

# Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education: A Critical Analysis of Australian Educators' Experiences

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**Abstract:** This paper critically investigates the challenges and difficulties encountered by educators in implementing the Inclusive Educational Model (IEM) in Australia. Although the IEM seeks to promote equal learning opportunities for students with disabilities, the practical application of inclusive education remains complex and inconsistent across Australian schools. Drawing on current studies and policy discussions, this paper identifies three major barriers that impede successful implementation: insufficient resources and government funding, limited parental support and confidence, and the lack of effective training programs for teachers. The analysis reveals that inadequate instructional materials, limited access to assistive technologies, and constrained financial support reduce teachers' ability to deliver inclusive and high-quality education. Furthermore, the absence of consistent parental involvement and trust in educators contributes to weak home-school partnerships, which are essential for sustaining inclusive practices. In addition, many teachers receive limited pre-service and in-service training, often characterized by a separation between "special" and "regular" education, which prevents them from effectively addressing the diverse needs of learners with disabilities. The paper concludes that achieving genuine inclusion requires coordinated action from policymakers, schools, and tertiary institutions. Recommendations include improving funding mechanisms, promoting stronger collaboration between parents and teachers, and redesigning teacher education programs to integrate both theoretical and practical components. Overall, this study argues that while Australia has made progress toward inclusive education, significant systemic and institutional barriers continue to hinder its full realization.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Educational Model (IEM); Disability Inclusion, Educator Challenges; Teacher Training; Educational Policy

## 1. Introduction, Background Statements and Key Concepts

Regardless of the rapidly increasing number of children with disabilities in Australia, they have yet to receive high quality of teaching experience and proper learning circumstance as compared with normal students [27]. Even if recent statistics indicates that approximately 95% of children with disabilities attended schools, nearly one third of them are still in either special classes or special schools, and they are not being educated properly because of their learning and communication difficulties [3]. Furthermore, without receiving the same education as the normal individuals, it is hard for them to integrate and fit into the broader society in the long-term [3]. In response to these situations, a provision of free and appropriate learning environment for disabled individuals has been gradually emphasized and prioritized by the global government over the last two decades [27].

With regards to these contemporary social phenomena, an 'inclusive educational model' was initially introduced since the late 1990s, which aims at combating against discriminatory attitudes in the classroom, followed by providing an effective and efficient educational context for all individuals, including those with various forms of disabilities [9][27]. As proposed by Botha and Kourkoutas (2015, p. 785)[4], the notion of 'inclusion' means that every individual in any communities should be 'respected, valued and accommodated'. Under educational context, the 'inclusive educational model' defines that all students, include all marginalized and vulnerable groups of individuals, are welcomed to 'attend regular schools in the common learning environment', which contributes to 'conflation of 'normal' and 'special' education'[27]. Children with disabilities are those who have 'long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers which may hinder their full and effective

participation in society on an equal basis with others’<sup>[26]</sup>.

Even though inclusive education is progressively being perceived as an effective means in providing better educational opportunities for children with disabilities, the implementation of such model creates several issues for different social and political entities, particularly Australian educators <sup>[26]</sup>. With the trend of promoting inclusive educational model in Australia, teachers are facing increased pressure from many sources and facets<sup>[26]</sup>. Relies upon the analysis provided above, this research paper will investigate ‘What are the challenges and difficulties faced by educators in implementing inclusive Educational model in Australia?’. Through the elaboration of this topic of research, it will provide valuable insights into different social barriers for educators that hinder the development of inclusive educational model in Australia. This research is essential since it offers potential suggestions of improving inclusive educational model, followed by enabling schools and educational department to carry out strategies aims at assisting educators to maximise their teaching capabilities in the inclusive classroom. In addition to this, this paper may help policy makers to design specific educational regulations in dealing with issues met by children with disabilities in Australia.

In developing the analysis on the challenges of inclusive education met by Australian educators, I will begin with a close discussion around a shortage of resources and necessary equipment provided for both teachers and children with disabilities, followed by elaborating insufficient governmental funding and financial support. Then, I will investigate how a lack of parental support and confidence may create obstacles for Australian educators. Lastly, an analysis around inadequate effective training sessions and programs for teachers will be provided. Apart from that, several implications of the issue and conclusion will be specified at the end of the paper.

## **2. Supporting thesis 1: insufficient resources and governmental Funding**

Within the context of inclusive classroom in Australia, ‘a lack of resources’ was perceived as one of the most highly ranked concern for the educators and the students with disabilities, since unavailability of necessary resources can jeopardize educators’ teaching performance in the inclusive classroom <sup>[13][24]</sup>. Indeed, a provision of abundant resources and support aims at meeting different types of individuals in the inclusive classroom should be treated as a key prerequisite for successful inclusion <sup>[24][26]</sup>. Recent investigation and research identified that two types of resources are greatly needed to effectively and successfully implement inclusive education in Australia – ‘instructional materials’ for the educators and ‘special assistive equipment and technology’ for disabled children.

### **2.1 Requirement and demand of instructional materials**

After children with disabilities are recruited and included in the inclusive classroom, teachers are facing challenges from not being supported by using different forms of corresponding instructional teaching materials <sup>[12]</sup>. Drawing on the analysis conducted by Westwood and Graham (2013, p. 12)<sup>[28]</sup>, due to an urgent limitation of appropriate materials, teachers in Australia reported that they would need to make their own resources to satisfy the needs of merely one or two students with disabilities in the classroom. Furthermore, because of insufficient resources provided, it takes much longer time for the class teacher to design and prepare alternative teaching materials, which significantly contribute to heavier workload <sup>[28]</sup>. Accordingly, one or two students with disabilities that need to be taken care particularly may be left to use inappropriate learning materials <sup>[28]</sup>. Furthermore, as explained by Sharma and his colleagues (2007, p. 106), a variety of required learning materials include ‘Braille, abacus, large print books and talking books’, which are greatly needed to teach disabled individuals in Australia. The absence and deficiency of such materials may greatly influence teachers’ capabilities in delivering quality instruction <sup>[18][24]</sup>. For this reason, students personal social and academic wellbeing, as well as their future achievements will be seriously and negatively affected <sup>[24]</sup>.

Nevertheless, a few researches proposed that once teachers receive adequate training session, an urgent concern of insufficient resources may start to decline and mitigate <sup>[24]</sup>. That is because, properly trained educators will become aware of different sorts of resources available to schools to implement inclusive practices, so that ‘a lack of resources’ may not be perceived as a major issue for teachers with adequate experience of training <sup>[24]</sup>. But, a majority of the contemporary research points out that pre-service teachers in Australia are not receiving adequate training of various areas of study, which include sensory integration, mnemonic strategies, applied behaviour analysis, etc. <sup>[11][18][20]</sup>. Hence a lack of resources may eventually result in numerous problems for teachers with inadequate training.

## ***2.2 Inadequate assistive equipment and materials for children with disabilities***

When disabled individuals are included under inclusive educational settings, various kinds of assistive technology and equipment are greatly required aims at meeting different social and learning needs <sup>[24]</sup>. As proposed by Imaniah and Fitria (2018, p. 3) <sup>[14]</sup>, in inclusive classroom, children who have long-term physical or sensory disorder, such as hearing loss, cerebral palsy and visual impairment need to be provided with specialised materials and equipment to learn. However, recent investigations show there are countless disorders, disabilities and ranges of capabilities, not having the necessary resources to or knowledge of how to make adaptations so that children cannot fully engage in class activities <sup>[23]</sup>. In addition, without proper provision of necessary assistive equipment, it significantly contributes to more obstacles for the educators, followed by resulting in an overwhelmingly hard teaching situation <sup>[23][28]</sup>. For instance, the preparation of traditional desks without special design of adjustable height in the inclusive classroom creates difficulties for children with disabilities to move, so that teachers cannot properly facilitate the whole class activities <sup>[6]</sup>. Guarantee of providing such kinds of special tools and equipment promote engagement of cooperative learning with peers and teachers, which leads to construction of a sense of class community <sup>[6]</sup>.

However, some investigation paper propose that schools should not hold responsibilities in providing necessary tools or other resources for disabled individuals alone <sup>[1]</sup>. Rather, a close collaboration and cooperation between parents should be encouraged, aims at providing these resources together or parents themselves <sup>[1]</sup>. Yet, some specially designed equipment should still be prepared by schools and related educational department. For example, as stated by Sharma and his colleagues (2018, p. 42) <sup>[23]</sup>, students with disabilities need to be provided with wheelchair and other tools to actively engage in physical education classes. Accordingly, there is still a gap of limited supply of necessary resources that needs to be properly fulfilled by schools and other educational institutions.

## ***2.3 Limited governmental funding and financial aids***

Considering there is a limited and inadequate supply of necessary resources for the educators in Australia, contemporary research suggest that these issues can generally be attributed to limited public funding provided by the government <sup>[2][8]</sup>. Due to a lack of adequate policy at regional, national and provincial level, there is insufficient funding and financial aids allocated for inclusive classroom <sup>[20][23]</sup>. A recent Australian survey proposed that, with 12% of disabled students need additional financial support, merely 2-3% of them can receive it <sup>[15]</sup>. Although a majority of children with disabilities in inclusive classroom have learning difficulties and behavioural issues, they were not necessarily fit into the 'category of individuals' that need financial support set by the government <sup>[15]</sup>. In addition, a lack of funded support for children with disabilities was also perceived as a major concern for teachers because of extra demand placed on them <sup>[15]</sup>. Apart from that, teachers are also facing the problem of limited financial budget and support, so that they have inadequate resources to teach in inclusive classroom <sup>[15]</sup>. Correspondingly, contemporary analysis reveals that resources applied in the inclusive classroom were not sufficiently purchased since resources are scarce with limited governmental funding <sup>[18]</sup>. Yet research shows that inclusive educational programs would significantly benefit from the additional funding used in providing necessary resources for the educators <sup>[18]</sup>.

Nonetheless, a few investigations propose that merely putting funding and financial aids into the construction of inclusive educational model may result in negative and reverse consequences. As stated by Anderson and Boyle (2015, p. 13) <sup>[2]</sup>, there is limited evidence to support the effectiveness of purely injecting money to support educators and student with disabilities in Australian inclusive classroom without other actions. Similar statements were also proposed by Rather, the government and policy makers should have an arrangement on how to thoroughly improve the whole inclusive educational model in Australia prior to investing extra funding into the framework <sup>[2]</sup>. But additional funding provided by the government should still be perceived as a core prerequisite of building inclusive educational model in Australia, aims at providing more necessary resources and equipment <sup>[2][15]</sup>.

## **3. Supporting thesis 2: lack of parental support and confidence**

During the process of developing and implementing inclusive educational model in Australia, parental involvement and participation were reported to have significant positive social outcome <sup>[17]</sup>. In addition, it is essential for schools to construct a solid partnership with various social stakeholders, which include close collaboration with both parents and educators <sup>[17][19]</sup>. Indeed, successful school-home

communication and cooperation with parents is imperative not only for effective inclusion but also in enhancing academic achievement of students with disabilities <sup>[25]</sup>. However, evidence reveals that teachers in Australia are facing inadequate support and confidence from parents in various forms, including insufficient parental care of children with disabilities, as well as low confidence in inclusion and teachers' capabilities, which may result in obstacles for the implementation of inclusive education <sup>[10]</sup>.

### ***3.1 Inadequate provision of parental care towards children with disabilities***

Even if parent plays an essential role during the process of implementing inclusive educational model, some research shows there is still a limited amount of care provided by parents towards children with disabilities <sup>[21]</sup>. As proposed by Graham and Spandagou (2011, p. 231), in some occasions, parents even cannot take their children with disabilities to do medical diagnosis prior to enrolling in schools. Accordingly, some teachers and principles took these matters into their own hands through bringing these disabled children to do medical checking (Graham & Spandagou, 2011, p. 231). Such phenomena create more work for the educators, so that they may not be able to concentrate on their teaching in inclusive classroom. Another case shows that some parents refuse to accept the suggestion of sending their children to a specially designed programme prior to enrolling into normal schools, so that disabled children can better adapt the inclusive educational model, only because parents think it may create more work for them (Graham & Spandagou, 2011, p. 231). Without such proper transitional learning classes, educators in inclusive classroom may need more time in taking care of these disabled individuals, which may distract their focus on teaching.

However, some contemporary analysis proposes that parents are providing adequate care through effectively cooperating with the educators <sup>[25]</sup>. In addition, parents are significantly more likely to agree that the implementation of inclusive educational model is strongly effective in educating their children with disabilities <sup>[25]</sup>. Yet, large amount of recent statistics reveals that some parents still refuse to provide adequate care for their children with disabilities, along with a lack of home-school collaboration, which result in heavier work burdens for the educators <sup>[5][21]</sup>.

### ***3.2 Insufficient support and low confidence in schools and educators***

There is a broad range of perceptions and opinions amongst parents in relation to the placement of children with disabilities in inclusive educational setting, as well as their attitudes towards educators <sup>[10]</sup>. A majority of the research literature proposed that parents often treats educators in inclusive classroom as lacking in knowledge about their children with disabilities <sup>[10][16][21]</sup>. Moreover, parents found it hard to access teachers or other educators who are willing to provide them with necessary support and information<sup>[10]</sup>. In particular, parents felt that educators in inclusive classroom are not adequately prepared to support the diverse range of students with disabilities<sup>[25]</sup>. Such negative attitudes and low confidentiality held towards educators in inclusive classroom may result in poor home-school cooperation and collaboration<sup>[16]</sup>. For this reason, without proper communication between educators and parents, teachers cannot obtain sufficient information about students with disabilities <sup>[16]</sup>. Hence teachers may not be able to properly prepare unique plan for children with disabilities.

Nonetheless, some analysis proposed by Elkins and his colleagues (2003, p. 127) stated that only 10% of parents in the case study commented negatively on educators' training needs, and a majority of them in the analysis hold positive attitudes towards teachers' teaching capabilities. But, as the increasing number of children with disabilities in Australia who need to be educated in the inclusive classroom, a large number of qualified teachers are significantly required, and thus it is difficult to make sure that each of them can receive proper and sufficient training<sup>[27]</sup>.

## **4. Supporting thesis 3: lack of proper training programs for teachers**

As the increasing number of children with disabilities in Australia that need to be educated in inclusive classroom, there is an urgent demand of teachers correspondingly <sup>[27]</sup>. Research shows that there is a significant and efficient effect of completing proper training sessions prior to formal teaching in inclusive classroom <sup>[22]</sup>. However, not all teachers in Australia are properly trained before delivering classes. That is mainly because, there is a lack of proper training programs provided for these teachers <sup>[22]</sup>.

The urgent need of promoting and improve teachers arises primarily from the inadequacy and

limitations of many current programs of teachers' training <sup>[7][20]</sup>. Even if the successful learning outcome of children with disabilities has been strongly associated with the quality of teachers' training programs, recent statistics indicate that 29% of teachers in New South Wales and 68.4% of them in South Australia had no training of inclusive education<sup>[25]</sup>. This phenomenon was mainly resulted from a number of reasons. As proposed by Carroll and his colleagues (2013, p. 66), due to a lack of training sessions in relation to the implementation of inclusive education, many training programs still apply a model that reinforce the separation between regular and special education <sup>[7]</sup>. Teachers' training framework was thus segregated and being viewed as normal and special <sup>[7]</sup>. Accordingly, educators have no opportunities to integrate the knowledge learned through the education programs to the inclusive classroom <sup>[7]</sup>. For this reason, teachers rarely experience the collaboration and conflation of normal and special education, so that they cannot provide high quality classes in inclusive classroom <sup>[7]</sup>. Another reason for the lack of effective training programs is that university teacher preparation programs over-emphasized the importance of knowledge acquisition <sup>[7][20]</sup>. Such arrangement may fail to provide teachers with appropriate field-based experiences, as well as exposure to persons with disabilities in inclusive classroom <sup>[7]</sup>. Hence, inexperienced teachers may find it hard to deliver suitable courses towards disabled individuals in the real school context.

Nevertheless, some investigation found that effective training sessions are being actively implemented in Australia, aims at helping pre-service teacher to prepare for upcoming teaching in inclusive classroom <sup>[11]</sup>. But, some other developing rural areas in Australia, such as western Australia, still need to focus on introducing effective training programs for the educators<sup>[11]</sup>.

## 5. Implications

For the policy makers in Australia, in response to insufficient resources, strict guidelines should be introduced and reinforced, aims at ensuring sufficient provision of necessary resources for the educators, including books and other materials. For the children with disabilities in inclusive classroom, specially designed equipment and tools, such as wheelchair, should be sufficiently made and implemented in schools, based on related lawful regulations. In addition, policy makers in Australian educational department should allocate adequate funding and financial aids in assisting educators to carry out daily educational work in inclusive classroom. Apart from that, in the broader social context, policy makers in the government should actively promote and prioritise the implementation and construction of inclusive educational model in Australia, through protecting disabled children's basic rights to inclusive education.

For inclusive schools in Australia, teachers and principals should strive to emphasize the essential role of parental care in children's academic development. This can be done by promoting better home-school collaboration, through encouraging close cooperation between teachers and parents. For instance, special activities or meetings can be held in enhancing communication between teachers and parents, so that educators' reliability can be significantly improved. Such positive arrangements may help educators to satisfy unique learning needs of children with disabilities, in achieving better academic outcome in the long run.

For the universities and colleges in Australia, specifically designed and integrated program for educators who are willing to teach in inclusive classroom should be emphasized and promoted. This can be done through abandoning the original segregated training framework that include both 'normal' and 'special' education. Rather, a conflation of 'normal' and 'special' education should be introduced in the training programs. By doing so, teachers can integrate the knowledge to the inclusive classroom, followed by delivering effective classes towards children with disabilities. Apart from that, universities should focus more on educators' practical experience and opportunities in the training programs, instead of overly emphasizing the significance of knowledge acquisition. This will help pre-service educators to properly prepare for upcoming classes in inclusive classroom and avoids unnecessary faults due to lack of experience.

## 6. Conclusion

This research paper addresses the clear existence of challenges and difficulties met by educators in implementing inclusive educational model in Australia, with the trend of rapid increasing number of children with disabilities. Following the global promotion of inclusive education as an essential way in educating disabled individuals effectively, teachers are facing obstacles from a number of sources. In response to this phenomenon, this investigation initially elaborates how a lack of necessary resources,

equipment and sufficient funding provided for the educators and disabled students may create difficulties for teachers in the inclusive classroom. Then, this literature offers a close analysis around the negative impact upon Australian educators caused by inadequate parental care of children with disabilities, as well as a lack of confidence and support showed by parents towards educators. This contention is followed by analysing how a lack of effective training programs may result in difficulties for educators to teach in inclusive classroom. This viewpoint contains examination on the potential limitation of segregation between 'special' and 'normal' education, as well as excessive emphasis on knowledge acquisition instead of practical skills.

Apart from that, this essay also proposes a number of feasible solutions and coping strategies in the section of implication. Initially, policy makers should carry out legal regulations in ensuring adequate provision of necessary resources and funding. In the broader social context, policy makers should place emphasis on protecting disabled children's basic rights to education. For schools in Australia, educators should strive to promote home-school collaboration and cooperation, aims at enhancing teachers' reliability for parents. Lastly, tertiary educational institutions should provide effective training programs for the pre-service teacher, through conflating 'normal' and 'special' education, as well as emphasizing the importance of practical skills in the real inclusive context.

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