

**A CASE STUDY ON FACTORS INFLUENCING TEACHER PREPAREDNESS TO
SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS
AT HARMONY ACADEMY IN KAMPALA**

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DECLARATION

I ROSYELENE AMPUMUZA, hereby solemnly declare that this Proposal titled, “**A Case Study on Factors Influencing Teacher Preparedness to Support Students with Special Needs in Inclusive Classrooms at Harmony Academy in Kampala**” is my original work and has never been produced by any other person for the award of a Master’s Degree in Education.

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Date:

12.03.2026

APPROVAL

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12.03.2026

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my Dad and Mum, Mr. and Mrs. Mugisha, my siblings, and teachers who are doing their best to support students with special needs. A special shout-out to Douglas for the few minutes of a chat, which were truly insightful.

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ACRONYMS

CPD – Continuous Professional Development

CwDs – Children with Disabilities

EENET – Enabling Education Network

EFA – Education for All

ESE – Exceptional Student Education

F – Focus Group Discussion

FAPE – Free Appropriate Public Education

IE – Inclusive Education

IEP – Individualized Education Plan

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

LDA – Learning and Development Assistance

LD – Learning Disabilities

MOES / MoES – Ministry of Education and Sports

NCDC – National Curriculum Development Centre

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PBIS – Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

PBL – Project-Based Learning

PD – Professional Development

PLC – Professional Learning Community

R – Response

RTE – Right to Education

SCD – Special Classroom Development

SEN – Special Educational Needs

SENCo – Special Educational Needs Coordinator

SNE – Special Needs Education

TALIS – Teaching and Learning International Survey

TBI – Trauma-Based Intervention

UDHR – Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UDL – Universal Design for Learning

UN – United Nations

UNCRPD – United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UIS – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics

UPE – Universal Primary Education

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

UTSEP – Uganda Teacher and School Effectiveness Project

ABSTRACT

The study examined the factors influencing teacher preparedness to support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms in Uganda, with a specific focus on Harmony Academy in Kampala. In its objectives the study wanted to identify the factors influencing teacher preparedness in supporting students with special needs in inclusive classrooms; to assess the role of school policies, professional development opportunities, and institutional support in enhancing teachers' preparedness for inclusive education; and to examine the external factors, such as student motivation, behavior, government policies and societal attitudes, that may influence the effective implementation of inclusive education at Harmony Academy. The study used a qualitative research design, gathering data from 29 individuals through focus groups and interviews. NVivo was used to analyze the data by developing patterns and theme categorisation. Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, the Social Model of Disability and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) served as the study's pillars. The results showed that self-efficacy, past experience, and instructor attitudes are important factors in readiness. It was also discovered that institutional support systems like cooperation, leadership, and resource availability were crucial. The study concluded that in order to enhance inclusive practices, organized professional development, supportive school cultures, and regular external engagement are required. It recommends that Harmony Academy and comparable organizations make investments in focused teacher preparation, improve staff cooperation, actively involve parents, and push for government support for inclusive policies.

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CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This section outlined the context of the research, the background, the problem statement, the primary objective of the study, the specific aims of the research, the research questions, the hypotheses of the investigation, the conceptual framework, the importance of the study, the rationale for the research, the boundaries of the study, and the definitions of terms used.

1.2 Background to the study

1.2.1 Historical Background

Education of children with disabilities has been a history of exclusion, institutionalization and isolation toward inclusion and equality in learning. In the past, most children with disabilities (CwDs) were denied education and were either not allowed to attend schools or sent to segregated institutions. Nevertheless, the situation has changed globally through a series of reforms promoting inclusive education. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the *1990 World Conference on Education for All* held in Jomtien, Thailand, emphasised education as a fundamental right for all. Later, the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (UNESCO, 1994) marked a historic milestone by affirming that every child, including those with disabilities, has the right to learn in an inclusive environment.

In the early 2000s, global attention on inclusion was further reinforced by the *Dakar Framework for Action* (UNESCO, 2000) and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)*, adopted in 2006, which called upon member states to ensure access to quality education for persons with disabilities. These international frameworks shaped national education policies across the world and established inclusion as a guiding principle for equitable learning.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the adoption of inclusive education policies has been gradual but steady, influenced by these global commitments. The *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)* and the *Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25)* have encouraged member states to provide equitable education to all learners, including those with special needs. However, the implementation of inclusive education across the region has faced persistent challenges such as inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and poor infrastructure (UNESCO, 2017). Despite these challenges, governments and educational partners in the region have made efforts to strengthen teacher capacity and reform curricula to promote inclusion.

In Uganda, inclusive education gained prominence through post-independence educational reforms that sought to ensure education for all. The *1992 Government White Paper on Education* emphasised equality and integration, and the *Uganda National Institute of Special Education (UNISE) Act of 1995* formally recognised Special Needs Education (SNE) as a vital component of the education system. The *Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995)* under Articles 16, 32, and 34 enshrines the rights of persons with disabilities and guarantees every child the right to education without discrimination. Furthermore, the *Education Act (2008)* and the *National Policy on Disability (2006)* reinforced the government's commitment to inclusive education through compulsory primary education for all. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) has also established specialised training programs and guidelines for inclusive education to ensure equitable learning opportunities. Despite these progressive frameworks, many teachers still report limited preparedness and training to effectively support learners with special needs in inclusive settings (MoES, 2015; Nakabugo et al., 2019).

This historical evolution, from global advocacy to national implementation, illustrates that while

Uganda has made considerable progress toward inclusive education, teacher preparedness remains a critical gap. It is this ongoing challenge that provides the basis for examining the factors influencing teacher preparedness to support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms, specifically at Harmony Academy in Kampala.

1.2.2 Conceptual Background

This study is conceptually grounded on two main variables: the independent variable (IV), factors influencing teacher preparedness, and the dependent variable (DV), teacher preparedness to support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms. Conceptualizing these variables helps clarify the scope and direction of the research while ensuring alignment between the research objectives, questions, and theoretical framework.

The independent variable, factors influencing teacher preparedness, encompasses several dimensions that shape teachers' readiness to effectively support students with special needs. These include:

Teacher-related factors – such as knowledge, skills, experience, attitude, and self-efficacy. Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory supports this dimension, highlighting the role of teachers' confidence in their capacity to implement inclusive practices effectively (Bandura, 1997).

Institutional factors – such as availability of teaching and learning materials, administrative support, class size, and opportunities for collaboration with other educators. According to the Social Model of Disability, institutional barriers within schools can limit effective inclusion if not addressed (Oliver, 1990).

Professional development factors – including access to in-service training, workshops, and continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities focused on inclusive education. Research suggests that professional development directly enhances teacher preparedness and instructional competence (MoES, 2024; Woodcock et al., 2023).

Policy and curriculum factors – which relate to the extent to which national education policies, curriculum guidelines, and assessment systems promote inclusive education. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework provides a guide for developing flexible curricula that accommodate learners with varying needs (CAST, 2018).

The dependent variable, teacher preparedness, refers to the extent to which teachers are ready and able to support learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms. Preparedness involves more than possessing basic knowledge; it extends to the ability to apply inclusive strategies, adapt materials, and maintain positive attitudes toward diversity. Within this study, teacher preparedness is conceptualized through three key dimensions:

Knowledge and understanding – teachers’ awareness of various disabilities, inclusive pedagogy, and relevant policies.

Skills and competencies – the ability to modify instruction, utilize assistive technologies, and manage diverse learners effectively.

Attitudes and beliefs – teachers’ perceptions toward inclusion, willingness to adapt, and confidence in their own abilities to teach all learners successfully.

The relationship between these variables is that the independent variable (factors influencing preparedness) directly affects the dependent variable (teacher preparedness). For instance, adequate professional training (an IV dimension) can enhance teachers’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes (DV dimensions). Conversely, inadequate institutional support or limited training opportunities may result in lower levels of preparedness. Thus, understanding these relationships provides a foundation for assessing how different factors combine to influence teacher readiness for inclusive education at Harmony Academy.

Conceptually, this study assumes that improving teacher-related, institutional, and professional development factors will lead to higher levels of preparedness and, consequently, better support

for students with special needs. This perspective aligns with the MoES (2015) emphasis on equipping teachers with the competencies and resources necessary to facilitate effective inclusion.

1.2.3 Contextual Background

At the national level, Uganda's education system has made notable strides toward inclusive education through policy and structural reforms. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) has implemented several initiatives, including the *National Policy on Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2011)*, the *Education Act (2008)*, and the *National Inclusive Education Policy Framework (2020)*. These policies aim to ensure equitable access to quality education for all learners, including those with special needs. However, despite these efforts, a significant gap remains between policy and practice, particularly in terms of teacher preparedness to support learners with special needs within inclusive classrooms (MoES, 2015, 2024).

In many Ugandan schools, including private institutions, teachers continue to report challenges in applying inclusive strategies due to inadequate training, limited teaching materials, and large class sizes (Nakabugo et al., 2019). This is particularly relevant in Kampala, where the growing diversity of learners has increased the demand for teachers who are competent and confident in supporting students with various learning needs. Although the government and development partners have provided professional development programs, such as those supported by the *Uganda Teacher and School Effectiveness Project (UTSEP, 2020)*, many teachers still feel ill-equipped to effectively meet the individual needs of learners with disabilities.

At Harmony Academy in Kampala, the school's philosophy aligns with the national and global vision of inclusive education. The institution has made efforts to enrol learners with diverse needs, including those with mild physical, sensory, and learning disabilities. However, classroom observations and informal discussions with teachers reveal persistent challenges in providing adequate support to these learners. Teachers have expressed limited confidence in adapting lesson

plans, using assistive materials, or differentiating instruction to accommodate learners with special needs. This situation suggests that while the school has embraced inclusion in principle, the level of teacher preparedness remains a concern.

Harmony Academy's experience reflects the broader challenges faced by many schools implementing inclusive education in Uganda. Despite the presence of supportive policies and a positive institutional attitude toward inclusion, gaps persist in areas such as teacher training, resource provision, and ongoing professional development. As a result, students with special needs may not always receive the tailored support necessary to achieve their learning potential. Addressing these gaps is critical for ensuring that the ideals of inclusive education are translated into effective classroom practice.

Therefore, this study focuses on examining the factors influencing teacher preparedness to support students with special needs. Understanding these factors within the specific context of the school will not only contribute to improved practice at the institutional level but also inform broader strategies for strengthening inclusive education implementation in Uganda.

1.2.4 Theoretical Background

This study was guided by three interrelated theories that together provide a comprehensive lens for understanding teacher preparedness to support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms. These are Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, the Social Model of Disability, and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. Each theory contributes a unique perspective on inclusion, teaching competence, and the role of the learning environment in supporting learners with diverse abilities.

Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1977, 1997) emphasizes an individual's belief in their capacity to organize and execute actions required to manage prospective situations. In the context of education, this theory highlights the importance of teachers' confidence in their ability to

effectively teach students with diverse learning needs. Bandura proposed that self-efficacy influences motivation, resilience, and performance—teachers who believe they are capable of meeting the needs of students with disabilities are more likely to adopt inclusive teaching strategies and persist in overcoming instructional challenges (Bandura, 1997). This theory is therefore essential for understanding the psychological dimension of teacher preparedness. When teachers possess high self-efficacy, they are more adaptable and proactive in differentiating instruction to accommodate students with special needs. However, the theory has been critiqued for focusing primarily on individual cognition while giving less attention to institutional or environmental factors that also shape teacher effectiveness (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Despite this, it provides an essential foundation for examining how teachers' beliefs influence their preparedness for inclusion.

Building upon the individual perspective of Bandura's theory, the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1983) expands the understanding of disability from a purely medical issue to one shaped by social and environmental barriers. This model asserts that individuals are not disabled by their impairments but by the societal structures and attitudes that fail to accommodate them (Oliver, 1990). Within the framework of this study, the model emphasizes that teachers' preparedness must go beyond addressing learners' impairments to transforming school environments, instructional practices, and attitudes that may exclude learners with special needs. The Social Model of Disability is particularly relevant to inclusive education in Uganda, where systemic barriers, such as inadequate resources, limited teacher training, and rigid curricula, still hinder full inclusion. Critics, however, argue that the model sometimes overlooks the genuine impact of certain impairments on learning and participation (Shakespeare, 2006). Nevertheless, its focus on social responsibility aligns with the Ministry of Education and Sports' (MoES, 2024) emphasis on eliminating barriers within schools to achieve equity in education.

While Bandura's theory centers on teachers' confidence and the social model emphasizes removing systemic barriers, the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework integrates these perspectives by offering a practical approach to inclusive instruction. Developed by Rose and Meyer (2002), UDL promotes flexible learning environments that accommodate individual learning differences from the outset. It rests on three core principles: providing multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression. UDL recognizes that learners differ in how they perceive, process, and demonstrate knowledge, and therefore teaching must be intentionally designed to meet these differences (CAST, 2018). For this study, UDL underscores the practical aspect of teacher preparedness, how teachers plan, deliver, and assess lessons in ways that meet the diverse needs of all learners. Critics have noted that the UDL framework requires significant training and resources to implement effectively (Edyburn, 2010). Nonetheless, it remains one of the most applicable frameworks for inclusive teaching, particularly in schools striving to make learning accessible to all students, regardless of ability.

In summary, these three theories collectively inform this study by addressing different yet interconnected aspects of teacher preparedness. Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory provides insight into teachers' confidence and attitudes; the Social Model of Disability frames inclusion as a societal and institutional responsibility; and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework translates these ideas into actionable classroom strategies. Together, they create a comprehensive theoretical foundation for investigating the factors influencing teacher preparedness to support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms at Harmony Academy in Kampala.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Worldwide, the push toward inclusive education has stressed the significance of making certain that all learners, irrespective of ability, have access to quality education within regular school settings. International frameworks such as the *Salamanca Statement* (UNESCO, 1994), the *United*

Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006), and the *Sustainable Development Goal 4* (UNESCO, 2015) promote the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream classrooms. These frameworks highlight the ideal situation in which educators are fully empowered with the skills, knowledge, and positive attitudes necessary to successfully aid all learners. In such settings, education systems provide enough training, resources, and institutional support to certify that educators are confident and competent in rolling out inclusive practices.

Nonetheless, the actual situation in many Ugandan schools shows that this ideal has not yet been fully achieved. Even with robust national commitments through the *Education Act (2008)*, the *National Policy on Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2011)*, and recent *MoES (2024)* initiatives, show that many educators lack the preparedness to meet the diverse needs of learners with disabilities in inclusive classrooms (Nakabugo et al., 2019; MoES, 2015). Educators mostly report insufficient training in special needs education, inadequate teaching and learning materials, and minimal exposure to inclusive pedagogical strategies. As a result, students with special needs continue to face barriers that hinder their participation and academic success within regular school settings.

At Harmony Academy in Kampala, comparable struggles persist. While the school's mission embraces inclusive education and efforts have been made to integrate learners with special needs, teachers still experience challenges in adapting lesson content, utilizing assistive technologies, and handling varied classroom environments. Observations and informal feedback from staff show that many educators depend on traditional teaching approaches that do not sufficiently address the needs of learners with disabilities. Thus, learners with special needs may not be getting the individualized attention needed to promote equitable learning outcomes.

The gap, therefore, lies between the policy-driven ideal of inclusive education, where all educators

are prepared to assist students with special needs, and the actuality of limited teacher preparedness at the institutional level. This gap threatens the effective implementation of inclusive education and the achievement of equitable learning opportunities for all. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the factors influencing teacher preparedness to support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms at Harmony Academy in Kampala.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the factors influencing teacher preparedness to support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms at Harmony Academy in Kampala. The study purposes to examine how teacher-related, institutional, professional development, and policy factors define teachers' readiness to apply inclusive practices. Through this inquiry, the research aims to generate insights that can inform school-based and national strategies for strengthening teacher training and enhancing inclusive education implementation.

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To identify the factors influencing teacher preparedness in supporting students with special needs in the inclusive classrooms of Harmony Academy.
2. To assess the role of school policies, professional development opportunities, and institutional support in enhancing teachers' preparedness for inclusive education.
3. To examine the external factors, such as student motivation, behavior, government policies and societal attitudes, that may influence the effective implementation of inclusive education at Harmony Academy.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What are the main factors influencing teacher preparedness in supporting students with special needs in the inclusive classrooms of Harmony Academy?

2. How do school policies, professional development opportunities, and institutional support impact teachers' preparedness for inclusive education?
3. What external factors, such as student motivation, behavior, government policies and societal attitudes, influence the effective implementation of inclusive education at Harmony Academy?

1.7 Scope of the study

This study investigated the factors influencing teacher preparedness to support students with special needs at Harmony Academy in inclusive classrooms. However, the focus of this research was exclusively on primary school teachers. The study explored how teacher training, access to resources, and institutional support contribute to or hinder teachers' readiness to effectively teach students with special needs in primary inclusive classrooms.

The research specifically examined the experiences and perspectives of in-service primary school teachers, focusing on their training background, attitudes toward inclusive education, and the availability of necessary resources, such as teaching materials, support staff, and professional development opportunities. It also explored how institutional policies and leadership influence teachers' preparedness and confidence in handling special needs students in primary inclusive settings.

This study was limited to Harmony Academy to maintain a focused analysis within this specific school context. Other schools or regions outside Harmony Academy was not included in the study. Additionally, the study did not evaluate student outcomes or academic performance but centred on teachers' preparedness, confidence, and perceptions of training effectiveness. The data was collected in the course of the 2024-2025 academic year as part of interviews, focus groups, and, possibly, as classroom observations. This gave an in-depth description of issues involved in influencing teacher preparedness in inclusive education in primary classroom so that the study

considered the major elements that impact towards the teacher preparedness in such a setting.

1.8 Justification

Teacher preparation is very important in the availability of equity and quality education to students with special needs in inclusive classrooms. It is mentioned in the research that the effectiveness of inclusive education policies depends on well trained teachers who feel prepared to tackle a wide variety of learner needs (UNESCO, 2017; Florian, 2019). Since Uganda still continues to implement the policies giving preference to inclusive education, e.g., the documents of the National Inclusive Education Policy (Ministry of Education and Sports [MoES], 2020), it has become more significant to determine the factors which affect the readiness of teachers.

Even though the idea of inclusive traditions has become more popular, not many studies refer to teachers in Kampala and the barriers they may encounter in preparing to teach students with special needs (Ainscow, 2020). Research done in other settings provides evidence that educators tend to be unprepared as a result of inadequate training and resource presences (Avramidis & Norwich, 2020; Booth et al., 2000). The present study fills a major gap through investigating the quality of the current teacher training programs and the life of teachers in inclusive classrooms in Uganda.

The results will offer practical information to the policymakers, school officials, and teacher-training establishments, serving to design more viable training courses. To give an example, the curricular efforts and changes in policies may be based directly on the hole in the allocation of the resources, or pre-professional growth opportunities, etc. (Wearmouth, Edwards, & Richmond, 2000). In addition, the study is in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (United Nations, 2015), which also focuses on inclusive and equitable quality education to all individuals, offering its consistency with the national Uganda resolution toward creating an inclusive educational environment (MoES, 2020).

Although the government of Uganda has indicated its interest in ensuring that the persons with special need are able to get quality education by establishing acts like the Persons with Disability Act (2006), ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008) among others, not much has been done in assessing the preparedness of teachers in assisting such learners. The teacher education programs do not even cover the pedagogical skills teachers need to carry out an inclusive practice in multicultural classrooms, so there are only a limited number of educators specializing in delivering instruction to students with special needs (MoES, 2015). This is a weakness within the teacher readiness in terms of the education sector in Uganda that continues to show that research is much needed to assess and improve their schooling preparation.

The government also has recently supported a new training program teacher that concentrates on teacher education and better pedagogical models, as noted in one of the Daily Monitor press articles (2024). This project fits with the national agenda of increased expertise in training teachers to work in inclusive settings as stated in the Policy Handbook.

This research by the author aims at closing this gap coming in to address the questions about the readiness of the in-service teachers in terms of teaching practicums and classroom experiences. The effectiveness of various models of teacher training will also be analyzed in the course of the research, which has not yet been given sufficient attention in the existing literature base. Future strategies of professional development and educational policies that are targeted at preparing teachers to better enable preparing them to conduct inclusive education in Uganda will be shaped on the basis of results because as these results will represent information about what needs to be improved and what not in trainings programs currently provided to teachers.

1.9 Significance

The issue of teacher preparedness is crucial in the process of successful implementation of inclusive education policies. As Fullan (1993) indicates, teachers play big role in setting the quality of education reforms including inclusive practices. Yet, in many cases, the problem is that not much concern is given to the facts of actual practices and needs of teachers and this may slow down the efficiency of these changes (Wearmouth, Edwards & Richmond, 2000). This research is directed to the evaluation of the factors that may affect the preparedness of teachers in the context where the teacher has to work in a classroom with inclusive school culture and assist students with special needs. It examines the significance of teacher training courses, institutional support as well as other contextual issues that affect teacher readiness in teaching children with special needs.

Teachers play a critical role in evaluating effectiveness of any new educational policy to be established even the policy of inclusion (Fullan, 1993:127). Change in the field of education often meets unsuccessful end because few have taken into account the current practice and needs of persons who have been entrusted with the implementation of change (Wearmouth, Edwards & Richmond, 2000: 36). Due to the emerging increase in variability among students in classrooms in recent years, teacher preparation programs are under ever-growing pressure to help educators become prepared to solve the inclusivity issues in their classrooms (Munby, Lock, Hutchinson, Whitehead, & Martin, 1999). The key factor towards its (classroom diversity) management lies in effective and efficient teacher preparation. Many instructors in general and special education development often feel under prepared to accommodate the needs of the students with diverse exceptionalities. The evidence that students with special educational needs in general education classrooms are always at the benefiting end of the arrangement than they are in the segregated or withdrawal classrooms into the general education is formed by the studies conducted by Booth,

Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan, and Shaw (2000) and Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson, and Kaplan (2021). In a study that carried out 11,000 students in the United States, Blackorby, Wagner, Cameto, Davies, Levine, and Newman (2021) report that students with disabilities in the mainstream classes spend more time in them have higher assessment outcomes, have lower absenteeism, and are near grade level as opposed to students with disabilities who receive segregated teaching. At the lower level, Blackorby et al. (2021) confirm the interpretations of Wagner, Newman, Cameto and Levine (2003) according which students with disabilities in inclusive settings achieve high school standards on standards-based tests at a higher level than their more segregated counterparts.

The research is significant because it addresses the growing need for effective teacher preparation in inclusive education. By identifying the factors that influence teacher readiness, the study aims to bridge the gap between teacher training and classroom practices. The findings will provide actionable insights for improving teacher training programs and support systems, with the goal of enhancing the quality of education for students with special needs and promoting a more equitable and inclusive education system (UNESCO, 2017; Florian & Linklater, 2010).

Also, the study can be used in the creation of more specific professional development programs since it provides evidence regarding the composition of effective training formats. It will allow teacher training schools and administrators in schools to iron out their plans to guide teachers in inclusive settings (Avramidis & Norwich, 2020). Besides, the results will be used to develop curricula in which training materials will reflect better on the practical demands of teachers who have to work with heterogeneous groups in the inexperienced (Forlin, 2010).

The study is vital to educational policy makers, Ministry of Education and Sports, National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) and other stakeholders. It will assist in exploring

curriculum changes so that teachers should be better prepared more relevant to the needs of the students. The study will also propose the increase of resources and funds allocated to teacher preparation programs by finding the successful practices of schooling the teachers (OECD, 2019). Its eventual objective is to enhance professionalizing teachers to benefit the needs of students with needs and the general educational prospect of inclusiveness and quality education in Uganda (Ainscow, 2020).

1.10 Conceptual Framework

According to Neuman (2014), a conceptual framework serves as a theoretical structure that organizes and clarifies the relationship between variables in a study. This framework illustrates how various factors influence teacher preparedness to support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms at Harmony Academy in Kampala.

The framework is guided by three theories, Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, the Social Model of Disability, and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which together explain how individual, institutional, and systemic factors shape teachers' readiness to implement inclusive practices.

Independent Variables: Factors Influencing Teacher Preparedness

Individual Teacher Factors (guided by Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, 1997)

These include the teacher's:

1. Knowledge and training in special and inclusive education.
2. Experience working with students with special needs.
3. Attitudes and beliefs toward inclusion.
4. Self-efficacy, confidence in implementing inclusive strategies.
5. Motivation and commitment to support inclusion.

Bandura's theory suggests that teachers' beliefs in their own competence directly affect their effort, persistence, and success in inclusive teaching.

School/Institutional Factors (supported by the Social Model of Disability, Oliver, 1990)

These factors include:

1. School policies and leadership support for inclusion.
2. Availability of resources and teaching aids (assistive technology, adapted materials).
3. Collaborative support systems (teaching assistants, special educators).
4. School culture that values diversity and inclusion.
5. Opportunities for professional development within the institution.

The Social Model views disability as a product of barriers within the environment rather than individual limitations, highlighting the school's responsibility to provide accessible and supportive structures.

External Support and Policy Factors (linked to UDL and inclusive policy frameworks). These include:

1. Government policies and legislation promoting inclusive education.
2. Community and parental involvement in supporting learners with special needs.
3. Availability of specialized services such as counseling and therapy.
4. Educational research and innovations that inform inclusive practice.

The UDL framework emphasizes flexible curriculum design, policy support, and accessibility measures that enable all learners to succeed.

Dependent Variable: Teacher Preparedness

Teacher preparedness refers to the readiness and capability of teachers to effectively support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms. It is reflected through:

1. Knowledge and understanding of inclusive pedagogy.
2. Skills and competencies in adapting lessons and using inclusive strategies.

3. Attitudes and confidence in teaching diverse learners.
4. Instructional adaptability and quality in delivering inclusive education.

Teacher Preparedness to Support Special Needs Students

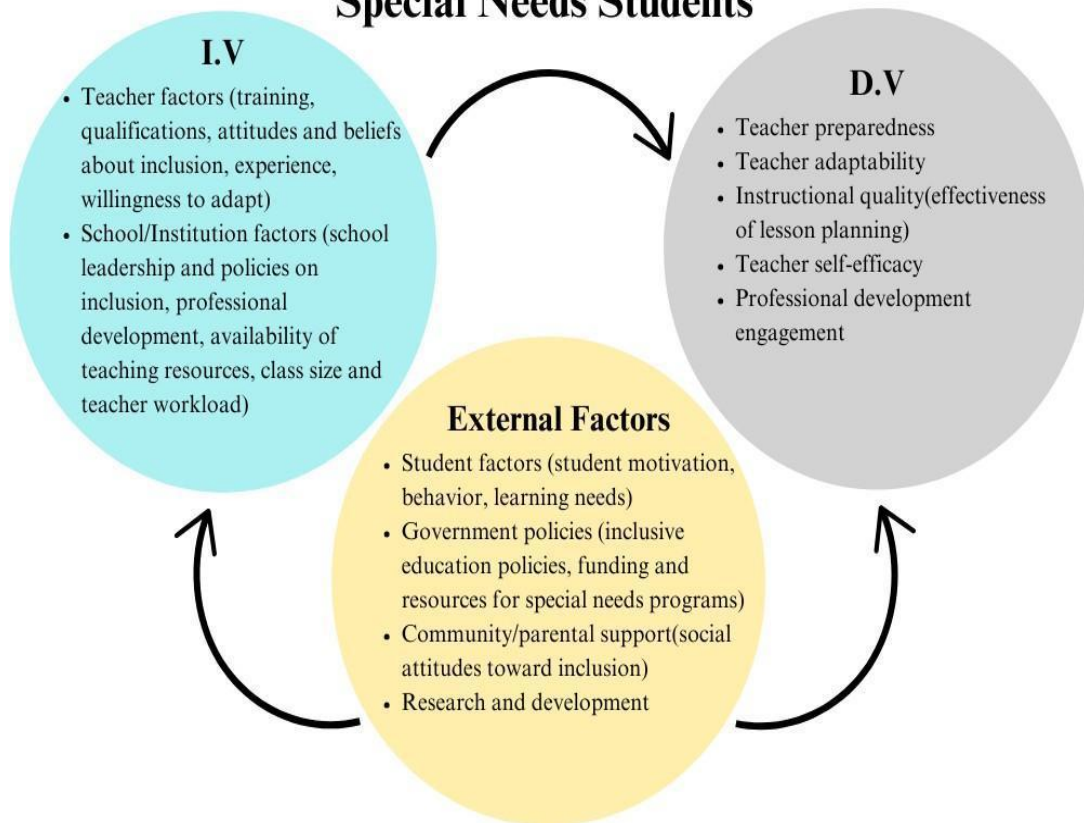


Figure 1: *Conceptual framework illustrating the relationship between teacher preparedness to support special needs students and various influencing factors. Source: Created by the author*

It is assumed that teacher-related, institutional, and external/policy factors interact to influence teacher preparedness. Adequate training, institutional support, and enabling policies enhance teachers' self-efficacy and instructional competence, resulting in higher preparedness to support students with special needs. Conversely, limited training, inadequate resources, and weak institutional structures reduce preparedness and hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education.

1.11 Definition of Operational Terms

Inclusive Education: In this study, inclusive education refers to the practice of providing equitable learning opportunities for all students, including those with special needs, within the same classroom setting. It involves adapting teaching methods, learning materials, and assessment approaches to accommodate diverse learning abilities (UNESCO, 2017).

Special Needs Education (SNE): This refers to educational support designed for learners who experience barriers to learning due to physical, intellectual, emotional, or learning disabilities. In this study, SNE is viewed as part of the broader framework of inclusive education that promotes full participation and achievement of all learners (MoES, 2015).

Teacher Preparedness: Teacher preparedness in this study denotes the extent to which teachers possess the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and confidence required to effectively support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms. It includes their ability to design and deliver lessons that meet varied learning needs (Bandura, 1997; Woodcock et al., 2023).

Factors Influencing Teacher Preparedness: These are the conditions, characteristics, and

contextual elements that affect a teacher's readiness to implement inclusive education. In this study, they include teacher-related factors (knowledge, attitude, experience), institutional factors (resources, class size, administrative support), professional development (training and CPD), and policy and curriculum support (MoES, 2024).

Self-Efficacy: Derived from Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, this term refers to a teacher's belief in their own ability to plan, organize, and carry out inclusive teaching effectively. High self-efficacy contributes to greater confidence and willingness to adapt instruction for diverse learners (Bandura, 1997).

Social Model of Disability: This concept views disability as a result of environmental and institutional barriers rather than an individual's impairment. Within this study, it emphasizes how school structures, resources, and practices at Harmony Academy can either enable or hinder inclusive education (Oliver, 1990).

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): A pedagogical framework promoting flexible teaching methods that address the diverse needs of all learners. In this study, UDL supports the idea that teachers who are adequately prepared can plan for multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression to ensure accessibility and inclusion for students with special needs (CAST, 2018).

Professional Development: Refers to structured learning opportunities such as training, workshops, or CPD programs aimed at improving teachers' competencies in inclusive education. In this study, professional development is considered a critical factor influencing teacher preparedness (UTSEP, 2020; MoES, 2024).

1.12 Chapter One Summary

Chapter One provided an overview of the study, including the background, statement of the

problem, purpose, and objectives. It also outlined the research questions, scope, justification, and significance of the study, the conceptual framework as well as the definitions of the operational terms. The next chapter presents a review of the relevant literature.

CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter Two offered an extensive literature review of the factors which are associated with preparations of teachers to be ready to teach children with special needs. It looks at how training of teachers, institutional support, and continuous professional development can provide teachers with the competencies and knowledge they need. Moreover, the chapter focused on the way in which school culture and leadership, as well as the present resources, help to promote the practice of inclusiveness. Also, the teacher characteristics (attitudes, self-efficacy) are examined with regards to their influence on the adoption of the effective inclusive strategies. Resting on global models and theories, the chapter emphasizes the essence of a common and comprehensive approach to teacher development.

2.2 Teacher Preparedness in Supporting Students with Special Needs in the Inclusive Classrooms

Teacher readiness to assist students with special needs in inclusive classrooms depends on the interaction of many factors such as training of the teachers, institutional backing, access to resources and the general school climate. Vaughn and Bos (2012) highlight the fact that teacher training should be done effectively, which is provided with sufficient resources and involving a collaborative school environment. As Galloway (2014) exclaims, the inclusion preparation of teachers does not only entail a professional development process but rather incorporates the preparation through school culture and leadership as well.

Loreman, Deppeler, and Harvey (2011) add that teacher preparation programs should combine programs that promote collaboration and peer support as a way of establishing inclusive classrooms. On the same note, the world health organization (2011) emphasizes that teacher performance in achieving the diverse needs of the students with disabilities depends highly on the availability of the right resources and institutional support systems. Ryndak, Jackson and Billingsley (2013) state that an inclusive practice must be well implemented by providing extensive preparation of the teacher, including school politics, community involvement, and community engagement to support school policies. The UNESCO (2009) also emphasizes the necessity of a positive school climate that will support the efforts of inclusive schooling: adequate funding, professional development strategy, and coverage of the professional needs of teachers who have to support the inclusion of students with special needs into mainstream classrooms. Along with each other these scholars postulate that teacher preparedness cannot be just about training, but should be looked at via institutional forces and also the school backdrop.

The very first international document on human rights to be adopted at a universal level is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which in article 26 (1) declares that, everyone has the right to education. The right to elementary education is compulsory and free” (Universal declaration of human rights, 1948).

The values-based approach (Lindsay Thompson, 1997) has been to accept diversity of students in mainstream schools, which has been influenced by international treaties (e.g. the UN Convention on the Rights of the Children, 1989) as well as in England, by acts of parliament (Equality Act 2010; Children and Families Act 2014). According to Article 35 (1) of the Constitution of Uganda (1995), the people with disabilities have the right to own respect and human dignity and the state

and society should fulfill appropriate measures that allow them to realize their full mental and physical potential. Under Article 30, it is stated that all persons have the right to education and under Article 34(2) the entitlement of a child to basic education is stipulated, being a right and responsibility of the state and parents of the child (The Constitution of Uganda, 1995). States are bound to their responsibility to Inclusive Education of Refugee Children with Disabilities because of the above-presented texts which can be characterized as the main Gold Standards.

2.3 School Policies, Professional Development Opportunities, and Institutional Support Impact Teachers' Preparedness for Inclusive Education

Acknowledging the peculiar differences among learners is one of the major principles guiding teachers when planning to teach. Strategic teaching and learning in essence presupposes that instruction in classrooms must be driven by the interaction of several instructional variables, process of learning, measures of achievement and situational variables.

In creating a typical school setting which offers prospects to success rather than failures of the pupils with special educational needs it will be important to understand how both proximate and more distant contexts of the environment affect the learning processes and development of children. Urie Bronfenbrenner devoted his scientific activity to the task of examining our understanding of human development and implementing his works, as well as those of others (crystallised in Rosa & Tudge, 2013).

The inclusion education is the teaching and learning process where students with and without

impairment attend the same classrooms to learn and therefore achieve the appropriate results and fit into the society (Ali & Jelas, 2006; Browder & Cooper-Duffy, 2003; Kurth et al., 2015). The above perspective on education is supported by recent research according to which people with impairments can become significantly better when being taught in classes along with their typically developing peers (Calculator, 2009; Leko et al., 2012; Rogers & Johnson, 2018; Ruppard et al., 2016). The research suggests more positive results of inclusive education than of other educational environments (Alquraini & Gut, 2012; Ayres et al., 1994; Ballard & Dymond, 2017; Boyd et al., 2021). Putting into place the benefits of inclusive education open up new opportunities to this population to attain the future success.

2.3.1 Institutional Support, Resources, and School Environment

In education, we are used to hearing the social model of impairments versus the medical model of impairments. The social model views disability to be an environmental characteristic instead of a characteristic of an individual. The medical model regards impairment as a trait of individuals. The concept of adopting a bioecology approach provides a platform that emphasizes the environmental viewpoint, but also shines the light on the more individualistic viewpoint of a biomedical approach. The concept is to modify the environment so as to support the best learning and growth: the environment refers not only to the daily actions and interpersonal interactions, but also includes physical space. Barriers to learning of a student could be identified and eliminated by studying his/her near environment and his/her reactions in that environment. It is an enabling approach to teachers, putting the focus on the fact that they already possess much of the knowledge and expertise that they require to meet with effectiveness the needs of the varied group of students in their school, and that they can augment their tools-bag with professionally based development

events whose efficacy has been proven. As Cullen et al. (2020) note, this is currently the case (page 18).

Some of those researchers determined that the role of a teacher in the teaching of students with SEN is significant (Avramidis & Norwich, 2020; Forlin, 2001). Attitudes of teachers are also found to be key determinant of inclusive education (Chalmers, Hoover, & Olson, 1997). the positive attitudes of the instructors are most likely to employ favourable teaching strategies and the negative attitudes of the instructors can hinder the inclusion programs as well (Gal, Schreur, & Engel- Yeger, 2010; Worrell, 2008). Inquiry on what teachers think, however, has produced ambiguous results. Although results of certain studies were that teachers intended to facilitate inclusive education (Abbott, 2006; Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000; Avramidis & Norwich, 2020; Marshall, Ralph, & Palmer, 2020), some showed the contrary (Alghazo, Dodeen, & Algaryouti, 2003).

Although difficult to adequately define, inclusive education can be broadly conceptualised as the formation of enabling learning spaces that are concerned with the diverse educational needs of all children, regardless of factors such as race, socioeconomic background, gender, disability, and so on (Ainscow and César 2006; Armstrong, Armstrong, and Spandagou 2011).

2.3.2 Teacher Preparedness and Impact on Inclusion

Teacher preparedness to support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms is influenced by a combination of factors, including teacher training, institutional support, available resources, and the overall school environment. Vaughn and Bos (2012) emphasize that effective teacher training is essential, but it must be supported by adequate resources and a collaborative school

environment. Galloway (2014) highlights the importance of not only professional development but also the role of school culture and leadership in preparing teachers for inclusion. According to Loreman, Deppeler, and Harvey (2011), teacher preparation programs must integrate strategies that foster collaboration and peer support to create inclusive classrooms. Similarly, the World Health Organization (2011) stresses that the right resources and institutional support systems are crucial for teachers to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Ryndak, Jackson, and Billingsley (2013) argue that a comprehensive approach to teacher preparedness must include school policies and community engagement to ensure that inclusive practices are effectively implemented. UNESCO (2009) further reinforces the need for a supportive school environment, with sufficient resources and professional development opportunities, to ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to include students with special needs in mainstream classrooms. Collectively, these scholars assert that teacher preparedness cannot be solely attributed to training alone, but must also consider institutional factors and the broader school context.

2.3.3 Social Cognitive Theory and Teacher Development

To understand the process and how the attitudes influence the teaching practice, the social cognitive theory offers a suitable construct to investigate self-efficacy attitude of the teachers concerning inclusive education. According to Bandura, learning and self-development happens in a multidirectional interaction of behaviours of the person (e.g. inclusive teaching practices), personal (e.g. self-efficacy) and environmental (e.g. school and classroom) factors. As opposed to being driven by an inclination to respond spontaneously either to external conduct or inner compulsions, through a triadic reciprocal relationship between personal, behavioural and environmental factors, the person tends to be subjected to a course of action in relative reaction to

these factors. Among these three, it is the correlation between personal cognition that is, self-efficacy and outcome expectations that remains the core of the educational practice and success in inclusion teaching (Bandura, 1986; 1997).

According to a social cognitive perspective, Wilson et al. (2017) write that perhaps, the working environment of the school contributes to self-efficacy beliefs of teachers (i.e., psychological mechanisms) and such beliefs influence behaviour. It appears to be an ongoing two-way process that gives an educator a chance to become a reflective learner by systematically taking on self-regulation and shifting to new circumstances. Therefore, the analysis of teachers' self-efficacy and perspectives influence on teaching practice can be carried through the social cognitive theory.

2.3.4 Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs for Special Needs Education

Teacher training programs for special needs education are essential in providing educators with the confidence, knowledge, and skills necessary to assist different learners. Effective programs encompass systematic techniques, pragmatic applications, and ways for overseeing inclusive classrooms. Critiques include deficiencies including inadequate preparation time, disjointed curricula, and a lack of practical components (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Beck, Kosnik & Roswell, 2007).

The main features that define strong teacher preparation programs include a coherent vision of good teaching, curriculum mix of child development and social learning, longer clinical interactions and evidence-based instructional designs (Darling-Hammond, 2006). This is because in addition to boosting teacher self-efficacy, such programs also lead to better communication between teachers and parents leading to a realization of the accomplishment of the students.

Degrees in special needs education teacher training play a crucial role in providing educators with

the confidence, knowledge, and skills needed to educate various learners. Good programs have methodical programs, informative application, and the classroom management plans. But on the other hand, criticism points to the drawbacks like lack of time to prepare, disunified curriculums and scarcity of practice sections (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Beck, Kosnik & Roswell, 2007). The professional development and learning in the field of inclusive education (IE) or teaching a learner with special treatment needs is becoming more complicated and problematic. It has been evidenced in research that there could be no better time in history when teacher education, both pre-service and in-service, does not seem to be fraught with challenges towards motivating and effectively preparing teachers (Forlin & Sin, 2017; Sharma, 2018). It is repeatedly indicated that pre-service and in-service teachers are ill prepared to deal with inclusive education (Forlin & Sin, 2017; Opoku, Rayner, Pedersen, & Cuskelly, 2019; Sharma, 2018). Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) offer one of the most recent definitions, explaining professional development as a professional learning that occurs at a structured approach, which leads to the results on the differentiation of the teacher knowledge, practices, and enhancements of the student learning outcomes (p. 2). There are however numerous professional developments that tend to exclude the same teachers targeted by those developments which may lower their impact (Archibald, Coggshall, Croft, & Goe, 2011). The problem is especially severe in the focus on the African countries where the teachers are not actively involved and engaged in the process of program design of their professional development that also negatively affects its efficacy (Charema, 2010; Colbert, Brown, Choi, & Thomas, 2008).

Decent training and continuous development of the professionals are critical to the promotion of inclusive education. High quality of inclusive education depends greatly on the preparation of teachers that are thoroughly trained and continuously even in early childhood environments

(Bartolo et al., 2016).

Equipping teacher in the field of educating students with disabilities cannot be presented in terms of theory or exposure to the evidenced-based practices; instead, it has to be a multifaceted intervention, which comprises both coursework and real-life experiences (Leko & Brownell, 2011). However, training programs are still too short and have too narrow focus, and they tend to focus on certain types of special educational needs (SEN) but not the inclusive strategies (Kurniawati, De Boer, Minnaert, & Mangunsong, 2014).

An analysis of 13 research in different countries on pre-service and in-service training showed that majority of the programs were of brief duration and were either course based or course-based and field experience based. The evaluation criteria consisted in the enhancement of knowledge and attitudes and in the development of skills, and the greatest impact was in increasing knowledge. Nevertheless, most of them lacked a control group, follow-ups, and an evaluation of student effects (Kurniawati et al., 2014). Such a difference highlights the necessity of stronger and longitudinal programs of teacher preparation.

In such countries as Netherlands, there is inclusive education training of the teachers; both in pre-service training of teachers and in-service training (Pijl, 2010). On the contrary, in countries like Indonesia such programs tend to be limited to the teachers who already have special education. Consequently, regular education teachers in inclusive classrooms can come to the situation where they have to support students with SEN without necessary preparation (Kurniawati et al., 2014). Good teacher preparation programs are marked with the realization of a good teaching and linking the curriculum of the child development and social learning, abundant clinical experiences, and

evidenced-based methods in teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Besides enhancing self-efficacy of the teachers, such programs will also lead to better communication with parents and help students to achieve.

2.4 External factors that influence the effective implementation of inclusive education

2.4.1 Teacher Characteristics

Teacher preparedness is shaped by individual characteristics, including prior experience, educational background, and attitudes toward special needs education. Teachers with positive attitudes are more likely to engage in ongoing professional development, facilitating successful inclusion practices (Unianu, 2012; Galovic, Brojcin, & Glumbic, 2014). On the other hand, negative attitudes and lack of relevant experience can hinder effective implementation of inclusive strategies (Agbenyega, 2007).

2.4.2 Institutional Support

Institutional support, such as access to resources, collaboration among peers, and leadership encouragement, significantly impacts teacher preparedness. A supportive school culture enables teachers to explore new strategies and adjust practices to address learning barriers effectively (Cullen et al., 2020). Studies highlight the importance of peer collaboration and leadership in promoting inclusive education, with transformational leaders fostering a culture of equity and inclusion (Angelides, 2011; Cambron-McCabe, 2006).

2.4.3 Professional Development

Ongoing professional development bridges the gap between initial training and classroom realities. In-service training programs, including workshops, seminars, and peer observations, provide

teachers with practical solutions to classroom challenges (Alkuş & Olgan, 2014; Osamwonyi, 2016). Teachers' frustrations often stem from insufficient preparation in areas such as classroom management, parental involvement, and inclusive teaching strategies, underscoring the need for continuous skill-building opportunities (Barrett Kutcy & Schulz, 2006).

2.4.4 Teachers' Role in Assessing Learning Needs and Teacher Self-Efficacy in Supporting Students with Special Needs

Teachers play a pivotal role in identifying students' learning needs, not by diagnosing conditions but by determining the necessary adjustments for effective learning. Universal teaching approaches address most learning barriers, but some students require targeted interventions. In a school culture valuing diversity, learning challenges are viewed as opportunities to modify the environment rather than as student deficiencies (Cullen et al., 2020).

Supportive peer cultures enable collaborative problem-solving, such as peer observations and hypothesis-driven interventions, fostering flexibility and innovation in addressing students' barriers. Parental engagement is integral to this process, ensuring a holistic approach to student development (Cullen et al., 2020).

Teachers' attitudes toward inclusion are significantly influenced by their knowledge of disabilities, feelings toward individuals with disabilities, and willingness to engage with them. Although the relationship between attitudes and behavior is complex, it is well established that attitudes shape behavior and are themselves shaped by life experiences (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Inclusive education (IE), rooted in global frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement, emphasizes that students with diverse learning needs should receive quality education in their local mainstream schools. However, true inclusion extends beyond mere physical presence in classrooms; it

demands that educators address the strengths and challenges of diverse learners equitably (Bandura, 2007; Dembo & Gibson, 1985).

The perceived ability of teachers to effectively affect the learning of students which is known as teacher self-efficacy plays an important role in the promotion of inclusive teaching practices. Studies confirm that the elevated self- efficacy has a positive influence in the performance of teacher and motivation and the results of learners (Bouffard-Bouchard, Parent, & Larivee, 1991; Pajares, 1996). High self-efficacy can help teachers to cognize the needs of their students, respond to the changes, and create learning experiences that mean something (Caprara et al., 2006; Hoy & Spero, 2021; Reyes et al., 2012). To reinforce the practices of inclusivity, the new research points to an importance of better special education teacher training program, in-service training, and the guidebooks with special teaching methodologies updated on a yearly basis (Senarath, 2019). There should also be awareness programs about developmental disorders and alternative assessment means of the children in the inclusive scenario. An inclusive education policy is part of a systemic approach that might substantially contribute to effective implementation of classroom practices.

Teachers' intrinsic motivations and positive attitudes toward the profession also influence their ability to teach inclusively. Flores and Day (2006) found that teachers with a strong sense of personal commitment to teaching valued their training and experiences, finding their work rewarding. This commitment often translates into greater student success and professional satisfaction (Lavigne & Wood, 2014). Collaborative working environments further enhance these positive outcomes by fostering constructive attitudes toward teaching and learning (Flores & Day, 2006).

Effective training programs play a central role in shaping teachers' attitudes and knowledge

regarding SEN and inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich, 2020; Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Ellins & Porter, 2021). While primary school teacher training programs for inclusion have increased, limited studies have examined their impact on changing teachers' attitudes and knowledge about SEN and inclusion. Further research is needed to assess the long-term efficacy of these programs in cultivating teacher self-efficacy and improving inclusive education practices

CHAPTER 3 : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to explore the factors influencing teacher preparedness to support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms at Harmony Academy. It presents the research design, study area, target population, sampling procedures, data collection methods, research tools, data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, and strategies for ensuring data quality. The aim is to provide a clear rationale for the chosen methods and demonstrate how they align with the study objectives. While the study is primarily qualitative, descriptive statistics were used to summarize participant demographics, providing context for the qualitative findings.

3.2 Research design

This study adopted a qualitative case study design to explore teachers' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes regarding inclusive education. A case study design was appropriate because it allows an in-depth investigation of real-life experiences within a bounded context, Harmony Academy. This design facilitated a comprehensive understanding of teacher preparedness in supporting students with special needs and allowed exploration of factors influencing inclusive teaching practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018).

Although qualitative methods were central, descriptive statistics were employed to summarize participant demographics. This limited quantitative element provided context for understanding participants' backgrounds, such as years of experience and training, without influencing the core qualitative findings.

Rationale for Design

A case study approach was selected to capture rich, detailed insights into teachers' experiences in inclusive classrooms. It aligns with the research objectives by enabling exploration of both individual and collective factors influencing teacher preparedness.

3.3 Area of Study

The research was conducted in Kampala, Uganda, within the context of Harmony Academy, a primary and secondary school with a strong focus on inclusive education. This school was selected because of its diverse student population and the inclusion of students with special needs, providing a valuable context for examining teacher preparedness.

3.4 Target Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Techniques

Target Population

The study targeted teachers at Harmony Academy who are directly involved in inclusive education. This population consisted of approximately 30 teachers across the primary level.

Sampling Technique

A **purposive sampling** approach was used to select participants with relevant experience in inclusive classrooms. This ensured that the participants could provide rich, context-specific insights.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants were required to have experience teaching students with special needs and actively implement inclusive practices.

Sample Size: A total of 30 teachers were selected. This sample size was sufficient for in-depth qualitative exploration while remaining manageable for detailed analysis.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods were designed to provide deep insights into teachers' experiences and

perspectives.

Semi-structured Interviews: The primary data collection method involved semi-structured interviews with teachers. These interviews allowed for flexibility in questioning while ensuring that the research questions are addressed. The interviews were conducted one-on-one and are audio-recorded with participants' consent.

Interview Guide: A set of open-ended questions was developed to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, challenges, and strategies related to inclusive education.

Focus Group Discussions: Focus groups were conducted with a small number of teachers to facilitate dialogue on shared experiences and collective insights.

3.6 Research Tools for Data Collection

This is an outline of the tools used in the data collection process, tailored to the study

Semi-Structured Interview Guide:

Purpose: Gathered detailed insights into individual teachers' experiences, attitudes, and strategies for supporting inclusive education.

Structure: Organised according to the three study objectives.

Focus Group Discussion Prompts:

Purpose: Facilitated group discussion and captured collective experiences and suggestions.

Structure: Questions were designed to encourage dialogue and highlight common themes.

Tool Validation: All tools were reviewed by two experts in special needs education to ensure content validity and pre-tested with a small group of teachers before full deployment.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data analysis process in qualitative research focused on identifying themes and patterns from the collected data.

Cluster Analysis: Demographic data gathered from the respondents was analyzed using cluster analysis because they were of similar data points into clusters, identifying natural groupings within the data.

Thematic Analysis: Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved transcribing interview and focus group recordings, coding the data, and identifying key themes related to teacher preparedness and the factors influencing their ability to support students with special needs.

Steps in Analysis:

Data familiarization: Reading through transcripts to get an overall understanding.

Initial coding: Highlighting relevant data segments and assigning codes.

Theme development: Grouping related codes into broader themes.

Review and refinement: Refining themes based on the data's richness and depth.

Software: NVivo was used to assist with coding and theme development.

Member Checking: Participants were asked to review the findings to ensure that their perspectives were accurately represented.

3.8 Data Quality Control

Qualitative research emphasized the trustworthiness of data, ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the participants' experiences and perspectives.

Credibility: Triangulation (using multiple data sources, such as interviews and observations) was employed to enhance credibility. Member checking and peer debriefing are additional strategies used to confirm findings.

Transferability: Although findings are specific to Harmony Academy, detailed descriptions of the context were provided, allowing other educators and researchers to assess the applicability of

findings in different settings.

Dependability: A clear audit trail was maintained, documenting all steps of the research process, from data collection to analysis.

Confirmability: Reflexive journaling was used to minimize researcher bias and ensure that findings are rooted in the data rather than personal assumptions.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are critical in qualitative research, especially when working with human participants.

Informed Consent: All participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights. They signed a consent form before participating.

Confidentiality: Participants' identities were kept confidential, and data was anonymized during analysis and reporting.

Right to Withdraw: Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

Ethical Approval: The study received approval from the institutional review board (IRB) or ethics committee.

3.10 Limitations of the Study

This section discusses the limitations of the research methodology. For example:

Sample Size: The small sample size limited the generalizability of the findings but allowed for in-depth exploration of teacher experiences.

Subjectivity: Given the qualitative nature of the study, researcher bias influenced the interpretation of data; however, strategies such as reflexive journaling and triangulation mitigated this risk.

Context-Specific Findings: The study's findings were specific to Harmony Academy and were

not entirely applicable to other schools.

3.11 Variables and Indicators

Kerlinger (1986) defined a variable as a characteristic that assumes varying values. D'Amato (1970) defines variables as measurable properties of objects, events, entities, and beings. Postman and Egan (1949) define a variable as a characteristic or attribute capable of assuming multiple values; examples include the quantity of items solved by an individual on a specific test, response speed to a signal, IQ, sex, anxiety level, and varying degrees of illumination, all of which are frequently utilised in psychological research.

3.11.1 Dependent Variables (DVs):

This includes teacher adaptability, which reflects how well they adjust their teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning needs. Instructional quality to determine the effectiveness of lesson planning and delivery, while the use of inclusive teaching strategies involves applying specialized methods tailored to students with disabilities. Teacher self-efficacy plays a role in their confidence to teach special needs students, and collaboration with special needs support staff ensures teamwork with professionals like therapists and counselors. Professional development engagement highlights a teacher's commitment to continuous learning and training in inclusive education.

3.11.2 Independent Variables (IVs):

Individual teacher factors, such as teacher knowledge, training, experience, attitudes, beliefs, self-efficacy, motivation, and commitment, directly influence the effectiveness of implementing inclusive practices. Alongside these, school and institutional factors, including school policies, professional development opportunities, classroom resources, teaching aids, collaborative support systems, and the overall school culture and leadership, work together to create an environment that either supports or hinders inclusive education.

3.11.3 External Support Factors:

These involved student factors, government policies, community and parental support, the availability of specialized services, and research and development. These external elements provided a broader framework of support for teachers working in inclusive settings.

This chapter has detailed the research methodology, emphasizing its alignment with the study's objectives. By adopting a qualitative case study design, employing purposive sampling, and utilizing multiple data collection methods, the research aims to generate comprehensive insights into the factors influencing teacher preparedness for inclusive education. Ethical considerations and strategies to ensure trustworthiness further enhance the rigor of the study, laying the foundation for meaningful findings in subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 4 : PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings of the study. It summarizes the response rates, demographic characteristics of the participants, and the detailed analysis of the study objectives. The accessible population for the study consisted of 30 participants, out of which 29 participated in individual interviews conducted using an interview guide, representing a response rate of 96.67%. In addition, three focus group discussions were conducted instead of the four that had initially been planned, with some of the interview participants also contributing to these discussions to provide further collective insights.

According to **Mugenda and Mugenda (1999)**, in qualitative research the aim is not to generalize findings to a larger population but rather to obtain an in-depth understanding of phenomena from the perspectives of the participants. They further suggest that when quantitative response rates are considered, **50% is regarded as adequate, 60% as good, and 70% and above as very good.** Therefore, the response rate obtained in this study was considered satisfactory for the purposes of the research.

4.2 Social Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

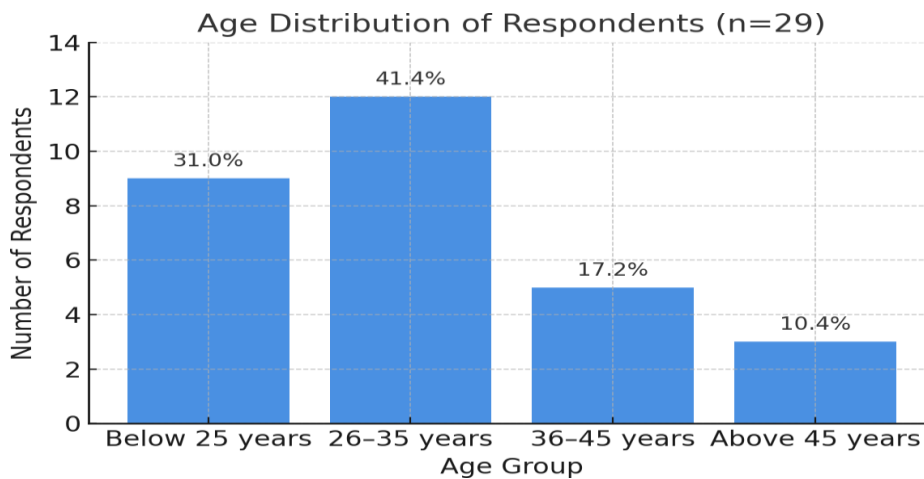
To establish the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, the study focused on key variables including age, gender, marital status, highest level of education attained, and the duration of employment at Harmony Academy. Understanding these demographic characteristics was essential for contextualizing the participants' perspectives and experiences. This background information enabled the researcher to appreciate the unique attributes of each respondent, which

may have influenced their perceptions and responses regarding inclusive education practices.

4.2.1 Age in Years of the Respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate their age by selecting one of four categories: Below 25 years, 26–35 years, 36–45 years, and Above 45 years. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics to show the distribution of participants by age. The results are presented below.

Figure 1 : Age of Respondents



Source: Primary Data 2025

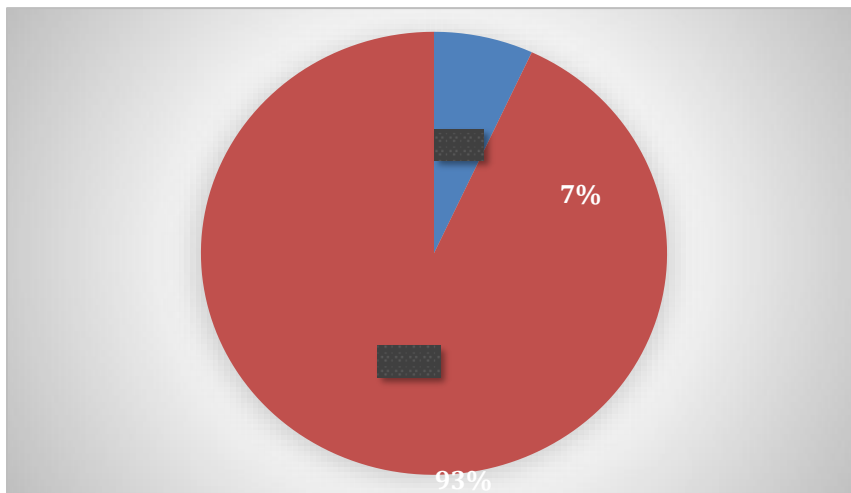
After analysis, the majority of respondents were aged 26–35 years, accounting for 12 participants (41.4%). This was followed by those aged below 25 years at 9 participants (31.0%), then those aged 36–45 years at 5 participants (17.2%), and finally, respondents aged above 45 years made up 3 participants (10.4%). The data suggest that the average age of respondents lies within the 26–35-year range. This indicates that Harmony Academy employs a relatively young workforce, which is likely to be dynamic, adaptable, and actively engaged in professional development. Such a demographic composition can positively influence the implementation of inclusive education

practices through openness to training and innovation.

4.2.2 Gender of the Respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate their gender by selecting one of two categories: male or female. This question was used to establish the gender distribution among participants, which can provide insight into workforce composition and potential gender-related perspectives on inclusive education. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and the results are presented in the pie chart below.

Figure 3: Gender of Respondents



Source: Primary Data 2025

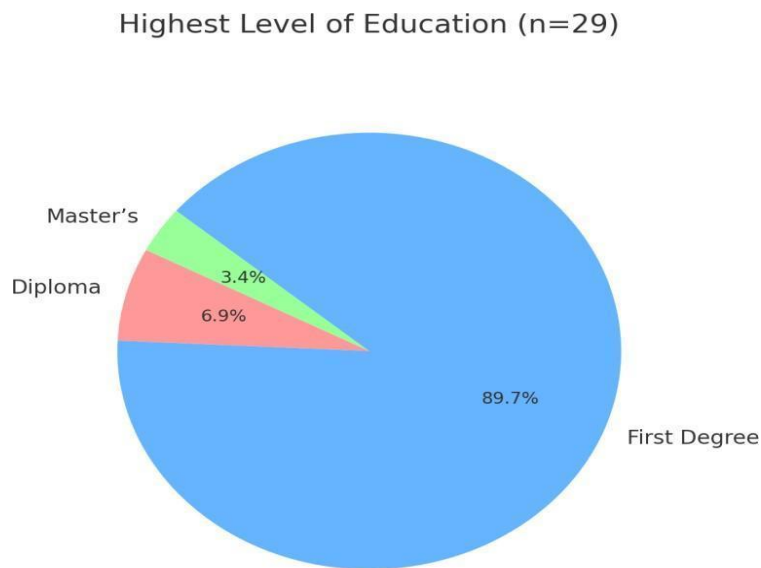
The pie chart shows that 27 out of 29 respondents (93.1%) were female, while only 2 respondents (6.9%) were male. This significant gender imbalance suggests that the teaching staff at Harmony Academy is predominantly female. The data reflects broader trends in the education sector, where female representation in teaching especially in primary education is typically higher. The small number of male participants limits gender-based comparisons in this study. However, the high

female representation may have positively influenced inclusive practices, as previous research indicates that women often demonstrate higher empathy and collaborative teaching behaviors, which are essential in inclusive classrooms.

4.2.3 Highest Level of Education of the Respondents

The research participants were asked to indicate their highest level of education attained. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and are presented in the chart below.

Figure 2 : Highest level of Education



Source: Primary Data, 2025

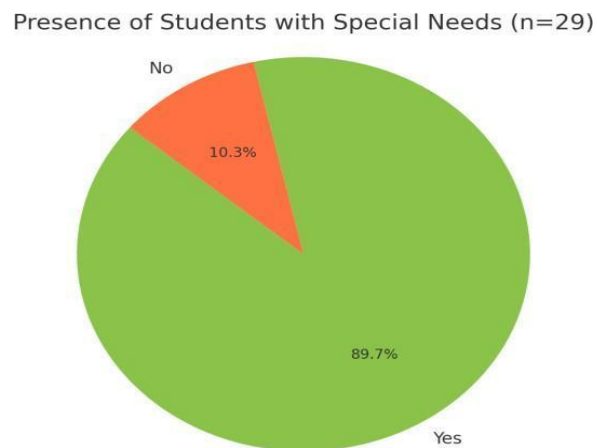
The chart shows that the vast majority of respondents were First Degree holders, accounting for 89.7% (26) of the sample. This was followed by Diploma holders at 6.9% (2) and Master's degree holders at 3.4% (1). None of the respondents held a Certificate or PhD qualification. These findings indicate a predominantly degree-qualified teaching staff at Harmony Academy. While postgraduate qualifications are limited, the high proportion of bachelor's degree holders suggests a solid academic foundation. This educational profile positions the school well to support effective

teaching and learning practices, particularly in implementing inclusive education strategies that cater to a broad spectrum of learners.

4.2.4 Presence of Students with Special Needs

Respondents were asked whether they currently have students with special needs in their classrooms or areas of interaction. This question aimed to establish the presence of learners with special needs in the school, as their inclusion directly impacts teaching strategies, resource allocation, and staff preparedness. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and are presented below.

Figure: Presence of Students with Special Needs



Source: Primary data 2025

As illustrated in the pie chart, the majority of respondents (89.7%) confirmed having students with special needs in their classes, while only 10.3% reported otherwise. This significant majority clearly indicates the presence of learners with diverse needs within the school. These findings underscore the critical importance of inclusive education strategies, teacher preparedness, and

appropriate resource provision to support the effective learning of all students, regardless of ability.

4.3 Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

This section presents the empirical findings of the study titled “A Case Study on Factors Influencing Teacher Preparedness to Support Students with Special Needs in Inclusive Classrooms at Harmony Academy in Kampala”. The study used a qualitative research design, and information was solicited through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The analyses were done with the assistance of the qualitative data-analysis package known as NVivo, which is the package that offers systematic organization, coding, and interpretation of textual materials. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns that kept reoccurring, it also led to the establishment of codes and central themes that reinforced the study objectives.

4.4 Teacher Preparedness in Supporting Students with Special Needs in the Inclusive Classrooms

Theme 1 - Teachers’ Experiences with Inclusive Education

The majority of educators in this study indicated direct engagement with kids with special needs, highlighting a range of experiences influenced by context and support. Some participants (e.g., R3, R4, R15) possessed extensive expertise with learners displaying varied needs such as ADHD, autism, or learning difficulties, whilst others (e.g., R2, R5, R18) characterised their initial experiences as overwhelming and disorganised. Numerous educators observed that interaction with these learners was transforming, enhancing their empathy and refining their classroom management and educational methods. Participants highlighted that inclusive education necessitated the use of more patient, flexible, and personalised teaching approaches. For example, R14 described collaborating with a student with autism who demonstrated exceptional skills in computers, emphasising how strengths-based methodologies uncover learner potential. However,

not all experiences were favourable. Numerous educators reported feeling inadequately prepared or unsupported, particularly in the initial stages. Members of the focus group (F1–F3) reiterated this dual reality: inclusive education was seen vital, yet challenging, and frequently lacking systemic support. The experiences of these educators illustrate the intricate and adaptable nature of inclusive practice, characterised by significant personal development alongside institutional deficiencies and resource constraints.

Theme 2 - Training and Professional Development

Training became a significant factor in teacher preparedness for inclusive education. Thematic coding identified persistent issue: the absence of structured, ongoing professional development in special needs schooling. Numerous educators (e.g., R2, R5, R7, R18) acknowledged their lack of formal training, instead depending on "on-the-job learning," online research, or counsel from colleagues. Certain individuals, such as R4 and R11, had undergone formal training in art therapy, behavioural techniques, or co-teaching methodologies. Nonetheless, there was a consensus among the trained individuals that more focused and continuous improvement was essential. Focus group findings from F1 and F3 highlighted this disparity: participants indicated that professional development predominantly emphasised general teaching, neglecting topics related to helping specific disorders such as autism or dyslexia. PD was occasionally characterised as erratic, discretionary, or superficial. Recommendations encompassed the implementation of obligatory, termly workshops and mentorship initiatives for educators unfamiliar with inclusive education. Teachers who participated in professional development exhibited increased confidence and enhanced capability to address the varied needs of learners. The statistics unequivocally indicate that although informal learning addresses certain deficiencies, comprehensive, systematic, and inclusive-specific training is crucial for teacher readiness and the sustainable execution of

inclusive practices.

School policies, professional development opportunities, and institutional support impact teachers' preparedness for inclusive education.

Theme 3 - Perceptions and Preparedness for Inclusive Teaching

Educators' perceptions of their readiness exhibited considerable variability and were intricately associated with their training, experience, and institutional backing. Certain participants (e.g., R3, R15, R11) had considerable confidence, attributing it to extensive experience, autonomous learning, and collaborative settings. In contrast, some (e.g., R2, R7, R18) perceived themselves as inadequately prepared to address the requirements of students with disabilities, assessing their confidence levels as low due to insufficient formal training or ambiguous expectations. Even certain educators recognised that inclusive teaching necessitated continual adjustment, as no two students are identical. The study identified multiple factors affecting teacher preparedness: school leadership, class size, resource availability, collaboration with specialists, and family involvement. R7 expressed confidence in addressing mild requirements but shown hesitation regarding severe disability, attributing this to a lack of competence. Focus group participants (F1–F3) underscored the necessity of empathy, open-mindedness, and differentiated education as essential components of inclusive teaching. A consistent trend in the data indicated that readiness enhanced over time when educators utilised support systems. The findings emphasise that although individual attitudes and experiences are important, structural variables and training play a crucial role in a teacher's capacity to teach inclusively.

Theme 4 – Institutional Support Structures for Inclusion

Institutional support surfaced as a significant theme, characterised by diverse experiences among schools. Numerous respondents (e.g., R1, R6, R10) characterised their institutions as possessing

specialised learner support teams, inclusive education coordinators, and policies such as Individualised Education Programs (IEPs) and differentiation frameworks. These institutions were commended for fostering circumstances conducive to the flourishing of inclusive practices. R3 acknowledged the significance of enrichment departments and classroom differentiation in enhancing learner outcomes. Nonetheless, discrepancies were also apparent. Educators (e.g., R12, R18) emphasised the inconsistency in policy execution, insufficient inter-departmental cooperation, and their isolation from decision-making processes related to student welfare. Focus group data provided nuance: F1 members expressed dissatisfaction that confidential student information was not disseminated to classroom teachers, hindering their ability to address learner needs effectively. Certain schools were identified as exceptionally supportive, offering sensory rooms, certified support aides, and frequent professional development. Others were devoid of even fundamental provisions. These differences underscore the essential importance of school leadership, strategic planning, and financial resources in facilitating or obstructing inclusive education. In contexts with robust institutional support, educators indicated elevated confidence, enhanced student outcomes, and increased collaboration. Consequently, institutional infrastructure functions as both a facilitator and a constraint of effective inclusive practice.

Theme 5 - Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education

Notwithstanding their dedication to inclusive education, educators indicated various obstacles that hindered its implementation. A prevailing topic was the deficiency of training, as articulated by R2, R5, and R7, who expressed feelings of inadequacy in addressing behavioural difficulties or formulating individualised strategies. Resource limitations constituted an additional concern. Educators such as R9 and R12 identified deficiencies in assistive equipment, educational resources, and classroom space, which impeded differentiated instruction. The prevalence of high

class sizes was often mentioned, hindering the provision of individualised help. Attitudinal obstacles were also significant. Certain educators (e.g., R13) observed that peers and parents sometimes shown opposition or had a lack of comprehension regarding inclusive principles. Focus groups corroborated this: F1 addressed societal stigmas and insufficient parental engagement at home. Furthermore, the inconsistency in interdepartmental coordination and the lack of well-defined inclusive policies intensified these issues. Despite the existence of explicit inclusion policies in schools, inconsistent implementation and inflexible curriculum frameworks, such as standardised exams, constrained adaptability. The statistics indicate that inclusive education requires more than teacher commitment; it necessitates structural modifications, changes in attitudes, and substantial institutional investment to address ongoing issues.

Theme 6 - External Engagement and Systemic Support

The findings revealed that support from parents, communities, and national systems was essential yet inconsistent. Participants expressed that parental involvement played a vital role in reinforcing inclusive practices. Parents who attended IEP meetings, communicated regularly, and provided emotional support at home enhanced learning continuity and student confidence. Focus group F3 noted that “parental support helps create a bridge between school and home,” making interventions more effective.

However, teachers also reported that many parents were unaware of their children’s learning needs or reluctant to participate due to stigma. This echoes Cullen et al.’s (2020) observation that school cultures must view learning challenges as opportunities for growth rather than student failings. Some teachers shared instances where community attitudes reinforced exclusion particularly in rural or conservative settings where disability remains misunderstood.

Participants also stressed the need for national education policies that are clear, inclusive, and

realistically implementable. Several respondents pointed out that while inclusion is mandated, the lack of systemic support such as funding, training, and specialized personnel renders implementation difficult. These findings resonate with the Salamanca Statement and highlight the need for policy-to-practice alignment.

Theme 7 - Effective Strategies for Overcoming Inclusion Barriers

Notwithstanding the hurdles, educators conveyed a variety of beneficial techniques they had implemented to promote inclusiveness. A consistent approach was differentiated education, wherein educators (e.g., R3, R11, R13) modified content, processes, and assessments to address individual requirements. The utilisation of visual aids, manipulatives, and assistive technology were prevalent instruments to assist learners with cognitive or language-based challenges. A further technique involved collaborative teaching, wherein educators closely collaborated with learning support assistants, co-designed curriculum, or sought counsel from specialists. R4 and F3 underscored the need of collaborative IEP formulation and collective accountability for educational results. Collaborative learning and group activities were employed to promote inclusive peer interactions. Educators often used internet resources and informal mentorship to address knowledge deficiencies, particularly in the absence of official training. Crucially, cultivating open communication with parents was regarded as essential for reinforcing learning and behavioural expectations at home. Educators emphasised the significance of affirmative teacher dispositions, patience, and adaptability. These findings indicate that although institutional support is crucial, ingenuity and cooperation among educators can substantially alleviate certain obstacles to inclusive practice.

CHAPTER 5 : DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses and elucidates the principal findings stated in Chapter Four. It situates the results within the extensive literature and theoretical frameworks previously examined, focusing on how the findings corroborate or contradict earlier assumptions and the researcher's hypotheses. The discourse is thematically organized, consistent with the objectives and emerging themes derived from the NVivo-coded analysis. It examines the practical realities of teacher readiness for inclusive education and correlates the findings with established theoretical and empirical knowledge.

5.2 Teacher Preparedness in Supporting Students with Special Needs in the Inclusive Classrooms

The initial theme examined instructors' practical experiences inside inclusive classrooms. The findings demonstrated that while some teachers (e.g., R3, R4, R15) had pleasantly engaged with students with special needs, many (e.g., R2, R5, R18) first felt overwhelmed, echoing the dual reality of inclusive education as both enriching and demanding. These findings align with Social Constructivist Theory, which asserts that knowledge is collaboratively created through experience and social interaction. Educators indicated that interaction with students with special needs improved their empathy and instructional innovation, affirming the transformative capacity of inclusive settings. This corresponds with Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), who underscore the significance of inclusive pedagogy in facilitating all learners via adaptable teaching methodologies. Nonetheless, the analysis corroborates Ainscow's (2021) warning that, in the absence of adequate institutional support, inclusion may devolve into tokenism. The varied

experiences advancement through practice, yet challenges stemming from insufficient systemic support affirm the initial assertion that teachers' experiences in inclusion are influenced by both individual disposition and institutional framework.

The research revealed that numerous educators lacked formal training in special needs education, instead depending on informal learning or peer assistance. This discovery aligns with international literature. Forlin (2010) contended that without comprehensive training, inclusive education plans may falter in their implementation. Respondents R2 and R7 articulated uncertainty in managing diseases such as autism or ADHD, corroborating the hypothesis that insufficient training adversely impacts teacher confidence and efficacy. The results robustly endorse the assertion that ongoing professional development is vital for teacher readiness. Focus group F3 indicated that training was inconsistent and lacked specificity, a criticism corroborated by Sharma et al. (2012), who noted that generic training seldom prepares teachers for the complexities of heterogeneous classrooms. The absence of training diminishes Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development in education; without expert direction, teachers find it challenging to realise their complete instructional capabilities. The results indicate a necessity for policy modification to incorporate systematic, continuous training designed for inclusive education requirements.

5.3 School Policies, Professional Development Opportunities, and Institutional Support Impact Teachers' Preparedness for Inclusive Education

Teachers' confidence levels varied in accordance with their access to resources, expertise, and support. Individuals with substantial teaching experience and previous involvement in inclusive

environments (e.g., R11, R15) expressed more confidence. Others, such as R18, felt inadequately prepared, despite their eagerness. These patterns support Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, which asserts that mastery experiences substantially enhance individuals' confidence in their abilities. The study's results corroborate the existing literature (Avramidis & Norwich, 2020), which determined that teacher attitudes, influenced by training and institutional environment, forecast successful inclusion. The focus group testimony about empathy, differentiation, and cooperation as fundamental elements of readiness exemplify the contemporary inclusive teaching philosophy. The data predominantly corroborate the research hypothesis that preparedness is not a fixed characteristic but develops through institutional support and teacher empowerment.

This study emphasises that institutional assistance via learner support teams, IEPs, and inclusive policies enhances effective inclusive education. Educators in institutions with organised assistance (e.g., R1, R6, R10) shown increased confidence and efficacy. Conversely, erratic policy execution and insufficient collaboration impeded practice in other areas (e.g., R12, R18). These findings corroborate the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner), which highlights the importance of institutional and policy contexts on individual development and behavior. Their findings align with the literature (UNESCO, 2009) that emphasises the importance of leadership and preparation for inclusive implementation. The results substantiate the assertion that, in the absence of coordinated institutional procedures, even well-meaning inclusive initiatives fail. Leadership commitment was correlated with enhanced morale, increased communication, and a collective sense of duty among personnel.

5.4 External Factors that Influence the Effective Implementation of Inclusive

Education

Participants identified insufficient training, inadequate resources, limited assistive technologies, elevated pupil-teacher ratios, and inflexible curricula as significant obstacles. These correspond with international studies (e.g., Mitchell, 2015) indicating that systemic barriers impede inclusive initiatives more significantly than teacher willingness. The frustration articulated by educators reflects the belief that policy alone is inadequate; it requires financial backing and operational support. The issue of stigma and insufficient parental collaboration, as noted by F1 and R13, highlights underlying cultural and societal perspectives, corroborating Cullen et al. (2020), who emphasise that inclusive schools must also focus on transforming community attitudes. These issues affirm that successful inclusion requires a collaborative effort among multiple stakeholders, since teachers cannot shoulder the entire responsibility alone.

Theme 6 findings emphasised that although parental participation and systemic support are essential, they are inconsistent. This reflects the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), which advocated for collective accountability among families, educational institutions, and governmental bodies. Participants highlighted that successful inclusion was more prevalent when parental involvement was present and policies were well-defined and well-funded. The lack of such support in certain instances reinforces the idea presented in earlier research (Loreman, 2007) that inclusion is unsuccessful when detached from wider societal frameworks. The findings confirm the study's hypothesis that external engagement is essential rather than ancillary to teacher readiness and student achievement in inclusive environments. Teachers utilised differentiated education, collaborative teaching, technology integration, and informal peer mentoring to surmount obstacles. This corresponds with Florian's (2014) Inclusive Pedagogy Approach, which promotes proactive

preparation and responsiveness instead of reactive remediation. The ingenuity and adaptability of teachers, even in resource-limited settings, substantiate the assertion that teacher agency—when facilitated by even minimum assistance can result in effective and meaningful inclusive practices. This further substantiates Slee’s (2011) viewpoint that inclusive education pertains to values and professional dedication as much as it does to practicalities.

5.5 Study Limitation

This study was limited to Harmony Academy, a single private school in Kampala, which may not fully represent the diversity of educational environments across Uganda. The results thereby capture the unique experiences, assets, and institutional frameworks of this school. They might not apply to rural areas, public schools, or other inclusive learning environments. The conclusions gained may not be as broadly applicable at other institutions due to the distinct circumstances at Harmony Academy, such as the availability of support staff or the dedication of the leadership. In addition, because of time and resource limitations, the study only looked at a few factors: teacher experiences, training, institutional support, and external participation. There was little investigation of other potentially significant factors, including national education policy frameworks, student characteristics, and curriculum design. Despite being useful for obtaining deep insights, the qualitative design mostly relied on self-reported data, which could be biased. These restrictions imply that more study with a wider range of inquiry and a more varied sample is required.

CHAPTER 6 : CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter draws conclusions from the empirical findings presented in Chapter Four and interpreted in Chapter Five. Each conclusion directly corresponds to the study objectives and reflects only what was derived from the qualitative data collected through interviews and focus groups at Harmony Academy. Based on these conclusions, practical recommendations are offered. The chapter concludes with a discussion, gives recommendations as well suggestions for future research.

6.2 Conclusions

Influence of Teacher Attributes on Preparedness

The study revealed that teacher attributes, particularly attitudes, past experience, and self-efficacy, substantially influenced readiness for inclusive education at Harmony Academy. Teachers with prior experience working with students with exceptional challenges (e.g., autism, ADHD, communication disorders) demonstrated higher adaptability and patience. However, experience alone was insufficient; the quality of experience, reflective learning, and intrinsic motivation played a crucial role. Teachers with higher self-efficacy actively pursued strategies, collaborated with colleagues, and adapted instruction to meet diverse learner needs.

Institutional Support and Policy Frameworks

Institutional support emerged as a key determinant of teacher preparedness. Participants reported that active learner support teams, effective Individualised Education Plan (IEP) systems, and collaborative practices fostered a supportive climate. Teachers who had access to co-teaching,

frequent staff meetings, and specialized educators reported higher confidence and competence. However, inconsistent policy implementation and limited administrative support hindered effective inclusive practices.

Role of Professional Development

Professional development (PD) substantially impacted teacher readiness for inclusive education. Many teachers reported a lack of formal training, and the PD they received was often too general. Workshops, peer observations, and short courses were valued but were most effective when practical, continuous, and aligned with classroom realities. Quantitative findings indicated that only a small portion of participants had received specialized training in inclusive education, confirming the need for targeted capacity-building.

Teacher Practices in Identifying and Supporting Learning Needs

Teachers primarily used informal methods, observation, student engagement, and formative assessments, to identify learning challenges. While these practices demonstrated initiative and responsiveness, they were often unstructured and insufficient for students with complex needs. Focus group discussions indicated a willingness to collaborate and adapt instruction, but the lack of formal assessment tools and structured approaches limited the effectiveness of their interventions.

External Support Factors (Parental and Community Engagement)

Parental and community engagement significantly influenced inclusive education. Teachers who maintained open communication with parents were better able to address student needs. Positive outcomes were observed when parents participated in IEP sessions or supported learning at home. However, engagement was inconsistent due to stigma, lack of awareness, or cultural perceptions of disability, limiting the overall effectiveness of classroom interventions.

Summary

The study demonstrated that teacher preparedness for inclusive education at Harmony Academy was influenced by individual attributes, institutional support, professional development, teaching practices, and external engagement. The findings are specific to the 30 teachers studied at this single school and provide in-depth insights into the factors affecting readiness for inclusive education. While not generalizable to other schools, the study offers a valuable understanding of the interplay between teacher characteristics, institutional structures, and external support in promoting effective inclusive practices.

6.3 Recommendations

Influence of Teacher Attributes on Preparedness

Enhance teacher training on inclusive education. The results indicated that many educators lack formal training in special needs education, which constrained their confidence and ability to implement inclusive strategies. Harmony Academy should establish continuous, organized professional development programs focusing on inclusive education. These should cover practical training in differentiated instruction, behavior management, IEP formulation, and collaboration with support personnel.

Training modules must be contextually relevant, reflecting classroom realities and employing case-based learning. Workshops, mentorship from special education professionals, and collaborative lesson preparation sessions can enhance competencies. Providing teachers with suitable knowledge and practical resources can directly improve classroom outcomes for students with special needs.

Promote Positive Teacher Attitudes and Self-Efficacy

Cultivate positive teacher attitudes and self-efficacy. The study indicated that confidence and

intrinsic motivation significantly influence inclusive teaching. Harmony Academy should foster a school culture that supports professional development and emotional well-being. Teachers should be supported through consistent recognition, professional learning groups, and safe spaces for discussing challenges.

Peer coaching, reflective journaling, and structured feedback cycles can cultivate optimistic mindsets. When teachers are confident in their ability to make an impact, they are more likely to engage innovatively and persistently with diverse learners.

Institutional Support and Policy Frameworks

Strengthen institutional support for inclusivity. School leadership should prioritize establishing robust internal frameworks that facilitate inclusive practices, including allocation of time and resources for team meetings, co-teaching, and monitoring student progress.

Policies should promote collaborative accountability between general educators and support personnel. Additionally, management must implement information-sharing policies that safeguard student privacy while ensuring teachers are adequately informed to provide effective support.

External Support Factors (Parental and Community Engagement)

Enhance parental and community engagement. Given the inconsistency of external interaction, Harmony Academy should implement regular parent outreach initiatives, including workshops and feedback sessions. These forums can clarify student needs, build trust, and encourage collaborative problem-solving between teachers and families.

Administrators can also collaborate with community leaders, local health organizations, and NGOs to raise awareness and mobilize resources. A supportive community network can significantly strengthen inclusive practices beyond the school.

Policy and Financial Backing at a Systemic Level

Promote systemic support for inclusive education. While school-level initiatives are important, overarching structural support remains insufficient. Harmony Academy should engage with education policymakers to secure funding, advocate for inclusive curriculum revisions, and influence national teacher training standards prioritizing special needs education.

Collaboration with the Ministry of Education, teacher training institutions, and civil society can enhance advocacy for inclusive policy frameworks, ensuring that inclusive education is prioritized and adequately supported at all levels.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

1. A similar study could be conducted across multiple schools or districts to allow for comparative analysis and greater generalizability.
2. Quantitative studies could be undertaken to measure the impact of specific training programs on teacher preparedness.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear respondent,

I am a student of Uganda Christian University pursuing a Masters in Master of Education Administration and Management. As part of the requirements for the award of this degree, I am undertaking a research study on “*factors influencing teacher preparedness to support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms at Harmony Academy in Kampala*”. You have been chosen to take part in this research to gather information about the subject. Please provide details based on your understanding, as the information shared will solely be used for research purposes and will be handled with confidentiality.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION (TICK YOUR RESPONSE) E.g.

Age

Below 25 yrs b) 26yrs - 35yrs c) 35yrs - 45yrs d) 45yrs +

Gender

Male b) Female

Highest level of education attained

Certificate b) Diploma c) First Degree d) Masters
e) PhD. f) Others (specify)

Work Experience (Number of years in the teaching profession)

Less than 1year b) Between 2 – 5 years
c) Between 6 – 10 years d) More than 10 years

Do you have students with special needs in your class or areas of interaction?

Yes

No

SECTION B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

General Background

1. Can you describe your experience working with students with special needs?
2. What training or professional development have you received on inclusive education?

Perceptions and Preparedness

1. How confident do you feel about supporting students with special needs in your classroom?
2. What factors do you believe influence your ability to teach inclusively?

Institutional Support

1. What resources or support systems does your school provide to assist with inclusive education?
2. Are there policies or practices at your school that help or hinder your work with special needs students?

Challenges and Solutions

1. What challenges do you face in implementing inclusive education practices?
2. What solutions or strategies have you found effective in overcoming these challenges?

Recommendations

1. What additional support or resources do you think would enhance your preparedness for inclusive education?
2. How do you envision the role of school leadership in fostering a more inclusive environment?

SECTION C: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Purpose: To encourage group dialogue among teachers, enabling the identification of shared experiences, challenges, and ideas for improving inclusive education

Initial Thoughts

1. What does inclusive education mean to you?
2. How does inclusive education impact your teaching approach?

Collaboration

1. How do you work with colleagues to support students with special needs?
2. What role do the teaching assistants or special education teachers play in your work?

Training and Resources

1. Are current training programs sufficient to prepare you for inclusive teaching?
2. What additional resources or support do you think are needed?

School Environment

1. How does your school's leadership and culture affect your ability to teach inclusively?
2. What role do parents and the community play in supporting inclusive education?

Looking Ahead

1. What changes would you recommend to improve teacher preparedness for inclusive education?
2. How can schools better support teachers in addressing the needs of students with special needs?

APPENDIX 2: LETTER OF APPROVAL



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY**

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

Office of the Vice Chancellor
Research Ethics Committee UG-026



03rd April, 2025

ROSYELENE AMPUMUZA
Uganda Christian University
+256 786059088
Email: lynmugisha222@gmail.com

UG-REC-026 APPROVAL NOTICE

To: Rosyelene Ampumuza, Principal Investigator

Re: UCU-REC Application titled: *Assessing Factors Influencing Teacher Preparedness to Support Students with Special Needs in Inclusive School Classrooms at Harmony Academy in Kampala (a pseudonym)*

Application Number: **UCUREC-2025-836**

Version: 4.1

Type: INITIAL REVIEW
 Protocol Amendment
 Letter of Amendment (LOA)
 Continuing Review
 Material Transfer Agreement
 Other, Specify:



I am pleased to inform you that the UG-REC-026; UCUREC approved the above referenced application.

Approval of the research is for the period from 03rd April, 2025, to 03rd April, 2026
This research is considered minimal risk category.

As Principal Investigator of the research, you are responsible for fulfilling the following requirements of approval:

1. All co-investigators must be kept informed of the status of the research.
2. Changes, amendments, and additions to the protocol or the consent form must be submitted to the REC for re-review and approval prior to the activation of the changes. The REC application number assigned to the research should be cited in any correspondence.
3. Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or other must be submitted to the REC. New information that becomes available which could change the risk: benefit ratio must be submitted promptly for REC review.

1 of 2

Research and Ethics

P.O. Box 4, Mukono, Uganda, Plot 67-173, Bishop Tucker Road, Mukono Hill
Tel: +256 (0) 312 350 885 Fax: +256 (0) 4142 90 800 Email: rec@ucu.ac.ug Web: www.ucu.ac.ug
UCUREC is accredited by Uganda National Council for Science & Technology, FDA, and National Institutes for Health of the United States of America



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Office of the Vice Chancellor
Research Ethics Committee UG-026



4. Only approved consent forms are to be used in the enrollment of participants. All consent forms signed by subjects and/or witnesses should be retained on file. The REC may conduct audits of all study records, and consent documentation may be part of such audits.
5. Regulations require review of an approved study not less than once per 12-month period. Therefore, a continuing review application must be submitted to the REC **eight weeks** prior to the above expiration date of 03rd April, 2026 in order to continue the study beyond the approved period. Failure to submit a continuing review application in a timely fashion may result in suspension or termination of the study, at which point new participants may not be enrolled and currently enrolled participants must be taken off the study.
6. The REC application number assigned to the research should be cited in any correspondence with the REC of record.
7. Your research details have been shared with the Executive secretary of Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) and you are not required to get clearance since you are a Master's Degree research. Refer to UNCST Research registration and clearance Policy and guidelines (July 2016) in Uganda section 6(e).

The following is the list of all documents approved in this application by UG-REC _026:

	Document Title	Language	Version	Version Date
1.	Protocol	English	1.0	2025-03-20
2.	Interview guides	English	1.0	2025-03-20
3.	Informed consent form	English	1.0	2025-03-20

Signed and Stamped

Prof. Peter Waiswa,
UCUREC Chairperson,
pwaiswa@musph.ac.ug



APPENDIX 3: CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: *A case study on factors influencing teacher preparedness to support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms at Harmony Academy in Kampala*

UCUREC INFORMED CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE

Title of Study:

No.	Name of Investigator	Designation	Address/Telephone/Email	Institution of Affiliation
1	Rosyelene Ampumuza	Principal Investigator	lynmugisha222@gmail.com	Uganda Christian University
2		Co-investigator/ Academic supervisor		
3		Co-investigator		

1. Introduction and rationale of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the factors influencing teacher preparedness in supporting students with special needs in inclusive school classrooms. It aims to provide a deeper understanding of how various elements—such as teacher training programs, available resources, and institutional support—either contribute to or hinder teachers' readiness.

This study aims to explore factors influencing teacher preparedness to support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms in Uganda. Despite policies promoting inclusion, teachers often feel unprepared due to inadequate training and resources. The research will assess the effectiveness of current teacher training programs and provide insights to improve teacher preparation, aligning with Uganda's commitment to inclusive education and Sustainable Development Goal 4. The findings will help shape future training initiatives and educational policies.

2. Description of the Research

Briefly describe how the study/research is designed

This study employs a qualitative research design to understand teachers' experiences,

UCUREC INFORMED CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE

attitudes, and perceptions related to supporting students with special needs in inclusive classrooms at Harmony Academy

in Kampala (a pseudonym)

3. Participation

Briefly mention who the participants are and why they are chosen to take part.

This study will involve 30 homeroom teachers with experience in inclusive classrooms, specifically focusing on supporting students with special needs, to ensure rich and detailed data collection.

4. Potential Risks and Discomforts

Participants may feel uncomfortable in their classrooms, fearing that any mistakes could be noted or scrutinized. However, all participants will be fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights. They will sign a consent form before participation, with their identities kept confidential and data anonymized during analysis and reporting. Participants will also be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

5. Potential Benefits

This research will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of teacher training programs and identify gaps in support for teachers working with students with special needs. The findings may help improve teacher preparedness, leading to more effective and inclusive classroom practices. Additionally, the research could inform educational policies and curriculum development, contributing to the enhancement of inclusive education in Uganda. It may also support the professional development of teachers by highlighting areas for further training and resource allocation, ultimately benefiting both educators and students.

UCUREC INFORMED CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE

6. Confidentiality

All participants will sign a consent form before participation, with their identities kept confidential and data anonymized during analysis and reporting. Participants will also be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

7. Procedure

The research will use purposive sampling to select approximately 30 teachers at Harmony Academy. Demographic factors such as years of experience, training background, and teaching levels will be considered and data collected through semi-structured interviews, guided by open-ended questions to explore teachers' experiences and challenges. Focus group discussions and classroom observations may also be conducted to gather additional insights into teaching practices and classroom dynamics. I will spend between 30-60 minutes with each participant for each of the methods used.

8. Voluntary Participation

Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide to not participate in this study, it will not affect your work in any way.

9. Withdrawal from the Study and/or Withdrawal of Authorization

As a participant in this study, you can withdraw at any point if you choose not to continue. Give the participant confidence that they have rights and freedom on any decision they want regarding the study. Participants can even choose particular questions/engagements in the process, not the entire time.

10. Reimbursements

Reimbursement which is equivalent to Ugx 10,000 for you. This can be in transport, time compensation, drinks and food/snacks.

11. Whom to contact in case of ethical-related concerns.

UCUREC INFORMED CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE

a) Prior Ethical approvals and permissions.

None

b) Local authorities and approvals.

This study was Approved by Uganda Christian University Research Ethics Committee (UCU-REC) and cleared by Uganda national Council for Science and Technology (UNCST), In case of any Ethical or your rights related concerns or inquiries, please contact UCUREC Chairperson; Prof. Peter Waiswa, 0772405357, pwaiswa@musph.ac.ug or UCUREC Manager, Mr. Osborn Ahimbisibwe, 0775737627 or oahimbisibwe@ucu.ac.ug. UNCST: Tel; +256 414 705500, info@uncst.go.ug

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

Do you accept to be recorded?

Yes

No

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research program; to tick appropriately

Yes

No.

I understand that I will be given a copy of this signed Consent Form.

Name of Participant:

Signature:

Date:

Name of Researcher/designee:

Signature:

Date:

NOTE: Depending on the nature of participants, witnesses or guardians (for minors & other vulnerable groups) will be required.

APPENDIX 4: PLAGIARISM REPORT





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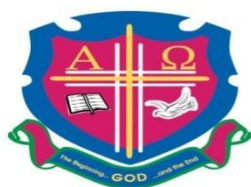
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7.3.3 Dissertation Correction Compliance form (Post Viva Form)



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SCHOOL OF RESEARCH & POSTGRADUATE STUDIES DISSERTATION CORRECTION COMPLIANCE FORM (POST VIVA FORM)

Date: 12.03.2026

Name of Candidate: Rosyelene Ampumuza Reg.No: RJ23M50/002

Title of Dissertation: A Case Study on Factors Influencing Teacher Preparedness to Support Students with Special Needs in Inclusive Classrooms at Harmony Academy in Kampala


S/N	COMMENTS BY EXTERNAL EXAMINER	ACTION TAKEN	INDICATOR
1	Clarify the operational definitions used in the study.	The operational definitions were revised and clearly articulated to ensure that key concepts used in the study are well defined within the research context.	Chapter 1: Definition of Operational Terms section
2	Restructuring of the topic/title	The research title was restructured and refined to improve clarity and better reflect the focus of the study.	Title page
3	Correct cover page to conform to required style	The cover page was revised to align with the required formatting and institutional guidelines.	Cover page
4	Historical background from broad to narrow	The historical background section was reorganized to present information in a logical flow from the broader context to the specific focus of the study.	Chapter 2: Historical Background
5	Including the theoretical perspective	The theoretical perspective was incorporated to strengthen the conceptual foundation of the study.	Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework
6	Improve background of the study	The background of the study was expanded and refined to provide clearer context and justification for the research.	Chapter 1: Background of the Study
7	Problem statement cleared	The problem statement was revised and clarified to present the research problem more precisely.	Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem

S/N	COMMENTS BY INTERNAL EXAMINER	ACTION TAKEN	INDICATOR
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1	Historical perspective	The historical perspective section was revised and clarified to ensure a clearer presentation of the development and context of the study topic.	Chapter 2: Historical Perspective
2	Statement of the problem and purpose of the study	The statement of the problem and the purpose of the study were reviewed and revised to improve clarity and alignment with the focus of the research.	Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem & Purpose of the Study
3	Clearly state that the research is qualitative	The research design was clarified to explicitly indicate that the study follows a qualitative approach.	Chapter 3: Research Design
4	Add references	Additional relevant references were incorporated and some existing citations were amended to strengthen the academic support of the study.	Chapters 1 and 2
5	Improve wording in Chapter 4	The wording in Chapter 4 was revised and refined to improve clarity and presentation of the findings.	Chapter 4
6	Clearly state which methods were used to avoid ambiguity	The methods section was revised to explicitly state the qualitative methods employed, ensuring clarity and removing any potential ambiguity.	Chapter 3: Research Design & Data Collection

S/N	COMMENTS BY VIVA VOCE PANEL	ACTION TAKEN	INDICATOR
1	Rephrasing the topic	The research topic/title was rephrased and refined to clearly reflect the focus and scope of the study.	Title page
2	Pick out relevant theories and explain their relation	Relevant theories were selected, described, and clearly linked to the study objectives to strengthen the theoretical foundation.	Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework
3	Explain why interviews and the research design were used	The choice of qualitative research design and use of interviews was explicitly explained, justifying the methodology in relation to the study's objectives.	Chapter 3: Research Design & Data Collection

Candidate's Name Rosyelene Ampumuza

Signature 

Supervisor's Name/ REV. DR. Henry Majwala

Signature 

NB: Post Viva compliance form is designed to capture all the corrections recommended by internal examiner (supervisor), external examiner and viva panel.