

Teachers' Preparedness for Implementing Inclusive Education in Mainstream Classrooms: An Integrative Review of Evidence from Namibian Schools

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ABSTRACT

Namibia has established a strong policy commitment to inclusive education, yet the practical readiness of mainstream teachers remains uneven. This critical integrative review examined how training, professional knowledge, attitudes, material and specialist support, and confidence shape teachers' preparedness to teach learners with special educational needs. Namibia-focused empirical studies, policy documents and selected comparative scholarship published from 2013 to August 2026 were searched, appraised and synthesised thematically. The evidence indicates that teachers generally endorse the principle of inclusion and express a strong demand for professional learning. However, endorsement does not consistently translate into instructional readiness. Knowledge gaps in differentiated instruction, assessment, behaviour support, individualised planning and disability-specific communication coexist with large classes, inflexible curricula, limited assistive materials and uneven access to specialist services. Confidence is therefore best understood as context-dependent rather than as a stable personal attribute. The review proposes a Preparedness-in-Context framework in which capability, professional agency and enabling school conditions operate together. It recommends practice-based pre-service preparation, sustained school-embedded professional development, functioning learning-support teams, regional specialist outreach and routine monitoring of inclusive practice. A nationally representative mixed-methods study is needed to establish regional patterns and connect teacher preparedness to classroom practice and learner outcomes.

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1. Introduction

Inclusive education is not achieved by placing a learner with additional support needs in an ordinary classroom and assuming that participation will follow. It requires teachers who can recognise barriers to learning, vary instruction without lowering expectations, work with families and specialists, manage a diverse classroom and judge whether each learner is genuinely participating. In Namibia, these demands are especially important because mainstream schools are expected to accommodate a widening range of learning needs while specialist provision remains limited and geographically uneven.

Namibia's Sector Policy on Inclusive Education places presence, acceptance, participation and achievement at the centre of educational provision. Its strategies call for attitudinal change, instructional development, curriculum responsiveness, broader educational support, strengthened teacher education and sustained in-service development (Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture [MoEAC], 2013). The Curriculum Framework for Inclusive Education extends this commitment by treating learner diversity as an ordinary feature of schooling rather than an exception to be managed elsewhere (National Institute for Educational Development [NIED], 2018). The policy direction is therefore clear: responsibility for inclusion belongs to the education system as a whole and to every teacher within it.

The difficulty lies in implementation. Namibia has a small number of designated inclusive and resource schools, while many mainstream schools admit learners with special educational needs without the same concentration of specialist staff, accessible infrastructure or learning materials. Evidence from Namibia repeatedly identifies gaps between policy intentions and classroom conditions (Martínez Madrid, 2015; Mokaleng & Möwes, 2020; Sheetheni, 2021). These gaps are often described as a lack of teacher preparedness,

but the term is used inconsistently. In some studies it denotes formal training; in others it refers to knowledge, confidence, attitudes, practical competence or access to resources. Treating these dimensions as interchangeable obscures why a willing and knowledgeable teacher may still struggle in an overcrowded classroom without assessment support or accessible materials.

This review addresses that conceptual and practical problem by synthesising Namibian evidence through five connected dimensions: training, knowledge, attitudes, resources and confidence. It asks three questions: (1) What does existing evidence show about mainstream teachers' preparedness to support learners with special educational needs in Namibia? (2) How do personal capability and school-level conditions interact to enable or constrain inclusive practice? and (3) What priorities follow for teacher education, professional development, school leadership and research? The contribution is a context-sensitive account of preparedness that moves beyond blaming individual teachers and identifies the conditions under which inclusive competence can be enacted.

1.1. Conceptualising teacher preparedness

Preparedness is defined here as a teacher's demonstrated readiness and practical capacity to plan, teach, assess and collaborate in ways that enable diverse learners to participate and progress. It contains three mutually dependent elements. Capability comprises relevant knowledge and pedagogical skill. Professional agency comprises attitudes, commitment and confidence to act. Enabling conditions comprise time, class size, leadership, curriculum flexibility, accessible resources and specialist support. This formulation draws on inclusive pedagogy, which extends learning opportunities available to everyone instead of planning a standard lesson and then attaching remedial alternatives for selected learners (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). It also reflects evidence that self-efficacy

in inclusive instruction, collaboration and behaviour support can be measured as distinct but related capacities (Sharma et al., 2012).

The distinction matters. Training can increase knowledge while simultaneously making teachers more aware of the complexity of inclusion and therefore more cautious about their readiness (Forlin & Chambers, 2011). Similarly, positive attitudes do not guarantee effective practice when teachers lack materials, collaboration time or specialist advice. Comparative evidence associates stronger self-efficacy, particularly confidence in collaboration with more favourable attitudes towards inclusion (Savolainen et al., 2012). Preparedness should therefore be evaluated through both what teachers bring to the classroom and what the education system makes possible there.

2. Methodology

2.1. Review design and scope

A critical integrative review design was used because the Namibia-specific evidence is methodologically diverse and includes surveys, qualitative case studies, postgraduate research, policy documents and institutional reports. A statistical meta-analysis would have implied a level of comparability that the available studies do not support. The review instead combined systematic searching with interpretive thematic synthesis. The unit of analysis was any document that provided evidence about teachers' training, knowledge, attitudes, confidence, classroom practices or enabling conditions for inclusive education in Namibian mainstream or closely related school settings.

2.2. Search and selection procedures

Searches were conducted in August 2026 across ERIC, the University of Namibia repository, Stellenbosch University's research repository, the UNESCO Digital Library and journal publisher platforms. Search strings combined Namibia with inclusive education, special educational needs, teacher preparedness, teacher training, teacher attitudes, self-efficacy, mainstream classroom, resources, learning support and differentiated instruction. Reference lists of eligible documents

were examined to identify earlier Namibia-focused work and high-relevance comparative studies.

Documents were eligible when they were published in English from 2013 to August 2026; focused on Namibia or supplied a directly relevant conceptual or measurement framework; and reported sufficient information about methods, policy content or evidence. Commentaries without an identifiable evidence base, duplicated versions and studies dealing only with learner placement without implications for teacher practice were excluded. The final analytical corpus comprised nine Namibia-focused empirical studies, four national or international policy and institutional documents, and six comparative or conceptual sources. Additional legal and contextual documents were used to frame the discussion but were not coded as preparedness evidence.

2.3. Appraisal and synthesis

Each source was read for research setting, participants or document type, evidence relevant to the five preparedness dimensions, methodological limitations and implications for implementation. Empirical studies were appraised for alignment between questions, sampling, data collection and claims. Policy documents were assessed for clarity of responsibilities and correspondence between policy expectations and the implementation evidence. Findings were coded deductively under training, knowledge, attitudes, resources/support and confidence, while inductive coding captured cross-cutting issues such as workload, leadership, rurality, curriculum pressure and collaboration. Contradictory findings were retained rather than averaged away. The synthesis therefore distinguishes broad convergence from context-specific observations.

2.4. Ethical considerations

The review analysed publicly available publications and policy documents. It did not recruit human participants, access identifiable personal data or conduct secondary analysis of restricted datasets. Institutional review-board approval and informed consent were therefore

not applicable. Sources were represented through paraphrase and citation, and no unpublished personal information was used.

3. Results

3.1. Profile of the Namibian evidence

The evidence base is modest and concentrated in a small number of regions and schools. It

nevertheless shows consistent patterns across quantitative surveys and qualitative studies. Table 1 summarises the sources that most directly inform the synthesis. The strongest quantitative evidence comes from surveys of teachers in several regions and in Omaheke; qualitative studies add detail about what knowledge and support gaps look like in practice.

Table 1. Selected Namibia-focused evidence on teacher preparedness

Source	Design/context	Contribution to the synthesis
Chitiyo et al. (2016)	Survey; 125 teachers across levels	Only 14% held special-education certification; strong demand for professional development, particularly in instructional organisation, learning strategies and behaviour support.
Chitiyo et al. (2019)	Multi-country survey; Namibia n = 125	Teachers supported inclusion and rated a broad range of professional-development topics highly; the study also identified resource and working-condition constraints.
Mokaleng and Möwes (2020)	Survey; 90 secondary teachers, Omaheke	Preparedness was constrained by knowledge gaps, limited confidence, negative attitudes under weak support, inadequate resources, large classes and curriculum pressure.
Martinez Madrid (2015)	Qualitative policy-to-practice study	Reported a persistent implementation gap and uneven understanding of inclusive policy and classroom responsibilities.
Shiimi (2018); Naholo (2020)	School case studies, northern Namibia	Teachers used local adaptations but reported insufficient training, materials and specialist guidance for sustained support.
Sheetheni (2021)	Qualitative study, mainstream schools, Oshana	School environments, resources and implementation support did not consistently match policy expectations.
Ambili et al. (2024)	Qualitative case study, Oshana resource school	Staff capability, accessible infrastructure, learning resources and curriculum responsiveness interacted in determining participation for learners with multiple disabilities.

The corpus is also uneven by evidence type. The survey studies provide the clearest numerical indications of certification, perceived knowledge, confidence, workload and support needs,

whereas the case studies explain how those constraints appear in lesson planning, communication, assessment and referral. Policy and institutional documents specify the expected

direction of reform but do not, on their own, establish the extent of classroom enactment. Consequently, the synthesis gives greatest weight to patterns that recur across more than one source type and treats single-site observations as context-specific signals rather than national estimates.

Coverage is stronger for teachers' perceptions and reported constraints than for observed teaching quality or learner outcomes. No included source supplies nationally representative estimates across all fourteen regions, and no common preparedness instrument is used throughout the Namibian studies. The findings below therefore describe convergence, variation and evidential gaps; they should not be read as pooled prevalence rates.

3.2. Training and professional learning

Training is the most consistently documented preparedness gap. In the national professional-development survey, only 14% of participating teachers held special-education certification, while teachers rated the importance of further professional learning very highly (Chitiyo et al., 2016). Their priorities were practical: discipline and behaviour management, organising instruction, learning strategies and instructional methods. The later regional comparison likewise found strong interest in professional development across numerous special and inclusive education topics (Chitiyo et al., 2019). These results do not indicate resistance to inclusion; they show teachers asking for usable knowledge.

The type of training matters. Short policy-orientation workshops may improve awareness but are unlikely to establish competence in assessment, differentiation, individualised planning, communication support or collaborative problem-solving. The evidence favours repeated, practice-based learning in which teachers examine learner work, rehearse adaptations, observe inclusive lessons, receive coaching and return with evidence of classroom application. Pre-service preparation should therefore combine a compulsory inclusive-education foundation with supervised experience

in diverse classrooms. In-service provision should be organised around problems teachers actually encounter rather than around broad policy messages.

Across the training evidence, three layers of need are visible. The first is foundational understanding of inclusive education and teacher responsibility. The second is a repertoire of classroom practices, including differentiation, formative assessment, positive behaviour support and accessible communication. The third is collaborative competence: documenting concern, discussing learner evidence with colleagues and families, and using referral or specialist pathways appropriately. The available studies most consistently demonstrate demand at the second and third layers, where policy awareness must be converted into repeatable instructional action.

The evidence does not establish that attendance at a workshop produces durable practice. Studies primarily record qualifications, prior exposure or perceived professional-development priorities, while follow-up observation and learner-level evaluation are uncommon. Training quantity and training effectiveness must therefore remain distinct results: teachers report substantial unmet demand, but the optimum duration, delivery model and coaching intensity for Namibian schools have not yet been tested comparatively.

3.3. Knowledge for inclusive classroom practice

Knowledge gaps extend beyond disability labels. In Omaheke, 82.2% of surveyed teachers agreed that teachers lacked knowledge for working with learners with special needs, while 94.4% supported in-service training and 93.3% stated that sufficient training was needed for implementation (Mokaleng & Möwes, 2020). Case-study evidence similarly points to difficulties with early identification, curriculum adaptation, accessible communication, individualised support, assessment and referral pathways (Naholo, 2020; Sheeya, 2018; Shiimi, 2018). The required knowledge is both pedagogical and organisational: teachers need to know how to broaden participation in the lesson

and how to mobilise help when classroom-level adaptation is insufficient.

Disability-specific knowledge remains necessary, particularly for communication, accessibility and safety, but it should not replace inclusive pedagogy. Ambili et al. (2024) showed that even a resource school organised around sensory disabilities struggled when learners presented multiple and intersecting needs. This finding cautions against a training model built around fixed categories. Teachers need a functional understanding of barriers—communication, mobility, sensory access, cognition, behaviour and social participation—alongside strategies that can be adjusted to the learner and context.

A further result is the fragmentation of practical knowledge. Teachers may know a general principle such as adapting instruction but remain uncertain about choosing an adaptation, documenting its purpose and evaluating whether it improves access. Case evidence describes this gap in relation to communication, curriculum modification and individual support. Knowledge of isolated techniques is therefore reported more often than an integrated cycle of identifying a barrier, selecting a response, monitoring participation and revising the response.

3.4. Attitudes and professional responsibility

Namibian teachers generally support the principle that learners with disabilities should learn with their peers, but attitudes become more cautious when inclusion is associated with additional workload and weak support. In Omaheke, 78.9% agreed that teacher attitudes influence implementation, 63.3% felt inclusion makes too many demands on teachers, and 84.5% linked lack of support to more negative attitudes (Mokaleng & Möwes, 2020). Attitudes are therefore not simply prior beliefs carried into school. They are also responses to repeated experience. When teachers are held responsible for outcomes without time, materials or specialist assistance, frustration can harden into resistance.

This interpretation is consistent with international evidence showing that training and direct experience of inclusion are associated with more favourable attitudes, although attitudes vary

according to perceived support and the nature of learners' needs (de Boer et al., 2011). Professional development should address beliefs explicitly, but it should do so alongside visible improvements in support. Teachers are more likely to accept responsibility for diverse learners when the institution accepts responsibility for enabling their work.

The attitude findings are not uniform endorsement or uniform resistance. They indicate conditional support: acceptance of the principle of inclusion is generally stronger than confidence that it can be implemented under existing workload and support conditions. This distinction recurs across the evidence and helps account for apparently contradictory responses in which teachers endorse learners' right to participate while also reporting that inclusion places excessive demands on the classroom teacher.

3.5. Confidence and self-efficacy

Confidence appears to be the weakest individually reported dimension. Only 37.8% of the Omaheke respondents agreed that teachers were confident enough to implement inclusive education; 35.6% were unsure (Mokaleng & Möwes, 2020). Confidence cannot be inferred from positive attitudes or years of service. It develops through successful performance, feedback, collaboration and access to strategies that produce observable learner progress. The Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices framework is useful because it separates efficacy for inclusive instruction, collaboration and behaviour management rather than treating confidence as a single global feeling (Sharma et al., 2012).

The Namibian evidence suggests that confidence is relational. A teacher may feel capable of varying written tasks but not of teaching a learner who uses Braille, augmentative communication or sign language. The same teacher may cope well when a learning-support team is active and feel overwhelmed when referrals produce no response. Measures of preparedness should consequently ask what teachers feel able to do,

for which learners, with what support and under which classroom conditions.

Confidence is most defensible when reported at task level. The corpus distinguishes, at least implicitly, between confidence in ordinary instructional adaptation, confidence in managing behaviour, and confidence in collaboration or disability-specific communication. Because the studies do not consistently use the same subscales, direct comparison is limited. Nevertheless, low global confidence alongside strong requests for practical training suggests that perceived readiness is linked to opportunities for supported performance, not merely to favourable beliefs.

3.6. Resources, leadership and specialist support

Resources are not an optional backdrop to preparedness. In the Omaheke survey, 96.6% supported adequate resource allocation, 93.3% called for support to mainstream teachers, and 91.2% regarded specialist backup as essential (Mokaleng & Möwes, 2020). Large classes, inaccessible facilities, limited assistive materials, scarce adapted texts and delays in specialist assessment reduce teachers' ability to apply what they know. Curriculum pressure compounds the problem: 63.3% of respondents viewed the curriculum as too content-loaded for effective inclusion, and 76.7% believed that following it in detail made attention to learners with special needs difficult.

Leadership mediates these conditions. Supportive principals can protect collaboration time, organise school-based learning-support teams, use available funds for accessible materials, coordinate referrals and make inclusive participation part of instructional supervision. Regional resource schools can contribute through outreach, demonstration lessons and mobile specialist support rather than functioning

mainly as alternative placements. Namibia's good-practice documentation similarly recommends continuous teacher workshops and stronger monitoring and support networks between schools (UNESCO, 2022).

Resource constraints also cluster rather than occur independently. A large class reduces the time available for individual assessment; curriculum pressure narrows the space for flexible pacing; limited materials restrict the adaptations a teacher can attempt; and delayed specialist response leaves the teacher without feedback on difficult cases. The evidence therefore records a cumulative implementation burden. It does not permit a precise ranking of these constraints, but it consistently shows that access to one resource cannot fully compensate for several simultaneous deficiencies.

The studies offer less information about how enabling conditions vary between rural and urban settings, primary and secondary phases, or subjects with different practical and assessment demands. Rurality is frequently relevant to distance from services and resource concentration, yet the current corpus is too geographically uneven to quantify a rural-urban preparedness gap. This absence is itself an important result for interpreting national policy claims.

3.7. An integrated pattern

Across the five dimensions, the central finding is that preparedness is conditional and uneven rather than absent. Teachers often possess commitment without sufficient knowledge, knowledge without materials, or training without sustained coaching. These partial combinations produce fragile practice. The evidence supports a Preparedness-in-Context framework in which inclusive teaching is most likely when three conditions coincide: professional capability, agency to act and an enabling school system.

Table 2. Preparedness-in-Context framework for Namibian mainstream schools

Element	Preparedness dimensions	Observable indicators
Professional capability	Training and knowledge	Differentiated planning; formative assessment; accessible communication; behaviour support; individualised planning; referral knowledge
Professional agency	Attitudes and confidence	Responsibility for all learners; willingness to adapt; confidence in instruction, collaboration and behaviour support; reflective problem-solving
Enabling conditions	Resources and institutional support	Manageable class organisation; accessible materials; curriculum flexibility; protected collaboration time; leadership; functioning support teams and specialist outreach

3.8. Convergence, boundary conditions and evidence strength

Four conclusions receive support from both numerical and qualitative evidence. First, teachers want more practical professional learning. Second, instructional and organisational knowledge remains uneven. Third, confidence and attitudes are sensitive to workload, support and prior experience. Fourth, accessible resources, leadership and specialist assistance determine whether professional capability can be enacted. Table 3 separates these convergent results from the principal qualifications attached to them.

Table 3. Convergent results, qualifications and remaining evidence gaps

Dimension	Convergent result	Qualification in the evidence
Training	Demand for further professional learning is consistently high.	Existing studies report participation, certification and perceived needs more often than observed transfer into classroom practice.
Knowledge	Teachers report gaps in differentiation, assessment, communication, behaviour support and referral procedures.	Evidence is strongest for perceived knowledge and case-based implementation challenges; direct knowledge testing is rare.

Dimension	Convergent result	Qualification in the evidence
Attitudes and confidence	Support for inclusion coexists with workload concerns and limited confidence under weak support.	Measures are mainly self-reported and may vary by learner need, subject, school phase and available assistance.
Resources and support	Materials, manageable organisation, leadership, curriculum flexibility and specialist backup condition implementation.	The relative contribution of each school- and region-level factor has not yet been estimated nationally.
Practice and learner outcomes	Local adaptations are reported, but sustained inclusive practice is fragile when capability or support is incomplete.	Few studies connect teacher preparedness to systematic classroom observation, participation, attainment or longer-term learner outcomes.

3.9. Patterns of absence and uncertainty

The corpus contains little direct evidence on the fidelity, frequency or quality of inclusive classroom practices. Lesson observations, adapted assessment samples, records of support-team decisions and learner-participation measures are uncommon. Evidence is also limited for the perspectives of learners with disabilities and their families, despite their importance in judging whether placement results in meaningful participation.

Longitudinal evidence is absent from the reviewed Namibia-focused studies. It is therefore not possible to determine whether changes in teacher confidence persist, whether professional learning alters practice over time, or whether school-level support reduces referral delays and improves learner progression. These

uncertainties define the boundary of the present results and identify the outcomes that future evaluation should measure.

4. Discussion

The synthesis changes the question from whether Namibian teachers are prepared to what combination of capacities and conditions allows them to act inclusively. This is more than a semantic adjustment. A narrow deficit account positions the teacher as the failure point between policy and practice, whereas inclusive reform depends on coordinated change across the education system (Ainscow, 2020). The evidence instead shows a chain of interdependence. Teachers need knowledge to choose appropriate adaptations, confidence to attempt them, attitudes that sustain responsibility for every learner, and institutional conditions that make the

adaptations feasible. Weakness in one part of the chain can neutralise strength elsewhere.

The Preparedness-in-Context framework also explains why apparently successful inputs may yield weak outcomes. A trained teacher may be unable to differentiate consistently in a crowded class without adapted materials or planning time. A well-resourced school may still exclude learners if staff regard difference as somebody else's responsibility. A confident teacher may exhaust personal effort when referral and specialist systems do not respond. Preparedness is thus a property of the teacher-in-system relationship rather than a fixed trait located solely in the individual.

This interpretation extends inclusive pedagogy by identifying the organisational conditions required for teachers to broaden participation in routine lessons. It also qualifies self-efficacy explanations: mastery experience can strengthen confidence, but the opportunity to achieve mastery depends on feasible tasks, feedback and institutional follow-through. In the Namibian context, capability, agency and enabling conditions should be treated as complementary targets of reform.

4.1. Implications for teacher education

Initial teacher education should treat inclusive practice as a core teaching competence across subjects and phases, consistent with the principle that all teachers must be prepared to teach all learners (UNESCO, 2020). A single stand-alone module is unlikely to transfer into mathematics, languages, practical subjects and assessment unless inclusive planning is also modelled in methods courses and practicum supervision. Every student teacher should have supported experience of planning for learner variability, using accessible resources, adapting assessment and collaborating with school support personnel. Assessment of student teachers should include evidence that they can explain the barrier being addressed, justify the adaptation and evaluate its effect on participation and learning.

For serving teachers, professional development should move from episodic workshops to school-embedded cycles. A feasible cycle would begin with a local learner-participation problem,

introduce a small set of relevant strategies, support collaborative lesson planning, observe implementation and review learner evidence. Regional facilitators and resource-school specialists could coach clusters of schools, with face-to-face demonstrations supplemented by low-bandwidth digital materials. This approach is more likely to build mastery and confidence than information-heavy training detached from classroom follow-up.

Programme design should specify observable competencies rather than exposure alone. By graduation or completion of an in-service cycle, a teacher should be able to identify a participation barrier from learner evidence; design more than one route to the lesson objective; select an accessible assessment response; collaborate on a support plan; and explain how the resulting evidence will inform the next lesson. Portfolios, observed teaching and moderated case analyses are better aligned with these competencies than attendance certificates or recall-focused tests.

The separation of pre-service and in-service provision should also be reduced. Teacher-education institutions can maintain partnerships with demonstration schools, while regional specialists can contribute authentic cases and co-assess practicum evidence. Graduates would then enter service with routines that schools recognise and can continue, rather than encountering an entirely different support language after qualification.

4.2. Implications for schools and regional support

School leadership should make inclusion visible in ordinary routines. Learning-support teams require named members, scheduled meetings, documented action plans and clear escalation routes. The team's purpose should be to help the classroom teacher test and refine support, not merely to prepare referrals. Principals should review timetables for collaboration, monitor whether learners participate in the full curriculum and ensure that purchasing decisions include accessibility. Where specialist personnel are scarce, regional offices can prioritise outreach according to the intensity of need and train

school-level mentors who remain connected to professional networks.

Resource allocation should be linked to function rather than diagnosis alone. Low-cost changes—visual schedules, enlarged print, structured peer support, flexible grouping, concrete learning materials and alternative response formats—can widen access for many learners. Other needs require specialist devices, communication systems or environmental modifications. A school-level accessibility and participation audit would help distinguish what teachers can address immediately, what requires regional support and what requires national investment.

A tiered support model is appropriate to the distribution of expertise. At classroom level, teachers require strategies and materials that benefit many learners without waiting for diagnosis. At school level, a functioning learning-support team should coordinate cases, coaching and communication with families. At cluster or regional level, scarce specialists should provide scheduled outreach, demonstration, assessment guidance and escalation for complex needs. Clear thresholds between tiers would reduce both unnecessary referral and the risk that a teacher remains solely responsible for a need requiring specialist input.

Leadership development is central to this model. Principals and heads of department need practical guidance on inclusive timetabling, collaborative planning, procurement, observation and use of learner evidence. Without these management competencies, inclusion can remain an additional project rather than a criterion applied to ordinary instructional decisions. School improvement plans should therefore connect staff learning, accessibility actions, support-team performance and learner participation.

4.3. Implications for policy monitoring and research

Monitoring should measure enacted practice rather than counting workshops or policy documents. Useful indicators include the proportion of teachers who have completed supervised inclusive-practice cycles; the regularity and resolution rate of learning-support team

cases; access to adapted materials; time from referral to specialist response; and learner participation, attendance and progression. Teacher self-report remains useful, but it should be triangulated with classroom observation, lesson artefacts and learner or family perspectives.

The most urgent research need is a nationally representative mixed-methods study across Namibia's regions, school phases and rural–urban contexts. A validated measure such as the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices scale could be combined with knowledge scenarios, resource and leadership measures, and structured observations. Multilevel analysis could then estimate how much variation in preparedness is associated with teachers, schools and regions. Longitudinal or intervention studies are also needed to test whether practice-based professional development changes instruction and learner participation rather than only attitudes or self-reported confidence.

4.4. A staged implementation and evaluation pathway

The findings support staged implementation rather than a single national training event. The first stage is diagnostic: schools map staff competencies, participation barriers, existing materials, support-team functionality and referral delays. The second stage builds a minimum inclusive-practice package through modelling, collaborative planning and coached application. The third stage strengthens school and regional systems by allocating responsibilities, response times and outreach schedules. The fourth stage evaluates whether practice and learner participation improve, then uses the evidence to revise training and resource allocation.

This sequence makes implementation measurable. Early indicators can include completion of coached practice cycles, availability of basic accessible materials, frequency of support-team meetings and response time to classroom requests. Intermediate indicators can capture the quality of differentiated lesson plans, use of formative assessment and collaboration with families. Longer-term indicators should

address attendance, participation, progression and equitable access to the curriculum. Monitoring these levels together avoids claiming success merely because inputs were delivered.

Prioritisation is necessary where resources are constrained. Low-cost, high-reach classroom practices and functioning school teams can be established first, while regional systems identify learners and settings requiring specialised devices, infrastructure or intensive professional support. Such sequencing does not lower entitlement; it creates a transparent route from universal classroom provision to increasingly specialised assistance.

4.5. Equity, rurality and contextual responsiveness

A national strategy must account for Namibia's dispersed population and uneven proximity to specialist services. Identical provision across schools would not necessarily be equitable because travel distance, connectivity, language, class organisation and access to resource schools differ. Cluster-based coaching, mobile outreach and low-bandwidth professional materials can reduce distance-related exclusion, but their reach and response times require explicit monitoring.

Contextual responsiveness also means protecting academic expectations while varying routes to participation. Adaptation should be linked to the intended learning outcome and to evidence about the barrier faced by the learner. This guards against two risks: leaving the curriculum inaccessible in the name of uniformity, and reducing learning opportunities through unexamined simplification. Teachers require both professional judgement and collaborative review to maintain that balance.

4.6. Limitations

The review is limited by the size and uneven distribution of the Namibian evidence base. Several studies are regional case studies or postgraduate theses, and the largest surveys rely substantially on self-report. Samples do not provide equal coverage of school phases, disability groups or all fourteen regions. Measures and definitions differ, which prevents pooled

effect estimates. Some comparative studies were included to strengthen conceptual interpretation, but their institutional contexts are not identical to Namibia's. The review's conclusions should therefore be understood as a well-supported analytical account and agenda for testing, not as national prevalence estimates.

A further limitation is that the search was restricted to English-language material from 2013 onwards and did not include a formal grey-literature search across every regional education office. Relevant local reports or professional-development records may therefore have been missed. The integrative design made it possible to combine heterogeneous evidence, but interpretive coding cannot remove variation in terminology, sampling and measurement.

Finally, the proposed framework is an analytical synthesis rather than a validated causal model. Its three elements are strongly supported as interdependent conditions, but their relative weights and possible threshold effects remain unknown. Future studies should test the framework prospectively and examine whether improvements in enabling conditions amplify the effect of teacher learning on practice and learner outcomes.

5. Conclusion

This integrative review concludes that Namibia's central challenge is no longer the absence of an inclusive policy direction, but the uneven capacity to translate that direction into dependable classroom participation. Across the available evidence, teachers commonly support inclusion and request further professional learning. At the same time, reported gaps in instructional knowledge and confidence intersect with large classes, curriculum pressure, limited accessible materials, weak collaboration structures and uneven specialist response. The result is not universal unpreparedness; it is conditional preparedness that varies with the task, learner need and support environment.

The Preparedness-in-Context framework captures this conclusion through three interdependent elements: professional capability, professional agency and enabling conditions.

None is sufficient alone. Training must therefore be assessed by demonstrated changes in planning, instruction, assessment and collaboration; confidence must be examined in relation to particular practices and supports; and school readiness must be judged by whether teachers can obtain materials, time, leadership and specialist assistance when required.

The immediate priority is a coordinated package of compulsory inclusive practice in initial teacher education, repeated school-embedded professional-development cycles, functioning learning-support teams and scheduled regional outreach. Implementation should begin with a diagnostic baseline and proceed through coached application to evaluation of learner participation. National monitoring should connect inputs to practice and outcomes rather than relying on workshop counts, policy awareness or global self-report.

The evidence base remains too limited for national prevalence claims or causal conclusions.

A representative, multilevel and longitudinal research programme is required across regions, school phases and rural-urban settings, combining validated efficacy measures with knowledge scenarios, classroom observation, school-support indicators and learner and family perspectives. Such evidence would allow Namibia to identify where teacher learning is sufficient, where system conditions suppress its effect and which combinations of support produce durable inclusion.

Inclusive education becomes credible when a learner's access does not depend on an individual teacher compensating indefinitely for system weaknesses. Sustainable progress will come from aligning what teachers know and believe with what schools and regional services enable them to do. That alignment is the practical standard against which the next phase of inclusive education in Namibia should be planned and evaluated.

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8. Author Declaration

8.1. Author contributions

Philipus N. Nangolo: conceptualisation, lead methodology, review design, investigation, evidence synthesis, writing-original draft and project administration. Angelius Liveve: investigation, literature search, source appraisal, validation and writing-review and editing. Hosian Hitawa: methodology, thematic analysis, validation and writing-review and editing. Virginia Moyo: literature search, source appraisal, interpretation, validation and writing-review and editing. Sidney Simone: investigation, evidence organisation, project administration and writing-review and editing. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript and accept accountability for the work.

8.2. Ethics declaration

This article is a review of publicly available literature and policy documents. It involved no human participants, identifiable human data or restricted datasets; institutional review-board approval and informed consent were therefore not applicable.

8.3. Funding

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8.4. Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

8.5. Data availability

No new dataset was created or analysed. All evidence considered in the review is available in the cited publications and public documents.