Revista Multidisciplinaria Perspectivas Investigativas
Multidisciplinary Journal Investigative Perspectives
Vol. 6(4), 151-158, 2026
https://doi.org/10.62574/rmpi.v6i4.538

Teachers' perceptions of inclusive policies, curriculum and pedagogical practice in lower secondary education in Chiquinquirá

Percepciones docentes sobre políticas inclusivas, currículo y práctica pedagógica en básica secundaria de Chiquinquirá

Lyda Constanza Pérez-Cárdenas
lyda-c.perez-c@up.ac.pa
Universidad de Panamá, Faculty of Education Sciences, Panama
https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7621-3507

ABSTRACT

Colombia's Decree 1421 of 2017 required institutions to guarantee inclusive education through Universal Design for Learning and Individual Plans for Reasonable Adjustments, since its realization depends on how teachers interpret it in the classroom. The study therefore aimed to understand the relationship between teaching practice, inclusive education policies and the institutional curriculum in lower secondary education at the Escuela Normal Superior de Chiquinquirá. A qualitative phenomenological-hermeneutic approach was used, with documentary analysis and interviews with 28 teachers processed in ATLAS.ti. The results showed that inclusion is embraced as an ethical principle, but gaps in training, resources and collaborative work persist. It was concluded that coherence requires situated training, peer support and institutional leadership.

Descriptors: inclusive education; curriculum; teaching practice; teacher education; secondary education. (Source: UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

El Decreto 1421 de 2017 obligó a las instituciones colombianas a garantizar la educación inclusiva mediante el Diseño Universal para el Aprendizaje y los Planes Individuales de Ajustes Razonables, por cuanto su realización depende de cómo los docentes la interpretan en el aula. Es así que el estudio se planteó como objetivo comprender la relación entre la práctica docente, las políticas de educación inclusiva y el currículo institucional en la básica secundaria de la Escuela Normal Superior de Chiquinquirá. En este sentido se empleó un enfoque cualitativo fenomenológico-hermenéutico, con análisis documental y entrevistas a 28 docentes procesadas en ATLAS.ti. Entre los resultados se obtuvo que la inclusión es asumida como principio ético, pero persisten brechas de formación, recursos y trabajo colaborativo. Entre las conclusiones se estableció que la coherencia exige formación situada, acompañamiento entre pares y liderazgo institucional.

Descriptores: educación inclusiva; currículo; práctica pedagógica; formación de docentes; enseñanza secundaria. (Fuente: Tesauro UNESCO).

Received: 6/07/2026. Reviewed: 12/07/2026. Accepted: 9/09/2026. Published: 13/11/2026.
Research Articles Section

INTRODUCTION

When Colombia's Ministry of National Education issued Decree 1421 of 2017, which regulates educational provision for the population with disabilities within the framework of inclusive education, it transferred to each institution the obligation to make the curriculum flexible, apply Universal Design for Learning [UDL] and draw up Individual Plans for Reasonable Adjustments [PIAR], so that inclusion ceased to be an aspiration and became a verifiable requirement in planning, teaching and assessment. In line with this framework, Echeita and Ainscow (2011) understand inclusion as a right that is at stake in the presence, participation and learning of all students, and warn that its realization depends on identifying and removing the barriers that the school itself produces.

For their part, the Escuelas Normales Superiores (higher normal schools) occupy a singular place in this process, since Decree 1236 of 2020, which Gómez (2023) highlights among the regulatory milestones of the sector, regulates them as institutions that train future preschool and primary school teachers, so that what happens in their classrooms regarding inclusion affects the practices of those preparing to teach. However, Gómez (2023) reviewed 83 works published between 1995 and 2022 on the country's 137 Escuelas Normales and found that pedagogical practice accounts for only 9 studies, compared with 25 devoted to their historicity, which leaves the relationship between these institutions and inclusion policies in the shadows.

At the Latin American level, Duk et al. (2019) warn that, twenty-five years after the Salamanca Statement, inclusion remains peripheral in initial teacher education, while Marulanda and Collazos Aldana (2024) surveyed 249 teachers in Bogotá and found, on a four-point scale, knowledge of Decree 1421 of 2.61, implementation of UDL of 2.56 and collaborative design of the PIAR of 2.69, values lower than the rating of the Institutional Educational Project as inclusive, which reached 3.12. This indicates that the gap between regulations and the classroom is not a suspicion, but a documented feature of the Colombian education system.

But how do lower secondary teachers understand and interpret the relationship between their pedagogical practice, inclusive education policies and the institutional curriculum in an Escuela Normal Superior? Based on the above, the research aims to understand the relationship between the teaching practice of lower secondary teachers at the Escuela Normal Superior de Chiquinquirá, Colombia.

METHOD

The methodology used was qualitative, with an interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm, an ontological stance of critical realism and the phenomenological-hermeneutic method, which made it possible to understand the experiences, meanings and perceptions that teachers attribute to inclusion in their daily practice. Accordingly, the work was carried out at the Escuela Normal Superior de Chiquinquirá, Boyacá, an institution that brings together students and families from rural and urban contexts and combines schooling with teacher education, during 2026.

Regarding the participants, a purposive census-type sampling of the 40 lower secondary teachers was planned, and for reasons of institutional availability 28 participated, equivalent to 70% of the population, who teach sixth to ninth grade in various subject areas and have students with disabilities in their classrooms, a sufficiency criterion that follows the logic of information richness and saturation characteristic of interview-based qualitative research (Robinson, 2014). Likewise, preschool, primary and complementary training program teachers were excluded, since they work in different curricular contexts.

As for the techniques, documentary analysis was applied to the Institutional Educational Project [PEI], the subject-area plans and the guidelines for attention to diversity, using a matrix with five guiding categories, together with a semi-structured interview of 15 questions organized into five dimensions, the epistemology of inclusion, regulatory appropriation, praxis and UDL, curricular architecture and assessment, and organizational culture, lasting 45 to 60 minutes. Likewise, the instruments were submitted to the judgment of three doctors in education, who assessed their relevance, clarity and coherence.

Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed and integrated with the documents into a single

corpus, which was processed in ATLAS.ti 23 through open, axial and selective coding around four analytical categories and the emerging categories, and the teachers' narratives were triangulated with the documentary analysis to identify convergences, divergences and gaps, as represented in Figure 1 and detailed in Table 1. In accordance with ethical safeguards, each participant signed informed consent and their identity was protected, which is why testimonies are identified only by the subject area the teacher teaches.

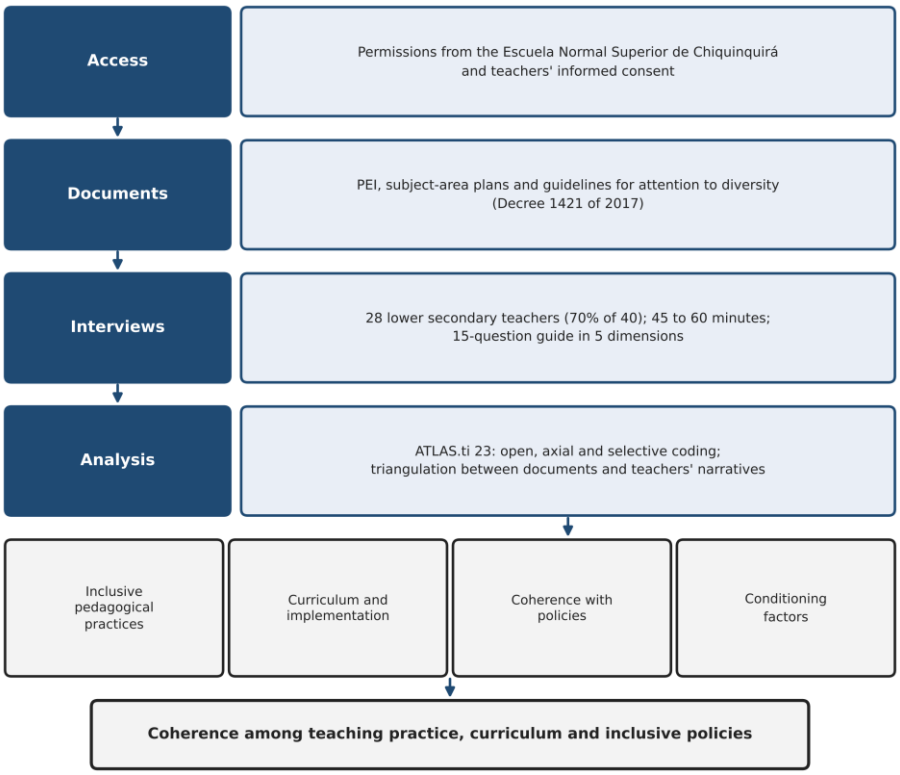


Figure 1. *Methodological route of the research*.

Note: developed in-house.

Table 1. *Categorization matrix and data collection techniques*.

Category	Subcategory	Indicators	Technique and source
Inclusive pedagogical practices	Teaching strategies and inclusion	Adaptation of methodologies and diversification of activities	Interviews
	Inclusive assessment	Flexibility of assessment instruments and criteria	Interviews and documents
Curriculum and implementation	Pedagogical planning	Coherence between classroom planning and the PEI	Interviews and documents
Coherence with policies	Knowledge and application	Appropriation and implementation of Decree 1421 of 2017	Interviews
Conditioning factors	Institutional and training-related	Support, resources and teacher training in inclusion	Interviews and documents

Note: taken from the research's categorization, contrast and theorization matrix.

RESULTS

Based on the analysis of the 28 interviews and the institutional documents, four key findings were identified that shape educational inclusion in the institution's lower secondary education, whose units of meaning are summarized in Table 2 and whose relationships are represented in the semantic network in Figure 2.

Inclusion as an ethical principle with practical limitations

Consistently, teachers recognize inclusive education as an ethical and normative principle, but this recognition does not always translate into systematic practices, since several define it from a deficit perspective, as a set of procedures to address mild or severe disabilities, and admit that they lack the teaching tools to put it into practice. This was expressed by a Mathematics teacher who stated that he would not know exactly how to integrate UDL into daily practice, while an English teacher called for more specific training for each type of need, from the most basic to the most complex.

The gap between regulations and institutional reality

Along the same lines, teachers described a considerable distance between what Decree 1421 of 2017 requires and what the institution can offer in terms of resources, support and guidance, a gap that is manifested in the lack of training by type of need, the scarcity of teaching resources, limited in-class support and an infrastructure that does not always favor accessibility. Thus, the decree is regarded as adequate at the normative level, although a Social Studies teacher summarized the tension by stating that there is a distance between the regulations and the actual educational process, and an Arts Education teacher acknowledged that inclusion has been handled at the limit of what the law requires.

The PIAR as an ambivalent tool

Another aspect that should be examined is the place of the PIAR, since teachers described it as a tool that oscillates between pedagogical support and administrative burden, depending on how it is built and used. In this regard, a Mathematics teacher acknowledged that it sometimes serves as support, but also involves time and paperwork, while a Spanish Language teacher warned that, since it is a separate plan, the risk is that it is perceived as a burden, so that its value depends on it being developed collaboratively and integrated into everyday planning.

Valued institutional support and demand for collaborative work

Finally, teachers valued the support of the inclusion teacher and the school psychologist, but expressed the need for more teamwork and spaces for sharing experiences, as a Spanish Language teacher put it when proposing workshops during institutional week organized by subject area, and a Social Studies teacher when asking for interaction with colleagues from other areas to learn working styles that have worked for others. This indicates that vertical support is necessary but insufficient, and that inclusion requires horizontal networks of collaboration among teachers.

Table 2. *Key findings and units of meaning from the teachers' narratives*.

Finding	Teacher's subject area	Unit of meaning
Inclusion as an ethical principle with practical limitations	Mathematics	“I wouldn't know exactly how to integrate UDL into daily teaching practice”
	English	“We all also lack [...] more training, specifically in each type of need”
Gap between regulations and institutional reality	Social Studies	“There is a distance between the regulations and the actual educational process”
	Arts Education	“Inclusion [...] has been handled at the limit of what the law requires”
PIAR as an ambivalent tool	Mathematics	“Sometimes they serve as a support tool, yes, but they are also an administrative burden”
	Spanish Language	“The idea is that one doesn't see it as a burden, it is a support tool”
Valued institutional support and demand for collaboration	Spanish Language	“That they bring us some workshop during institutional week [...] that we organize ourselves by subject area”
	Social Studies	“It would be more teamwork, so that we can share our learning experiences with each other”

Note: developed in-house from the interviews processed in ATLAS.ti 23.

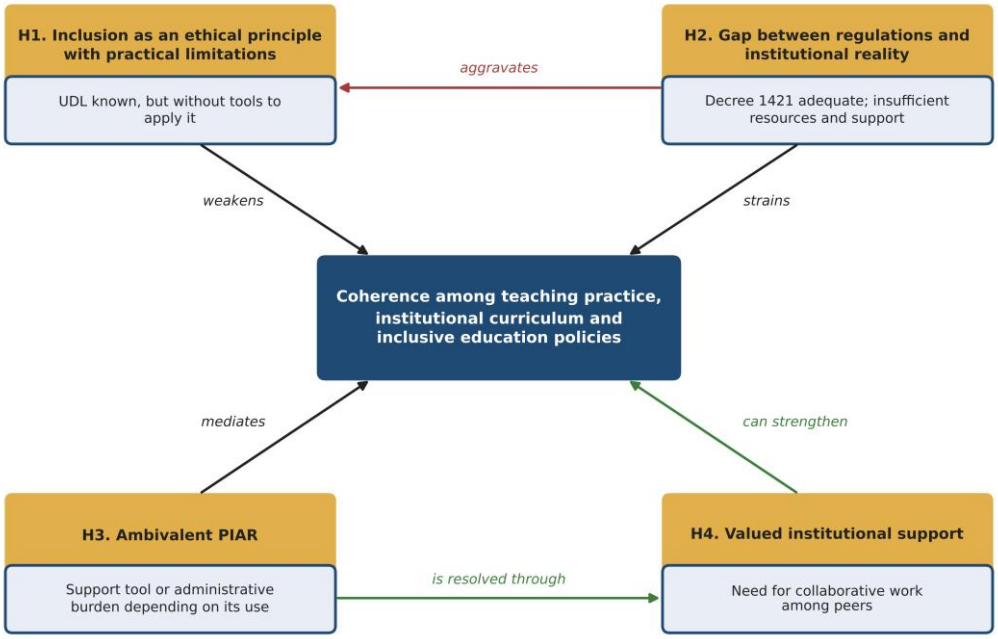


Figure 2. *Semantic network of the key findings*.

Note: developed in-house from axial and selective coding in ATLAS.ti 23.

DISCUSSION

This invites reflection on the nature of the gap identified, since the findings in Chiquinquirá coincide with those of Marulanda and Collazos Aldana (2024), who found in Bogotá an implementation of UDL of 2.56 out of 4 and a collaborative design of the PIAR of 2.69, and also observed that teachers with certified training in inclusion obtained higher scores in knowledge of the decree and application of UDL. Both studies agree that the regulation is known and valued, but its translation into classroom decisions depends on training that teachers have not always received, a feature that Duk et al. (2019) attribute to the peripheral position of inclusion in initial teacher education.

Likewise, the first finding confirms what Avramidis and Norwich (2002) established in their classic review, according to which teachers' attitudes toward inclusion depend on the type of disability and the support available, and what Forlin and Chambers (2011) and Sharma et al. (2008) showed by documenting that training increases knowledge and improves attitudes, although it does not eliminate concerns about practice. For their part, Woodcock et al. (2022) warn that teacher self-efficacy is related to willingness to adopt inclusive practices, so that the expression “I wouldn't know exactly how to integrate UDL” does not reveal rejection, but low self-efficacy that can be modified with situated training, in an approach whose effectiveness is supported by Capp's (2017) meta-analysis on UDL.

As for the regulatory gap, Braun et al. (2011) argue that policies are not implemented, but rather interpreted and enacted according to the situated, professional, material and external dimensions of each school, a reading that explains why the same decree produces different results depending on the resources and culture of each institution. Consequently, the ambivalence of the PIAR makes sense in light of Florian and Black-Hawkins' (2011) distinction between a pedagogy that offers something different to a few and an inclusive pedagogy that extends what is ordinarily available to everyone, since a PIAR drawn up separately reinforces the first logic, while a PIAR that is co-planned and integrated into subject-area planning comes closer to the second, in line with Florian and Spratt's (2013) framework for interrogating inclusive practice.

Another aspect that should be examined is the role of the teacher and the organization, since Pantić and Florian (2015) conceive of the teacher as an agent of inclusion and social justice whose action depends on the relationships and structures surrounding them, and Ainscow and

Sandill (2010) show that inclusive systems develop when organizational culture and leadership favor collaboration and the use of evidence. Similarly, Ainscow (2020) concludes, based on international experiences, that inclusion advances when schools learn from one another and from the analysis of their own barriers, and Florian (2014) recalls that the evidence of inclusive education must be sought in what teachers do in the classroom. Table 3 thus contrasts the findings with these lines of research.

Table 3. *Contrast of the findings with the literature*.

Finding	Evidence in Chiquinquirá	Contrast with the literature
Ethical principle with practical limitations	Teachers who value inclusion but do not know how to apply UDL	UDL at 2.56 out of 4 in Bogotá (Marulanda & Collazos Aldana, 2024); self-efficacy and inclusive practice (Woodcock et al., 2022)
Regulatory gap	Decree valued; insufficient resources and support	Policies are enacted according to the material and professional context (Braun et al., 2011)
Ambivalent PIAR	Support or paperwork depending on whether it is co-planned	Inclusive pedagogy that extends what is available to everyone (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011)
Demand for collaboration	Vertical support valued; peer networks lacking	Organizational culture and inclusive leadership (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Ainscow, 2020)

Note: developed in-house.

In light of the above, the findings support a situated pedagogical proposal with three axes, training in UDL and PIAR based on real classroom cases, pedagogical support through peer observation and co-planning, and institutional collaborative work in communities of practice, aimed at consolidating an inclusive school culture, as represented in Figure 3. Hence an intrinsic challenge for the Escuela Normal Superior, since, as it trains future teachers, the coherence it achieves among its practice, its curriculum and inclusion policies is projected onto the classrooms in which they will teach.

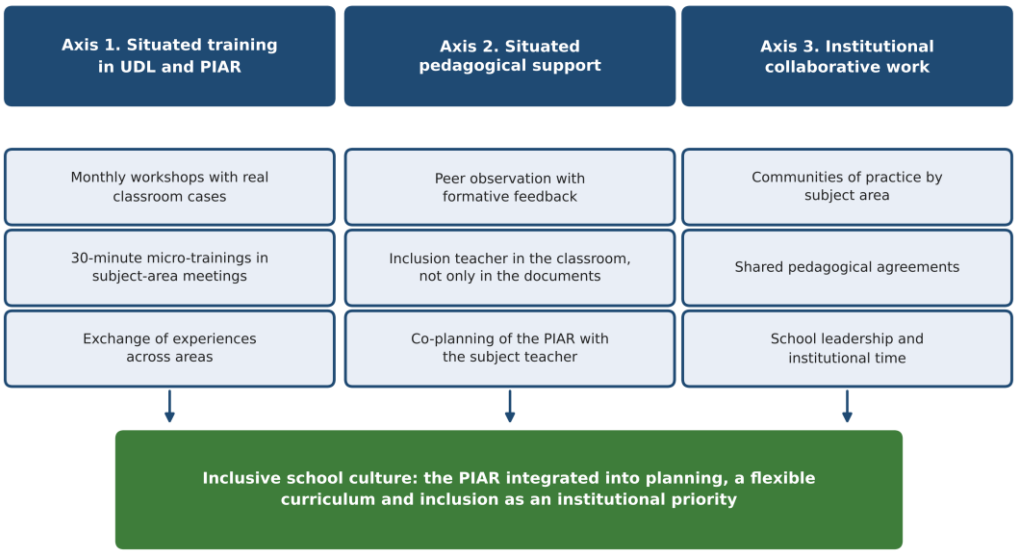


Figure 3. *Situated pedagogical proposal derived from the findings*.

Note: developed in-house.

It should be noted that the study has limitations, since it was carried out in a single institution with particular organizational and training features, and its interpretive nature produces a situated understanding that should not be automatically extrapolated, although it offers useful analytical references for settings with similar problems.

CONCLUSIONS

The objective of understanding the relationship between the teaching practice of lower secondary teachers at the Escuela Normal Superior de Chiquinquirá, inclusive education policies and the institutional curriculum was achieved by identifying that teachers embrace inclusion as an ethical principle, but face barriers of specific training, resources and support that hinder the systematic application of UDL and the PIAR, so that the gap lies not in the absence of policies, but in the weak connection between them, the curriculum and classroom practice.

Likewise, it is concluded that the teacher acts as a mediator who interprets and adapts policies and the curriculum, so that coherence between what the institution declares, what it plans and what it carries out in the classroom requires situated training, peer support, integration of the PIAR into everyday planning and leadership that makes inclusion an institutional priority. Therefore, future research could evaluate the implementation of the pedagogical proposal in the institution and explore the experiences of students with disabilities in lower secondary education.

FINANCING

Non-monetary.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest with any individuals or institutions related to this research.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To the lower secondary teachers of the Escuela Normal Superior de Chiquinquirá, for sharing their experiences.

REFERENCES

Ainscow, M. (2020). Promoting inclusion and equity in education: Lessons from international experiences. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, 6*(1), 7–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2020.1729097

Ainscow, M., & Sandill, A. (2010). Developing inclusive education systems: The role of organisational cultures and leadership. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 14*(4), 401–416. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110802504903

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

Braun, A., Ball, S. J., Maguire, M., & Hoskins, K. (2011). Taking context seriously: Towards explaining policy enactments in the secondary school. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 32*(4), 585–596. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2011.601555

Capp, M. J. (2017). The effectiveness of universal design for learning: A meta-analysis of literature between 2013 and 2016. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 21*(8), 791–807. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1325074

Decree 1421 of 2017. Regulating educational provision for the population with disabilities within the framework of inclusive education. August 29, 2017. Ministry of National Education of Colombia. https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/portal/normativa/Decretos/381928:Decreto-1421-de-agosto-29-de-2017

Duk, C., Cisternas, T., & Ramos, L. (2019). Teacher education from an inclusive approach: 25 years after the Salamanca Statement, new and old challenges. *Revista Latinoamericana de Educación Inclusiva, 13*(2), 91–109. https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-73782019000200091

Echeita, G., & Ainscow, M. (2011). Inclusive education as a right: Framework of reference and guidelines for action for the development of a pending revolution. *Tejuelo*, (12), 26–46. https://tejuelo.unex.es/tejuelo/article/view/2497

Florian, L. (2014). What counts as evidence of inclusive education? *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 29*(3), 286–294. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2014.933551

Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2011). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *British Educational Research Journal, 37*(5), 813–828. https://doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2010.501096

Florian, L., & Spratt, J. (2013). Enacting inclusion: A framework for interrogating inclusive practice. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 28*(2), 119–135. https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2013.778111

Forlin, C., & Chambers, D. (2011). Teacher preparation for inclusive education: Increasing knowledge but raising concerns. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 39*(1), 17–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2010.540850

Gómez, W. O. (2023). State of the art of research on Escuelas Normales Superiores in Colombia 1995-2022. *Revista Guillermo de Ockham, 21*(1), 219–249. https://doi.org/10.21500/22563202.5676

Marulanda, E., & Collazos Aldana, J. (2024). Pedagogical practices, knowledge and institutional conditions in which Colombian teachers work: A study on inclusive education and disability. *Psicología desde el Caribe, 41*(3), 53–79. https://doi.org/10.14482/psdc.41.3.369.015

Pantić, N., & Florian, L. (2015). Developing teachers as agents of inclusion and social justice. *Education Inquiry, 6*(3), 27311. https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v6.27311

Robinson, O. C. (2014). Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 11*(1), 25–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2013.801543

Sharma, U., Forlin, C., & Loreman, T. (2008). Impact of training on pre-service teachers' attitudes and concerns about inclusive education and sentiments about persons with disabilities. *Disability & Society, 23*(7), 773–785. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590802469271

Woodcock, S., Sharma, U., Subban, P., & Hitches, E. (2022). Teacher self-efficacy and inclusive education practices: Rethinking teachers' engagement with inclusive practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 117*, 103802. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2022.103802

Copyright: 2026 By the authors. This article is open access and distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/