Volume 11, Issue 4, April – 2026 International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology
ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1376

Promoting Inclusive Classroom Practices Through the Lenses of Non-Special Education Teachers

Judith J. Regalado[1]

[1]Researcher

Publication Date: 2026/05/19

Abstract: Inclusive education has increasingly been recognized as a core principle of quality education, yet its success in real classrooms depends heavily on the daily work of non-special education teachers, who are often the first line of support for diverse learners. This paper examines how inclusive classroom practices are understood, experienced, and enacted through the lenses of mainstream or general education teachers. Using a narrative literature review approach, the paper synthesizes major international policy documents and peer-reviewed studies on teacher attitudes, self-efficacy, collaboration, and classroom practice in inclusive settings. The review shows that non-special education teachers generally support the philosophy of inclusion, but their implementation is often conditional, shaped by training, confidence, time, resources, and access to specialist collaboration. The literature further suggests that inclusive practice becomes more sustainable when schools treat inclusion not as a specialist add-on, but as a whole-school responsibility supported by professional development, mentoring, Universal Design for Learning, collaborative planning, and flexible pedagogy. From the perspective of general classroom teachers, inclusion is not merely about placing students with diverse needs in regular classrooms; it is about redesigning instruction, classroom culture, and assessment so that all learners can participate meaningfully. The paper concludes that strengthening inclusive education requires empowering non-special education teachers as capable, reflective, and supported agents of inclusion.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, Non-Special Education Teachers, Mainstream Teachers, Inclusive Classroom Practices, Teacher Self-Efficacy, Collaboration.*

How to Cite: Judith J. Regalado (2026) Promoting Inclusive Classroom Practices Through the Lenses of Non-Special Education Teachers. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 11(4), 4895-4898. https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1376

I. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is widely understood as an approach in which all learners study together in common learning environments while schools actively remove barriers to participation and achievement. International organizations emphasize that inclusion is not limited to learners with disabilities alone; it also concerns students who experience exclusion because of language, poverty, migration, culture, or other differences. In this broader view, inclusive education means giving all learners equitable access to meaningful participation, belonging, and learning within the same classroom community.

Although inclusive education is often discussed in policy and special education discourse, its practical success rests largely on the work of non-special education teachers. These teachers manage the everyday flow of teaching, assessment, classroom relationships, and learning routines in mainstream classrooms. UNESCO has stressed that inclusion cannot be achieved unless **all** teachers are prepared to teach **all** students, while the OECD has similarly argued that inclusive teaching should be embedded across the teacher development continuum, from initial teacher education to lifelong professional learning. This means that general education teachers should no longer be viewed as peripheral participants in inclusion; rather, they are central actors whose practices determine whether inclusion becomes lived reality or remains policy language.

However, the transition from policy to practice remains uneven. Research has long shown that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion are shaped by practical realities, including the type and severity of learner needs, availability of support, training background, and school conditions. Avramidis and Norwich's foundational review found that teachers were often positive toward inclusion in principle but less supportive of total inclusion when they felt unprepared or unsupported. More recent syntheses show a similar pattern: teacher beliefs about inclusion remain moderate rather than strongly affirmative, and

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1376

there is still considerable room for growth in teachers' attitudes, emotional readiness, and efficacy beliefs.

This issue becomes even more important when the focus shifts specifically to non-special education teachers. Compared with special education teachers, mainstream teachers often carry greater responsibility for whole-class instruction while having less specialized preparation in disability, accommodation, or individualized planning. Studies comparing general and special educators have found that special education teachers typically report more favorable attitudes toward inclusion, suggesting that training and experience may significantly shape one's willingness and readiness to implement inclusive practice. Thus, examining inclusion through the lenses of non-special education teachers helps illuminate the real tensions between commitment and capacity.

Given these concerns, this paper aims to examine how inclusive classroom practices are understood and promoted from the perspective of non-special education teachers. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following question: How do non-special education teachers perceive, experience, and enact inclusive classroom practices, and what conditions support or constrain their implementation? By focusing on the views of mainstream teachers, the paper contributes to the growing literature that treats inclusion not as the work of specialists alone, but as a professional and ethical responsibility shared by all educators.

II. METHOD

This paper employed a **narrative literature review** design. Rather than presenting original field data, it synthesizes international policy reports and peer-reviewed journal articles relevant to inclusive education and the role of non-special education teachers. The literature used in this draft was purposively selected from sources published between 2002 and 2026, with particular attention to works that discussed mainstream or general education teachers, inclusive classroom practice, teacher beliefs, self-efficacy, collaboration, and instructional design for learner diversity.

Selection favored studies and reports that were conceptually useful for understanding inclusion from the viewpoint of teachers working in regular classrooms. These included landmark reviews on teacher attitudes, meta-analyses on teacher beliefs and self-efficacy, qualitative studies on barriers experienced by general education teachers, and policy reports from UNESCO, UNICEF, CAST, and the OECD. After selection, the materials were read and organized into recurring themes related to teacher attitudes, preparedness, collaboration, classroom strategies, and institutional support. These themes formed the basis for the Results and Discussion sections.

III. RESULTS

- *Teacher Support for Inclusion is Often Positive but Conditional*

The reviewed literature suggests that non-special education teachers generally accept the moral and social value of inclusion, but their support is often conditional rather than absolute. Earlier and more recent reviews converge on the finding that mainstream teachers are usually not opposed to inclusion as an ideal; rather, they become hesitant when they anticipate inadequate support, limited time, or difficulties meeting a wide range of needs in one classroom. Avramidis and Norwich found that teachers' attitudes were strongly shaped by learner characteristics and the availability of human and physical support. Likewise, Lindner and colleagues' systematic review of primary teachers reported that teachers' attitudes were often neutral or ambivalent, and that acceptance of inclusion still varied according to the type of disability.

This conditional support also appears in comparative studies between general and special educators. In Jordan, Alabdallat and colleagues found that both groups showed positive attitudes toward inclusion, but special education teachers reported more favorable attitudes overall. The study further suggested that both groups still tended to think in terms of separated responsibilities rather than fully shared ownership of inclusive practice. For non-special education teachers, this indicates that philosophical agreement with inclusion does not automatically translate into a confident sense of responsibility for all learners in the classroom.

- *Teacher Self-Efficacy Strongly Shapes Inclusive Practice*

A major theme across the literature is the central role of **teacher self-efficacy**, or teachers' beliefs about their capability to teach diverse learners effectively. The widely used Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) scale was developed precisely to measure teachers' confidence in inclusive instruction, collaboration, and managing disruptive behavior. Later reviews and meta-analyses confirm that self-efficacy is not a minor variable; it is one of the strongest psychological factors associated with inclusive practice and teacher attitudes.

Dignath and colleagues' meta-analysis of 102 studies found that teachers' cognitive appraisals, emotional appraisals, and efficacy beliefs toward inclusion were generally in the mid-range, indicating substantial room for growth. The same study also reported that teachers with special education training tended to hold more positive views than regular education teachers, and that training and interventions were associated with improved beliefs and self-efficacy. Similarly, Yada and colleagues found a positive overall relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes toward inclusive education, while Savolainen and colleagues showed in longitudinal analysis that teacher efficacy can predict more positive attitudes toward inclusion over time.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1376

Recent evidence strengthens this conclusion. Giorgi and colleagues' network meta-analysis synthesized 128 studies involving more than 50,000 teachers and found that self-efficacy for inclusive practice was strongly associated with social modeling, behavioral practice, and intentions to act inclusively, while concerns and resource limitations showed weaker or negligible links. This suggests that non-special education teachers do not become more inclusive only through abstract agreement with policy; they gain confidence when they observe inclusive practice, try it themselves, and receive structured opportunities to develop it.

- *Collaboration is Essential but Often Insufficient*

Another strong result from the reviewed literature is that inclusive practice is difficult to sustain when mainstream teachers are left to work alone. General education teachers repeatedly report that inclusion becomes far more manageable when they can collaborate with special educators, aides, therapists, and school leaders. In the Jordan study, collaboration emerged as a central issue, with limited shared responsibility undermining the implementation of inclusive teaching. This means that inclusion is not simply an individual teacher trait; it is also a relational and organizational process.

The qualitative study by Al Jaffal provides a clear view of this problem from the perspective of general education teachers working with students with autism. Teachers in that study affirmed the value of inclusion but also expressed feeling unprepared and under-supported. They emphasized the lack of collaboration opportunities, absence of support personnel, and difficulty balancing the needs of students with disabilities and the rest of the class. Their statements illustrate a recurring tension in inclusive classrooms: mainstream teachers are expected to implement inclusive practice, yet many still do so without the consistent structures necessary for success.

- *Inclusive Classroom Practices are Most Effective When they are Designed Proactively*

The literature also shows that inclusive practice is most sustainable when it is built proactively into instruction rather than added reactively after problems emerge. OECD guidance frames inclusive teaching around pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, and classroom environment. Likewise, CAST's UDL Guidelines 3.0 emphasize designing learning environments that reduce barriers and expand access from the outset, instead of depending solely on later accommodations. In this sense, inclusion is not just a matter of teacher goodwill; it is a matter of instructional design.

Universal Design for Learning is especially relevant for non-special education teachers because it offers a practical framework for planning lessons that anticipate learner variability. CAST describes UDL as a research-based guide for designing goals, methods, materials, and assessments that support access and participation for all learners. Almeqdad and colleagues' systematic review and meta-analysis further suggests that UDL-based approaches show promising effects across educational settings. The implication is that mainstream teachers can strengthen inclusion by using flexible representation, multiple ways for students to engage, and varied forms of expression and assessment.

Recent work on UDL also highlights the importance of teacher mindset. Lambert and colleagues found that teachers who engaged in sustained UDL-oriented professional development began to see UDL not as a rigid checklist but as a "way of thinking" rooted in responsiveness, empathy, and questioning deficit assumptions about learners. For non-special education teachers, this is particularly significant because it reframes inclusion from a burden of constant exception-making into a more flexible, humane approach to everyday teaching.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this review suggest that promoting inclusive classroom practices through the lenses of non-special education teachers requires shifting away from the idea that inclusion is a specialist concern. The mainstream classroom is the primary site where inclusion either succeeds or fails, and the general education teacher is the professional who most consistently shapes participation, access, peer interaction, and classroom belonging. Yet the literature makes clear that teachers cannot simply be expected to "be inclusive" without the training, collaborative structures, and pedagogical tools needed to enact inclusion meaningfully.

One major implication is that teacher preparation programs should integrate inclusion as a core component of general teacher education rather than isolating it as a special education topic. UNESCO explicitly argues that inclusive teaching should be part of general preparation for all teachers, and Kimhi and Bar Nir's 2025 study similarly found that teacher education needs stronger theoretical grounding, better connection between theory and field practice, mentorship, and continued professional development. This is especially important for non-special education teachers because they often enter service with responsibility for diverse classrooms but without robust preparation in inclusive pedagogy.

A second implication concerns the importance of confidence-building through real practice. Research on self-efficacy consistently shows that teacher attitudes become more positive when teachers feel competent, and competence grows through supported action, reflection, and collaborative learning. For schools, this means that one-off seminars are unlikely to be enough. More effective approaches may include mentoring, co-planning, lesson study, classroom coaching, peer observation, and communities of practice where non-special education teachers can test inclusive strategies and learn from colleagues.

A third implication is that inclusive practice should be evaluated not only by placement but by participation. Simply placing students with diverse needs in regular classrooms does not guarantee inclusion. From the viewpoint of non-special

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26apr1376

education teachers, inclusion becomes real when instruction is flexible, classroom culture is welcoming, assessment is responsive, and support systems are available. Therefore, promoting inclusion means paying attention to everyday classroom decisions: how lessons are presented, how students are grouped, how responses are accepted, how behavior is supported, and how teachers interpret learner difference.

Overall, the literature paints a realistic but hopeful picture. Non-special education teachers are not simply barriers to inclusion; many are willing participants who need stronger preparation and more coherent support. When schools invest in teacher efficacy, collaboration, and proactive design frameworks such as UDL, mainstream teachers are better positioned to move from conditional acceptance of inclusion toward confident, equitable, and sustained inclusive practice.

V. CONCLUSION

Promoting inclusive classroom practices through the lenses of non-special education teachers reveals that inclusion is both a pedagogical commitment and a capacity issue. Mainstream teachers frequently value inclusion, but their readiness to implement it depends on training, self-efficacy, collaborative support, and the design of the broader school environment. The literature suggests that when inclusion is embedded in teacher preparation, reinforced through professional learning, supported by collaborative structures, and operationalized through flexible frameworks like UDL, non-special education teachers are more likely to create classrooms where all learners can participate and succeed. In this sense, the future of inclusive education depends not only on specialist expertise, but on empowering every classroom teacher to see inclusion as part of good teaching itself.

REFERENCES

[1]. Al Jaffal, M. (2022). *Barriers general education teachers face regarding the inclusion of students with autism*. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 873248. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.873248

[2]. Alabdallat, B., Alkhamra, H., & Alkhamra, R. (2021). *Special education and general education teacher perceptions of collaborative teaching responsibilities and attitudes towards an inclusive environment in Jordan*. *Frontiers in Education, 6*, 739384. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.739384

[3]. Almeqdad, Q. I., Alodat, A. M., Alquraan, M. F., Mohaidat, M. A., & Al-Makhzoomy, A. K. (2023). *The effectiveness of universal design for learning: A systematic review of the literature and meta-analysis*. *Cogent Education, 10*(1), 2218191. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2218191

[4]. Avramidis, E., & Norwich, B. (2002). *Teachers' attitudes towards integration/inclusion: A review of the literature*. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 17*(2), 129–147. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856250210129056

[5]. Brussino, O. (2021). *Building capacity for inclusive teaching: Policies and practices to prepare all teachers for diversity and inclusion* (OECD Education Working Paper No. 256). OECD.

[6]. CAST. (2024). *Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 3.0*. CAST.

[7]. Dignath, C., Rimm-Kaufman, S., van Ewijk, R., & Kunter, M. (2022). *Teachers' beliefs about inclusive education and insights on what contributes to those beliefs: A meta-analytical study*. *Educational Psychology Review, 34*(4), 2609–2660. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-022-09695-0

[8]. Giorgi, M., Loverre, M., Stefanelli, F., Lucidi, F., Benvenuto, G., & Chirico, A. (2026). *Exploring variables related to teachers' self-efficacy in inclusive education: A network meta-analysis approach*. *International Journal of Educational Development, 120*, 103461. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2025.103461

[9]. Kimhi, Y., & Bar Nir, A. (2025). *Teacher training in transition to inclusive education*. *Frontiers in Education, 10*, 1510314. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1510314

[10]. Lindner, K.-T., Schwab, S., Emara, M., & Avramidis, E. (2023). *Do teachers favor the inclusion of all students? A systematic review of primary schoolteachers' attitudes towards inclusive education*. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 38*(6), 766–787. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2023.2172894

[11]. Savolainen, H., Malinen, O.-P., & Schwab, S. (2020). *Teacher efficacy predicts teachers' attitudes towards inclusion: A longitudinal cross-lagged analysis*. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1752826

[12]. Sharma, U., Loreman, T., & Forlin, C. (2012). *Measuring teacher efficacy to implement inclusive practices*. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 12*(1), 12–21. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-3802.2011.01200.x

[13]. UNESCO. (2020). *Inclusive teaching: Preparing all teachers to teach all students* (Policy Paper 43). Global Education Monitoring Report.

[14]. UNICEF. (n.d.). *Inclusive education*. UNICEF.

[15]. Yada, A., Leskinen, M., Savolainen, H., & Schwab, S. (2022). *Meta-analysis of the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes toward inclusive education*. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 109*, 103521. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103521