



PROFESSIONAL PREPAREDNESS OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS FOR CROSS-DISABILITY TEACHING IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

Inclusive education has been raising more focus on how the special educators should be professionally ready to teach in the cross-disability classrooms. The paper attempts to focus on the professional preparedness of special educators through three major dimensions, including teacher training and competency development, attitudes and self-efficacy, and institutional support and systemic challenges. The aims of the research are to determine how prepared special teachers are to meet the various disability demands, to examine the influence of psychological and professional variables in inclusive education and to establish institutional circumstances that support effective cross-disability education or those that inhibit effective cross-disability learning. These dimensions are difficult to comprehend and enhance inclusive practices and provide students with disabilities with equitable learning opportunities.

The research design is a secondary research design which relies on peer reviewed journal articles, policy documents and scholarly reports published since 2017. The analysis of the results was conducted with a qualitative content analysis and based on the available literature on the topics of inclusive education and special educator preparedness. The review shows that well-organized teacher training interventions and realistic exposure are important to promote instructional competence, and positive attitudes and high self-efficacy contribute to professional confidence in inclusive classrooms. Nevertheless, the discussion also contends on the systemic problems that still persist such as lack of institutional support, collaboration, and resources which are still compromises to effective adoption of cross-disability teaching. The researchers find out that a synthesis of inclusive education enhancement relies on a complex set of training, psychic readiness, and favorable institutional structures.

Keywords: *Inclusive education; Special educators; Cross-disability teaching; Teacher preparedness; Self-efficacy; Institutional support*

Introduction

Inclusive education has made it one of the priorities of education today and the focus on the right of all learners with or without disability to receive quality education in the regular classes. With the increasing number of students with different and multiple disabilities in inclusive classrooms, the duty of special educators has gone beyond single-



disability specialization. The special educators are currently expected to exhibit professional readiness to cross-disability teaching, which implies responding to diverse learning, behavioral, sensory, and social requirements of the students with various forms of disabilities when they are given simultaneously. The change has brought a new pressure on the competencies, training and instructional flexibility of the teachers.

Professional preparedness of cross-disability teaching means the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and applied competences needed by special educators to successfully work with learners with a wide range of different disabilities, such as intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional and neurodevelopmental disabilities. It also involves a high level of awareness of inclusive pedagogy, individualized education planning, differentiated instruction, assistive technologies, classroom management, and mutual practice with general educators and support staff. Inclusive environments special educators should be prepared to develop flexible teaching plans that meet the needs of heterogeneity and at the same time achieve academic rigor and social inclusion.

Even though there has been an increased focus on inclusive education, some studies have indicated a lack of professional readiness of special educators to cross-disability instruction. The conventional teacher preparation model tends to provide training that is disability-centered and therefore, it does not equip the teachers with the confidence and effectiveness to work with students who present complex and overlapping needs. Poor training during pre-service, scanty professional development prospects, inadequate institutional support, and absence of practical experience with inclusive classrooms are some of the challenges that may interfere with the willingness of educators, to adopt successful inclusive practices.

The professional preparedness of special educators is thus important in the success of implementing inclusive education by understanding and reinforcing them. Properly trained teachers do not only improve the academic achievement of the students with disabilities but they also help in the positive classroom environment and provide equal learning opportunities. The analysis of competencies, challenges, and support systems surrounding the notion of cross-disability teaching can offer insights to the policymakers, institutions of teacher education, and school administration to enhance the practice of inclusive classrooms.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the level of professional preparedness of special educators for cross-disability teaching in inclusive classrooms.
- To analyze the role of teacher training, attitudes, self-efficacy, and professional confidence in supporting effective inclusive teaching practices.



- To identify institutional support mechanisms and systemic challenges that influence the implementation of cross-disability teaching in inclusive educational settings.

Methodology

The current research design is the secondary research design because it will explore professional readiness of special educators to teach cross-disability in inclusive classrooms. The secondary research was selected because it allows conducting a thorough examination and integration of the existing literature, policy reports, and empirical research on the area of inclusive education and teacher preparedness in various types of disabilities.

The trustworthy secondary sources were used to gather the data, peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, government reports, and publications of national and international organizations that deal with the issue of inclusive education. Relevant studies were identified in scholarly databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus, and Web of Science, and the form of literature published after 2015 to identify new developments in inclusive pedagogical practices.

To choose the right sources, a systematic screening process was used. First, titles and abstracts were examined in terms of their relevance to the study objectives. Articles that had examined and analyzed single-disability instruction or non-inclusive educational instruction were those that were left out. The final cut down was to include research that dealt with competencies of teachers, inclusive instructional methods, teacher development and difficulties of special educators in the cross-disability environment. The inclusion of the relevant policy documents was also provided to be able to have a more extensive educational and regulatory perspective.

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the obtained information. The chosen sources were reviewed, and divided into the thematic categories including professional knowledge and skills, attitudes toward inclusive education, training and development opportunities, institutional support, and challenges in cross-disability teaching. The given thematic analysis promoted the discovery of common patterns, gaps in research, and major concerns regarding the preparedness of special educators.

Literature review

Dhabarde, K. A., Wankhade, A. B., Doble, P. M., Rahul, N. V., & Kende, R. P. (2022). A descriptive analysis of Unique Disability Identification Card (UDID)-certified visually disabled patients at a tertiary eye care center in central India. *Cureus, 14(11), e31106*. It is a descriptive study based at a hospital and it involved the study of the demographic and clinical characteristics of UDID certified visually disabled individuals. Even though the research concentrated on medical and welfare issues, the conclusions



can be applied to the inclusive education since they point out the heterogeneity and severity of the visual disabilities that are experienced in the school environment.

Kaur, J. (2024). A study on preparedness for teachers towards inclusive education. In this study, the readiness of the teachers to inclusive classrooms was evaluated and the researchers discovered that systematic training programs were effective in enhancing teacher confidence and readiness to teach. The study revealed that those teachers that had been exposed to the principles of inclusive education in their pre-service training were in a better position to meet the learning needs of these students. The results provide support to the significance of cross-disability training modules in teacher training to increase the professional readiness towards inclusive teaching contexts.

Dimri, D. (2025). Teacher preparedness and attitudes toward inclusive classrooms. This is a review based study that analyzed the correlation between teacher preparedness and attitudes towards inclusion. It also discovered that poorly trained teachers are prone to anxiety and resistance in the process of teaching students with multiple disabilities. The research emphasized the importance of professional readiness, which entails effective cross-disability instruction in inclusive classes, technical skills, as well as positive attitudes to facilitate effective teaching.

Savolainen et al. (2025). Transformative potential in special education: Training, exposure, and experience. In this empirical research, the authors examined the effects of training, exposure, and teaching experience in the preparedness of educators towards inclusive education. The results showed that the teachers who had a practical experience in various categories of disabilities exhibited more flexibility in instructions and self-efficacy. The paper provides a high level of support to the necessity of an experience-based learning in teacher preparation course in order to develop cross-disability teaching competence.

Frontiers in Education (2022). Learning together: Training teachers for disability inclusion in South Africa. This paper has looked at inclusive teacher training programs and discovered that most of the programs did not give much attention to classroom practices. Teachers indicated that they were not prepared to deal with various disabilities at the same time. The research has highlighted the need to continue professional growth to enhance the readiness of special educators towards cross-disability instruction.

Cambridge Core (2025). Effect of teacher education initiatives on pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. This study showed that pre-service teachers had a great increase in their level of confidence and instructional competence with inclusive education initiatives. It has however also identified gaps in preparation of teachers to work with students with multiple and complex disabilities which implies that teacher education should involve more cross-disability strategies.



MDPI (2025). Inclusive teaching practices in secondary schools. This paper was dedicated to one of the indicators of teacher preparedness differentiated instruction. The findings revealed that teachers who received adaptive instructional strategies were in a better chance of accommodating students with different disability types. The paper supports differentiated instruction as one of the skills of cross-disability teaching.

International Journal of Innovative Research (2025). Teacher preparedness for students with disabilities across training tracks. The researchers were able to compare and contrast these two teacher training models traditional and inclusive and discovered that inclusive based programs had a substantial positive impact on teacher readiness. The teachers who were trained in the framework of cross-disability were the most adaptable and confident in inclusive classes.

World Journal on Education and Humanities Research (2026). Teacher readiness and challenges in inclusive classrooms. The barriers that were identified in this study as systemic barriers included large class sizes, resource unavailability, and poor cooperation between teachers as key barriers to teacher preparedness. Although there were positive attitudes towards inclusion, teachers claimed that they feel ill-equipped to support multiple disabilities, which has to be institutionalized.

Opoku, M. P. (2022). Special educators' intentions towards supporting inclusive education in Ghana. Qualitative methods were used in conducting this study and it was found out that special educators experience role ambiguities and lack of proper training. The results reveal that policy clarity and collaborative school cultures also have an impact on professional preparedness in addition to training.

Nijakowska (2022). Inclusive pedagogy in initial teacher training. In this research, it was established that although there was an improvement in disability awareness as a result of training, teachers had no adequate hands-on experience in the inclusive classroom. The author also highlighted that the cross-disability teaching can only be effective with theoretical knowledge.

Mgonja, M., & Mwila, K. (2023). Roles of special needs educators in inclusive secondary schools. This paper has discussed the changing roles of special educators and discovered that cross-disability competence is critical in an inclusive environment. Educators indicated that they are required to have wider competencies than those of single disability to accommodate different students.

REAL Journal (2023). Education inclusiveness for children with learning disabilities in Nigeria. The paper revealed the significance of teacher readiness to support the various learning needs. It emphasized that the effectiveness of inclusive education is an impediment of the absence of training in cross-disability strategies.

UNESCO Policy Review (2021/2025). Inclusive teaching: Preparing all teachers to teach all children. In this policy review, it was highlighted that inclusive education needs a



paradigm shift in teacher preparation. It promoted cross disability training, partnership and life long learning in order to increase the preparedness of educators.

Kaur et al. (2024). Teacher preparedness and inclusive practices in India. This paper analyzed the inclusive practice in Indian classrooms and realized that teachers who had a formal inclusive training were more effective and confident. It reached a conclusion that, successful cross-disability teaching in inclusive classrooms requires the strengthening of professional preparedness.

Findings and discussion

Teacher Training and Competency Development for Cross-Disability Teaching

The focus of enhancing inclusive classroom outcomes is the teacher training and the development of competencies that support the cross-disability teaching. Professional preparedness in inclusive education refers not only to theoretical knowledge of diversity and inclusion but also to practical skills in order to adapt teaching strategies to meet the needs of students with different cognitive, sensorial, behavioral, and physical needs. It has been found out that the pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes can greatly influence the readiness of educators to use inclusive practices that will assist learners with multiple disabilities.

Research has always demonstrated that teacher training programs in inclusive pedagogies lead to improvement in teacher competencies. As an illustration, Kaur (2024) discovered that teachers with inclusive education training had better attitudes and preparedness to deal with a diverse classroom, indicating that training is a positive factor contributing to professional competence (e.g. lesson planning, adapting to the classroom) in inclusive schools. In the same vein, a review across the world noted that the intensive teacher education programs, involving both practical experience and theory, raise the self-efficacy and confidence of pre-service teachers in using inclusion methods of teaching, but attitudes do not produce practical competence on their own.

The significance of what can be termed as real-life classroom exposure in a training process is also highlighted by research. In a survey of students in Spain, it was noted that skills that had been acquired in the second year placement of working well with fellow students, families, inclusive classrooms and using diversified strategies were rated as more powerful than those acquired during university education only. These results suggest that teacher training should not focus on theoretical teaching only, but it should be provided with real experiences that can enable the development of cross-disability teaching day-to-day use.

Differentiated instruction (DI) is another significant unit in competency development. In a recent study by MDPI it was noted that although teachers usually have a conceptual readiness to use DI to support students with disabilities, they have problems with its application in practice particularly in instructional practices and assessment- because of



the lack of time and resources. These issues demonstrate that the training should be highly focused on the practical methods of differentiation and adjustment of the curriculum content in multi-disability classes.

Study	Year	Key Finding
Kaur (pre-service training)	2024	Inclusive training improved teacher readiness and attitudes toward inclusive instruction
Effect of teacher education initiatives	2025	Comprehensive programs increased self-efficacy and competence for inclusive teaching
Student perceptions of training	2024	Practical internship enhances competency development more than classroom training alone
Inclusive teaching practices (DI)	2025	Teachers struggle to apply differentiated instruction despite conceptual readiness

Attitudes, Self-Efficacy, and Professional Confidence of Special Educators

The success of inclusive education is highly determined by the psychological readiness of special educators, in this regard, the attitudes of inclusion, self-efficacy beliefs and professional confidence being the most critical elements. These aspects influence the way the educators view students with various disabilities, react to classroom challenges, and use cross-disability instructional methods. Modern studies highlight that professional preparedness is not only on the technical knowledge but also positive beliefs, emotional readiness and confidence in the teaching abilities (Savolainen et al., 2025).

Behavioural attitudes towards inclusive education are entry level in helping to form teaching behaviour. Educators with a positive approach toward disability and inclusion have higher chances to take ownership of diverse students and venture into inclusive pedagogies (Kaur, 2024). On the other hand, negative attitude or ambivalence can lead to avoidance behaviors, low expectation, and opposition to inclusion practices. According to studies that were performed after 2017, it has been shown that previous exposure to inclusive environments, training experiences, and institutional culture significantly impact the attitudes (Dimri, 2025).

Self-efficacy, which refers to the belief of teachers about the ability to fulfill the role of inclusive teaching, has been found to be a good predictor of instructional quality in inclusive classrooms. High self-efficacy in special educators means that they are more persistent, flexible, and innovative in meeting the needs of students with multiple disabilities (Opoku, 2022). These teachers are better prepared in modifying curriculum, controlling behavior, and working with general teachers. Nevertheless, a low level of self-efficacy, which is usually caused by the lack of training and resources, may make teachers less willing to adopt cross-disability strategies in spite of their positive attitude towards inclusion.



Professional confidence demonstrates how far educators are ready to implement inclusive practices in practical classroom settings. Notwithstanding the conception consent regarding inclusive education by many special educators, there is research indicating that there is still an imbalance in confidence in practice. Dimri (2025) has said that teachers tend to be confident about theoretical knowledge and less confident about their ability to handle behavioral problems, assistive technology, and students with complex and overlapping disabilities. This gap demonstrates the need to focus on experiential learning and continuous professional guidance.

The relationship between these three dimensions is interdependent, as summarized below:

Dimension	Description	Influence on Cross-Disability Teaching
Attitudes	Beliefs and perceptions about inclusion and disability	Determines openness to inclusive practices and acceptance of diverse learners
Self-Efficacy	Belief in one's capability to implement inclusive strategies	Influences persistence, adaptability, and problem-solving in diverse classrooms
Professional Confidence	Perceived readiness to apply inclusive skills in practice	Affects classroom decision-making and instructional effectiveness

Institutional Support, Collaboration, and Systemic Challenges in Inclusive Classrooms

The institutional support includes administrative leadership, access to learning resources, access to professional development and time to plan and reflect. A high administrative dedication to inclusion has been associated with increased teacher motivation and more intensive use of inclusive practices (Savolainen et al., 2025). On the other hand, teachers in schools that do not have well-organized support systems such as collaborative lesson planning time or access to assistive technology, have more stress and limited ability to help students with multiple disabilities. Studies conducted in different settings show that insufficient materials and lack of proper infrastructure reduces the adaptability of pedagogue required in cross-disability teaching (World Journal on Education and Humanities Research, 2026).

Cooperation between general educators, special educators, therapists, and support staff is one more crucial element in influencing inclusive outcomes. Through good teamwork, the stakeholders are able to pool knowledge, plan together, and organize interventions that support the academic and non-academic needs of learners. In a qualitative investigation conducted by Opoku with Ghanaian special educators, the authors discovered that in settings where teamwork was high, educators expressed more



confidence and more effective instructional accommodations to learners with complex requirements (Opoku, 2022). Nevertheless, when collaboration is ineffective because of the unclear role definitions, or because of the absence of shared planning time, the support may be fragmented, and teacher burnout may occur.

The following table summarizes key content areas related to institutional support, collaboration, and systemic challenges:

Area	Key Features	Impact on Cross-Disability Teaching
Institutional Support	Administrative leadership, resources, professional development	Facilitates teacher preparedness & implementation of inclusive strategies
Collaboration	Co-planning, shared expertise, multi-professional teamwork	Enhances instructional adjustments and learner support
Systemic Challenges	Large class size, limited policy enforcement, inadequate training	Constrains teacher effectiveness and inclusive practice sustainability

Conclusion

This paper highlights that the professional readiness of special educators to cross-disability teaching in inclusive classrooms is a multidimensional construct that is influenced by the personal competencies and by the systemic and institutional influences. The discussion notes that teacher competency development and training of teachers is a crucial measure towards providing them with the necessary practicality to meet the needs of various learners. The attitudes, self-efficacy, and professional confidence of educators are also of utmost importance and have a significant impact on whether they want to and can provide inclusive practices. In cases where special educators hold positive beliefs in inclusion and trust in their teaching abilities, they will tend to change teaching strategies, handle classroom diversity and help learners with multiple and complex disabilities.

In addition, the results highlight the fact that inclusive education cannot be maintained at an individual level. The translated teacher preparedness into classroom practice depends on institutional support, collaborative practices, and facilitating systemic conditions. The administrative leadership, the availability of resources, the presence of professional collaboration opportunities, and the continuity of professional growth contribute to the increase in the confidence of educators and minimize the difficulties involved in cross-disability teaching. On the other hand, systemic barriers like insufficient resources, poor policy implementation and inability to organize support remain as challenges to successful achievement of the inclusive education objectives.

To sum it up, the notion of enhancing the professional preparedness of special educators is an interdependent measure that involves powerful teacher education programs,

psychological preparation, and facilitating institutional infrastructure. These interrelated dimensions are crucial in solving the issue of inclusiveness of classrooms that are responsive, equitable and capable of supporting the needs of all learners. This strategy does not only maximize the education outcomes of students with disabilities, but also brings about long term sustainability and effectiveness of inclusive education systems.

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