across different programs.

Contextual Gaps: While studies like Thompson (2022) have examined professional development programs within specific contexts, such as comprehensive programs in particular school districts, there is a gap in research exploring professional development in diverse educational settings. Investigating how professional development programs vary in effectiveness across urban, rural, and suburban schools can provide insights into context-specific challenges and solutions. Lee (2023) highlighted challenges related to limited resources and institutional support for implementing inclusive education practices. However, there is a need for more in-depth research into the specific institutional factors that facilitate or hinder the successful implementation of inclusive practices following professional development initiatives. Understanding institutional contexts can guide policymakers and educational leaders in providing targeted support and resources.

Geographical Gaps: Most of the cited studies focus on professional development programs in developed economies. There is a significant gap in research exploring professional development for inclusive education practices in developing economies and regions with different cultural and socioeconomic contexts (Thompson, 2022). Investigating how professional development programs can be tailored to address unique challenges and opportunities in these regions is essential for global inclusivity efforts. Building on the geographical gap, there is a need for comparative studies that examine the effectiveness of professional development programs across diverse cultural and linguistic contexts. Such studies can highlight culturally responsive practices and identify universal principles that contribute to successful inclusive education implementation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The role of teacher professional development in the implementation of inclusive education practices is paramount in fostering equitable and supportive learning environments for all students. Through targeted and specialized professional development initiatives, teachers gain the necessary knowledge, skills, and confidence to effectively implement inclusive strategies tailored to meet the diverse needs of their students. Research studies, such as those by Johnson (2018), Smith (2019), Brown (2020), Patel (2021), Green (2018), Thompson (2022), and Lee (2023), have provided valuable insights into the impact of various professional development approaches on teachers' adoption and implementation of inclusive practices.

These studies have highlighted the effectiveness of collaborative learning communities, mentorship programs, online courses, reflective practices, and comprehensive professional development programs in enhancing teachers' understanding and application of inclusive education strategies. Furthermore, they have emphasized the importance of ongoing support, contextual relevance, and institutional commitment in sustaining the implementation of inclusive practices over time.

However, despite these advancements, there remain conceptual, contextual, and geographical gaps in research that warrant further investigation. Future studies should focus on longitudinal assessments of professional development impacts, standardized assessment tools for inclusive practices, diverse contextual settings, institutional support factors, global perspectives, and cross-cultural comparisons to ensure comprehensive and equitable approaches to inclusive education implementation.

In conclusion, teacher professional development plays a critical role in driving positive outcomes in inclusive education by empowering educators with the knowledge and skills needed to create inclusive and supportive learning environments that benefit all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities. Continued research and investment in effective professional development initiatives are essential for advancing inclusive education practices and promoting educational equity and excellence.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

Theory

To contribute significantly to theory, researchers should conduct longitudinal studies to assess the sustained impact of professional development programs on teachers' implementation of inclusive practices. This approach will provide valuable insights into the long-term efficacy and durability of different professional development approaches, allowing for the development of more robust theoretical frameworks. Additionally, investing in the development and validation of standardized assessment tools to measure the quality and effectiveness of inclusive practices resulting from professional development interventions is crucial. These assessment tools will enhance our theoretical understanding of what constitutes effective inclusive education implementation, facilitating more informed decision-making in educational policy and practice.

Practice

In the realm of practice, it is essential to tailor professional development programs to specific contextual factors such as school demographics, community needs, and student diversity. This tailored approach ensures that teachers receive training and support relevant to their unique teaching environments, leading to more effective implementation of inclusive practices. Additionally, promoting and supporting collaborative learning communities (PLCs) where teachers can engage in shared learning experiences, reflective discussions, and collaborative problem-solving related to inclusive education is highly beneficial. PLCs foster a culture of continuous improvement and knowledge exchange among educators, enhancing their ability to implement inclusive practices effectively in their classrooms.

Policy

At the policy level, advocating for institutional support is crucial. Policies should provide sufficient resources, time, and support for implementing inclusive education practices. This includes funding for professional development initiatives, access to ongoing support networks, and recognition of inclusive practices in teacher evaluations and assessments. Furthermore, encouraging global collaboration and knowledge sharing among educators, policymakers, and researchers is essential. By exchanging best practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches to inclusive education implementation across diverse cultural and geographical contexts, policymakers can develop more informed and inclusive policies that benefit all students.

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