

Teacher Self-Efficacy and Competence in Teaching Children with Special Educational Needs in Inclusive Classrooms

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Abstract

Inclusive education requires teachers to address substantial diversity in learners' abilities, learning styles, communication patterns, behaviour and educational needs. In such classrooms, teachers' beliefs about their own instructional capabilities and their actual competence in implementing inclusive teaching practices are particularly important. The present study examined the levels of teacher self-efficacy and competence in teaching children with special educational needs (SEN) in inclusive secondary-school classrooms and investigated the relationship between the two constructs. A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was adopted. For the purposes of developing and demonstrating the complete empirical research model, an illustrative sample of 300 secondary-school teachers was considered. Teacher self-efficacy was assessed using the 12-item Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES), covering efficacy in instructional strategies, classroom management and student engagement. Inclusive teaching competence was assessed through a researcher-developed multidimensional competence framework covering inclusive lesson planning, differentiated instruction, classroom management and participation, assessment and individualized support, and collaboration and professional practice. Descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-test, one-way ANOVA, Pearson's product-moment correlation and multiple regression were used for analysis.

The illustrative findings indicated that teachers demonstrated a moderately high level of overall self-efficacy ($M = 6.39$, $SD = 0.79$ on a 9-point scale), whereas their overall inclusive teaching competence was moderate ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.75$ on a 5-point scale). Among the self-efficacy dimensions, instructional strategies showed the highest mean, while classroom management and student engagement were comparatively lower. Teacher self-efficacy was positively and significantly related to inclusive teaching competence ($r = .51$, $p < .001$).

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Professional training in inclusive education was also positively associated with competence. Multiple regression indicated that self-efficacy and inclusive-education training significantly predicted competence, explaining approximately 27% of the variance. No statistically significant gender difference was observed. The findings suggest that strengthening teachers' efficacy beliefs through sustained professional development, practical exposure, collaborative learning and school-based support may contribute to improved inclusive teaching competence.

Keywords: *teacher self-efficacy, inclusive education, special educational needs, teacher competence, secondary school teachers, differentiated instruction, inclusive classrooms*

> 1. Introduction

Inclusive education has increasingly shifted educational thinking from placing responsibility for learning difficulties primarily on individual learners toward identifying and removing barriers within teaching, curriculum, assessment and the school environment. The successful implementation of inclusive education therefore depends not only on the enrolment of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools but also on teachers' capacity to create meaningful learning opportunities for all students.

The teacher occupies a central position in translating inclusive education policy into classroom practice. UNESCO emphasizes that inclusive education cannot be effectively realized unless teachers are prepared and empowered to teach all learners, including learners who experience disability and other barriers to participation and learning.

Teaching children with special educational needs in mainstream secondary classrooms can be particularly demanding. Secondary teachers are expected to maintain subject-specific academic standards while simultaneously adapting instruction to differences in learners' abilities, pace, communication needs, behaviour, attention and participation. They may need to modify instructional materials, use differentiated teaching strategies, provide alternative modes of assessment, manage classroom behaviour, collaborate with special educators and communicate with parents.

In this context, teacher self-efficacy becomes an important psychological variable. Teacher self-efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs about their capacity to organize and execute the actions required to accomplish particular teaching tasks. Bandura's social cognitive perspective proposes that self-efficacy influences the effort individuals invest in tasks, their persistence when difficulties arise and the ways in which they respond to challenges.

Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) conceptualized teacher efficacy as a multidimensional construct and developed the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale, subsequently known as the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES). The TSES assesses efficacy in three major areas: student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management.

Research has consistently treated these three dimensions as related but distinguishable aspects of teacher efficacy. The short 12-item TSES has four items for each dimension and uses a 9-point response format.

Teacher self-efficacy is particularly relevant to inclusive education because inclusive classrooms frequently involve uncertainty and complex instructional demands. Recent research has examined teachers' self-efficacy in relation to teaching students with disabilities and has identified preparation, experience, support and classroom challenges as important considerations.

However, self-efficacy and competence are not identical constructs. A teacher may believe that they can successfully support a learner but still require additional knowledge and practical skills. Conversely, a teacher may possess relevant skills but lack confidence in applying them in challenging situations. Therefore, examining both teacher self-efficacy and inclusive teaching competence provides a more complete understanding of teachers' preparedness for inclusive classrooms.

The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education identifies inclusive teacher competence in terms of values, knowledge and skills. Its framework emphasizes valuing learner diversity, supporting all learners, working with others and engaging in continuing professional development.

Recent evidence also indicates that teacher self-efficacy is connected with inclusive practices and that social modelling, behavioural practices and intentions to act inclusively may be important factors associated with teachers' efficacy beliefs.

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Despite the growing emphasis on inclusive education, there remains a need for empirical research focusing specifically on secondary-school teachers because subject-specific secondary classrooms present distinct challenges. The present study therefore investigates teacher self-efficacy and competence in teaching children with special educational needs in inclusive secondary-school classrooms.

➤ 2. Conceptual Framework

The study is based primarily on **Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory** and the concept of **teacher self-efficacy**, supplemented by an inclusive-teaching competence framework.

• 2.1 Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy represents teachers' perceived capability to perform teaching-related tasks successfully. In the present study, it is operationalized through three dimensions:

1. **Efficacy in Instructional Strategies**
2. **Efficacy in Classroom Management**
3. **Efficacy in Student Engagement**

The TSES is widely used for measuring these dimensions.

• 2.2 Inclusive Teaching Competence

Inclusive teaching competence refers to the knowledge, skills and professional practices required to provide effective educational opportunities to learners with diverse educational needs within mainstream classrooms.

For the present study, competence was conceptualized through five domains:

- Inclusive lesson planning
- Differentiated instruction
- Classroom management and participation
- Assessment and individualized support
- Collaboration and professional practice

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This conceptualization is consistent with international inclusive-teacher frameworks emphasizing learner diversity, support for all learners, collaboration and continuing professional learning.

- **2.3 Proposed Relationship**

The conceptual assumption of the study is:

Teacher Self-Efficacy → Inclusive Teaching Competence

The relationship is not assumed to be exclusively causal. Higher self-efficacy may facilitate persistence, experimentation with differentiated instructional approaches and willingness to engage with challenging learners. At the same time, successful professional experiences and training may strengthen self-efficacy.

➤ **3. Review of Related Literature**

- **3.1 Teacher Self-Efficacy**

Teacher efficacy has been extensively studied because of its relationship with teacher persistence, instructional behaviour, enthusiasm and commitment. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) reviewed major approaches to measuring teacher efficacy and proposed a multidimensional framework that led to the development of the TSES.

The TSES provides a useful framework because teaching requires multiple forms of competence. A teacher may feel confident in designing instructional activities but less confident in managing disruptive behaviour or motivating disengaged learners. The multidimensional approach therefore provides greater diagnostic value than treating efficacy as a single undifferentiated belief.

- **3.2 Self-Efficacy and Inclusive Education**

Inclusive classrooms introduce additional instructional complexity. Teachers may need to use individualized strategies, adapt curricular materials, support communication, provide assistive resources and collaborate with special educators.

A 2024 study examining teachers' self-efficacy and experiences in teaching students with disabilities highlighted the importance of teachers' perceptions of preparation, classroom

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challenges and available support.

Recent research has further investigated predictors of teachers' self-efficacy for inclusive education. Findings indicate that teacher beliefs are related to factors including professional experience, inclusive practices and social influences.

- **3.3 Teacher Competence for Inclusive Classrooms**

Teacher competence in inclusive education extends beyond knowledge of disability categories. Teachers need to understand learner diversity, select appropriate teaching strategies, adapt learning tasks, use flexible assessment and establish collaborative relationships with families and professionals.

The European Agency's Profile of Inclusive Teachers emphasizes that inclusive competence involves attitudes, knowledge and skills. It identifies four broad values: valuing learner diversity, supporting all learners, working with others and taking responsibility for professional development.

A recent instrument-development study has also emphasized the importance of measuring teacher competency specifically for teaching students with special educational needs, reflecting growing research interest in operationalizing this construct.

- **3.4 Professional Development**

Professional development is particularly important for inclusive education because teachers' initial training may not provide sufficient opportunities for practical experience with diverse learners. Effective professional learning can include workshops, mentoring, peer observation, collaborative planning, case discussions, classroom-based coaching and opportunities to work alongside special educators.

The European Agency's later framework for inclusive teacher professional learning emphasizes collaborative professional learning at school and community levels as an important mechanism for developing professional competence for inclusion.

- **3.5 Research Gap**

Three gaps provide the rationale for the present study.

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First, many studies examine teachers' attitudes or self-efficacy without simultaneously assessing competence.

Second, research focusing specifically on secondary-school teachers remains important because secondary education is characterized by subject specialization, examination pressure and increasingly heterogeneous classrooms.

Third, there is a need to examine whether teachers' self-efficacy is significantly associated with their perceived competence in implementing inclusive teaching practices.

The present study addresses these gaps by examining self-efficacy and inclusive teaching competence together.

➤ 4. Objectives of the Study

The study was designed to:

- determine the level of self-efficacy among secondary-school teachers teaching children with special educational needs in inclusive classrooms;
- determine the level of inclusive teaching competence among secondary-school teachers;
- examine the dimensions of teacher self-efficacy;
- examine the dimensions of inclusive teaching competence;
- determine whether male and female teachers differ significantly in self-efficacy;
- determine whether teachers with and without formal training in inclusive education differ significantly in competence;
- examine the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and inclusive teaching competence; and
- determine whether teacher self-efficacy, training and teaching experience predict inclusive teaching competence.

➤ **5. Research Questions**

- What is the level of teacher self-efficacy among secondary-school teachers teaching children with SEN?
- What is the level of inclusive teaching competence among secondary-school teachers?
- Which dimensions of teacher self-efficacy are comparatively stronger or weaker?
- Is there a significant difference in self-efficacy between male and female teachers?
- Does formal training in inclusive education influence teachers' competence?
- Is teacher self-efficacy significantly related to inclusive teaching competence?
- To what extent do self-efficacy, training and teaching experience predict inclusive teaching competence?

➤ **6. Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated:

H01: There is no significant difference between male and female secondary-school teachers in their overall teacher self-efficacy.

H02: There is no significant difference in inclusive teaching competence between teachers who have received formal training in inclusive education and those who have not.

H03: There is no significant relationship between teacher self-efficacy and inclusive teaching competence.

H04: Teacher self-efficacy, inclusive-education training and teaching experience do not significantly predict inclusive teaching competence.

➤ **7. Methodology**

• **7.1 Research Design**

A **quantitative descriptive-correlational survey design** was adopted. The design was considered appropriate because the study aimed to measure two major constructs, compare selected teacher groups and determine relationships among variables.

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- **7.2 Population**

The population comprised secondary-school teachers working in mainstream schools where children with special educational needs were enrolled in inclusive classrooms.

- **7.3 Sample**

For the present research model, a sample of **300 secondary-school teachers** was considered.

Table 1. Profile of the Illustrative Sample

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	150	50.0
	Female	150	50.0
Inclusive-education training	Yes	165	55.0
	No	135	45.0
Teaching experience	Below 5 years	91	30.3
	5–10 years	119	39.7
	Above 10 years	90	30.0
Total		300	100.0

➤ **8. Instruments**

- **8.1 Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale**

Teacher self-efficacy was measured conceptually through the **12-item short form of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES)** developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy.

The short form assesses three dimensions:

Dimension	No. of Items
Efficacy in Instructional Strategies	4
Efficacy in Classroom Management	4

Dimension	No. of Items
Efficacy in Student Engagement	4
Total	12

Responses are recorded on a 9-point scale ranging from low perceived capability to high perceived capability. The TSES has established evidence for a three-factor structure and has been widely used in teacher-efficacy research.

• 8.2 Inclusive Teaching Competence Scale

A researcher-developed **Inclusive Teaching Competence Scale (ITCS)** was proposed for the study.

The scale contains **30 items** distributed across five domains:

Domain	Items
Inclusive Lesson Planning	6
Differentiated Instruction	6
Classroom Management & Participation	6
Assessment & Individualized Support	6
Collaboration & Professional Practice	6
Total	30

Each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Undecided
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

Higher scores indicate higher perceived inclusive teaching competence.

- **Content Validity**

The proposed competence scale should be submitted to experts in special education, inclusive education, educational psychology and teacher education. A minimum panel of 5–7 experts may be used to examine relevance, clarity and representativeness of items.

For an actual study, Content Validity Ratio (CVR), Content Validity Index (CVI) and pilot-testing results should be reported.

➤ **9. Reliability**

For the research model, internal consistency was assumed to be satisfactory.

Table 2. Reliability Coefficients

Scale/Dimension	No. of Items	Cronbach's α
Instructional Strategies	4	.84
Classroom Management	4	.82
Student Engagement	4	.85
Overall TSES	12	.91
Inclusive Lesson Planning	6	.86
Differentiated Instruction	6	.88
Classroom Management & Participation	6	.84
Assessment & Individualized Support	6	.87
Collaboration & Professional Practice	6	.85
Overall ITCS	30	.93

The reliability coefficients indicate high internal consistency for both measures.

Important: These reliability values are illustrative. In the final empirical paper, Cronbach's alpha must be calculated from the actual collected responses.

➤ 10. Data Collection Procedure

After obtaining institutional permission, participating schools would be contacted and the purpose of the research explained to school authorities and teachers. Teachers would be informed that participation was voluntary and that responses would be treated confidentially.

The questionnaires would be administered either in paper form or through a secure online form. Participants would be instructed to respond honestly on the basis of their actual classroom experiences.

For the illustrative analysis presented here, a dataset representing 300 secondary-school teachers was used to demonstrate the complete statistical procedure.

➤ 11. Data Analysis

The following statistical techniques were selected:

- Frequency and percentage
- Mean and standard deviation
- Independent-samples *t*-test
- One-way ANOVA
- Pearson's product-moment correlation
- Multiple linear regression

The level of significance was set at **0.05**.

➤ 12. Results

• 12.1 Overall Level of Teacher Self-Efficacy

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Self-Efficacy

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Instructional Strategies	6.55	0.86	High

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Classroom Management	6.24	0.91	Moderately High
Student Engagement	6.38	0.88	Moderately High
Overall Self-Efficacy	6.39	0.79	Moderately High

The results indicate that the teachers possessed a moderately high level of overall self-efficacy.

Efficacy for instructional strategies obtained the highest mean score, suggesting comparatively greater confidence in selecting and implementing teaching strategies. Classroom management received the lowest mean among the three dimensions, indicating that managing diverse behavioural and participation needs may represent a comparatively greater challenge.

• 12.2 Inclusive Teaching Competence

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Inclusive Teaching Competence

Competence Domain	Mean	SD	Level
Inclusive Lesson Planning	3.62	0.76	Moderate
Differentiated Instruction	3.39	0.82	Moderate
Classroom Management & Participation	3.58	0.77	Moderate
Assessment & Individualized Support	3.45	0.79	Moderate
Collaboration & Professional Practice	3.67	0.72	Moderate
Overall Competence	3.53	0.75	Moderate

The overall competence score of 3.53 indicates a moderate level of perceived competence.

Collaboration and professional practice obtained the highest mean, whereas differentiated instruction obtained the lowest. This pattern suggests that teachers may feel relatively comfortable collaborating with colleagues and supporting general classroom participation but may require greater practical preparation for systematically differentiating instruction for students with SEN.

- **12.3 Gender Difference in Teacher Self-Efficacy**

Table 5. Gender-wise Comparison of Teacher Self-Efficacy

Gender	n	Mean	SD
Male	150	6.40	0.78
Female	150	6.38	0.80

Independent-samples *t*-test:

$$t(298) = 0.23, p = .819$$

Since $p > .05$, the difference is not statistically significant.

Therefore, **H01 was retained.**

The findings indicate that gender was not a significant factor associated with overall teacher self-efficacy in the illustrative sample.

- **12.4 Effect of Inclusive-Education Training on Competence**

Table 6. Training-wise Comparison of Inclusive Teaching Competence

Training	n	Mean	SD
Formal training received	165	3.64	0.69
No formal training	135	3.39	0.79

The illustrative comparison indicates that teachers who had received formal training in inclusive education reported higher competence than teachers without such training.

The difference was statistically significant at the .05 level.

Therefore, **H02 was rejected.**

The result suggests that professional preparation may be an important factor associated with teachers' competence in inclusive classrooms.

• **12.5 Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Inclusive Teaching Competence**

Table 7. Correlation Between Teacher Self-Efficacy and Inclusive Teaching Competence

Variables	r	p
Teacher Self-Efficacy × Inclusive Teaching Competence	.51	< .001

A significant positive relationship was observed between teacher self-efficacy and inclusive teaching competence ($r = .51, p < .001$).

The relationship is of moderate magnitude, indicating that teachers with stronger efficacy beliefs tended to report higher levels of inclusive teaching competence.

Therefore, **H03 was rejected**.

Importantly, correlation does not establish causation. The result indicates association rather than proof that self-efficacy causes competence.

• **12.6 Predictors of Inclusive Teaching Competence**

Multiple regression was conducted with inclusive teaching competence as the dependent variable and teacher self-efficacy, inclusive-education training and teaching experience as predictors.

Table 8. Multiple Regression Predicting Inclusive Teaching Competence

Predictor	β	t	p
Teacher Self-Efficacy	.447	9.08	< .001
Inclusive-Education Training	.164	2.12	.035
Teaching Experience	.034	0.70	.485

$$R^2 = .269$$

$$\text{Adjusted } R^2 = .262$$

$$F(3,296) = 36.39, p < .001$$

The regression model was statistically significant and explained approximately **26.9% of the variance** in inclusive teaching competence.

Teacher self-efficacy was the strongest predictor. Inclusive-education training also made a statistically significant contribution, whereas teaching experience did not make a significant independent contribution after self-efficacy and training were considered.

Therefore, **H04 was rejected**.

➤ 13. Discussion

The primary finding of the study was that secondary-school teachers demonstrated moderately high self-efficacy but only moderate inclusive teaching competence. This difference is important because confidence and competence should not be treated as interchangeable constructs.

Teachers may feel reasonably confident about teaching heterogeneous groups while still requiring specific pedagogical knowledge and practical skills to implement individualized and differentiated instruction.

The comparatively high score for instructional-strategy efficacy indicates that teachers generally perceive themselves as capable of selecting and using teaching strategies. However, classroom management obtained a relatively lower score. This finding is understandable because inclusive classrooms may include learners with different behavioural, communication and participation requirements.

The moderate level of inclusive teaching competence is also noteworthy. The lowest domain score was associated with differentiated instruction. Differentiation requires teachers to adjust content, process, learning activities and assessment according to individual learner needs while maintaining meaningful participation in the common classroom. This is more demanding than simply having positive attitudes toward inclusion.

The findings are consistent with the broader international understanding that inclusive teaching requires specific attitudes, knowledge and practical skills rather than merely placing students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The European Agency's inclusive-teacher framework

similarly emphasizes values, knowledge and skills across areas such as supporting all learners, collaboration and professional development.

A particularly important finding was the significant positive association between self-efficacy and competence ($r = .51$). This suggests that teachers who perceive themselves as capable of managing instructional challenges are also more likely to report confidence in implementing inclusive teaching practices.

This result is theoretically consistent with social cognitive theory. Teachers with stronger efficacy beliefs may be more willing to attempt challenging instructional approaches, persist when adaptations do not initially work and seek alternative strategies.

At the same time, the relationship should not be interpreted as purely causal. Professional competence may itself contribute to self-efficacy because successful classroom experiences can strengthen teachers' beliefs about their capabilities.

The significant association between formal inclusive-education training and competence is also educationally important. Teachers who had received formal training demonstrated higher competence than those without such training. This supports the argument that inclusive education should be integrated into both initial teacher preparation and continuing professional development.

The result is particularly relevant because inclusive education requires teachers to move beyond general awareness toward practical competence in assessment, differentiation, assistive strategies, classroom participation and collaboration.

The regression analysis further showed that self-efficacy was the strongest predictor of competence among the variables examined. Training also made a significant contribution, whereas years of experience did not independently predict competence.

This finding suggests that **experience alone may not guarantee inclusive competence**. A teacher may have many years of classroom experience without receiving systematic preparation for inclusive education. Therefore, the quality and relevance of professional learning may be more important than simply the number of years spent teaching.

Recent research likewise emphasizes the role of professional learning, social modelling and inclusive behavioural experiences in strengthening teachers' efficacy for inclusive education.

➤ 14. Major Findings

The major findings of the study were:

- Secondary-school teachers demonstrated a **moderately high level of overall teacher self-efficacy**.
- Efficacy for instructional strategies was comparatively strongest.
- Classroom-management efficacy was comparatively weaker.
- Teachers demonstrated a **moderate level of inclusive teaching competence**.
- Differentiated instruction represented the comparatively weaker competence domain.
- Collaboration and professional practice represented the comparatively stronger competence domain.
- No statistically significant gender difference was observed in teacher self-efficacy.
- Teachers who had received formal inclusive-education training demonstrated higher competence.
- Teacher self-efficacy was significantly and positively related to inclusive teaching competence.
- Teacher self-efficacy and inclusive-education training significantly predicted inclusive teaching competence.
- Teaching experience did not independently predict competence after other predictors were considered.
- The regression model explained approximately 26.9% of the variance in inclusive teaching competence.

➤ 15. Educational Implications

The findings have several implications for teacher education and school practice.

• **15.1 Strengthening Teacher Education**

Teacher education programmes should include practical preparation for inclusive classrooms rather than limiting inclusion to theoretical discussion.

Teacher trainees should receive practical experience in:

- differentiated instruction;
- universal design for learning;
- classroom management;
- individualized educational planning;
- accessible learning materials;
- formative assessment;
- assistive technology; and
- collaboration with special educators.

• **15.2 Continuous Professional Development**

In-service professional development should be continuous rather than limited to one-time workshops.

Schools may develop professional-learning programmes focusing on:

- understanding different disabilities;
- adapting teaching materials;
- differentiated lesson planning;
- behaviour support;
- assessment accommodations;
- peer tutoring;
- cooperative learning;
- assistive technology; and
- inclusive classroom management.

- **15.3 Mentoring and Peer Learning**

Teachers should have opportunities to observe colleagues who successfully implement inclusive practices. Peer modelling may provide teachers with concrete examples of how inclusive strategies can be used in actual classrooms.

- **15.4 Collaboration With Special Educators**

General teachers and special educators should work collaboratively. The role of the special educator should not be understood as replacing the classroom teacher but as providing specialized knowledge and collaborative support.

- **15.5 School Leadership**

School leaders should create conditions in which teachers can discuss learner needs, jointly plan adaptations and obtain professional support.

- **15.6 Assessment Practices**

Assessment should be flexible enough to accommodate learner differences. Teachers should be trained to use multiple assessment methods rather than relying exclusively on standardized written examinations.

➤ **16. Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Mandatory inclusive-education modules** should be strengthened in teacher education programmes.
- Secondary-school teachers should receive **regular school-based professional development** in inclusive pedagogy.
- Training should emphasize **hands-on classroom strategies** rather than theoretical information alone.
- Schools should establish **teacher–special educator collaboration mechanisms**.
- Teachers should be trained in **differentiated instruction**, as this emerged as a comparatively weaker competence area.

- Professional development should include **classroom-management strategies for diverse learners**.
- Teachers should receive training in **assistive and accessible technologies**.
- School leadership should provide teachers with adequate instructional resources and time for collaborative planning.
- Future research should include **classroom observation** rather than relying entirely on self-report measures.
- Future studies should examine whether increases in teacher self-efficacy through professional development lead to measurable improvements in actual classroom practices.

➤ 17. Limitations of the Study

The study has several limitations.

First, the design is cross-sectional and therefore cannot establish causal relationships between self-efficacy and competence.

Second, self-report measures may be influenced by social desirability and teachers' perceptions of their own performance.

Third, the study focuses on secondary-school teachers and therefore findings may not automatically generalize to primary or higher-secondary contexts.

Fourth, inclusive education varies considerably according to school resources, leadership, teacher preparation and availability of special educators.

Finally, the statistical dataset presented in this manuscript is **illustrative/simulated for research-paper development** and must be replaced with actual field data before the manuscript is submitted as an empirical study.

➤ 18. Suggestions for Future Research

Future research may:

- employ larger samples across multiple districts or states;

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- compare government and private schools;
- compare urban and rural schools;
- compare trained and untrained teachers;
- examine different disability categories separately;
- use classroom observations alongside questionnaires;
- collect student and special-educator ratings of teacher competence;
- conduct longitudinal studies following teachers before and after professional development;
- investigate the role of school leadership and institutional support;
- examine the contribution of assistive technology to teacher efficacy;
- use structural equation modelling to examine pathways between training, self-efficacy, competence and inclusive teaching practices.

A particularly useful future design would be a **pre-test/post-test intervention study** in which teachers receive a structured inclusive-pedagogy programme and changes in self-efficacy and observed teaching competence are measured.

➤ 19. Conclusion

Inclusive education depends substantially on the capacity of classroom teachers to respond effectively to learner diversity. The present study examined two closely related but distinct dimensions of teacher preparedness: self-efficacy and inclusive teaching competence.

The illustrative findings indicate that secondary-school teachers may possess reasonably strong beliefs in their general teaching capabilities while still experiencing moderate competence in specific inclusive practices, particularly differentiated instruction. A significant positive association was observed between teacher self-efficacy and inclusive teaching competence, while formal training in inclusive education was also associated with higher competence.

The findings reinforce the view that inclusive education requires more than policy commitments or physical placement of children with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. It requires teachers who possess appropriate knowledge, skills, confidence and collaborative capacity. International frameworks similarly emphasize that inclusive teaching competence

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involves values, knowledge and practical skills and that continuing professional learning is central to effective inclusion.

Therefore, teacher preparation should move toward a **competence-based, practice-oriented and continuously supported model of inclusive professional development**. Strengthening teachers' self-efficacy through authentic classroom experiences, mentoring, collaboration and targeted professional development may provide an important pathway toward more effective inclusive classrooms.

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