INVESTIGATING CONCERNS ABOUT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN PROTESTANT SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BUKAVU, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

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Abstract:

This study investigates the key concerns of teachers in Protestant secondary schools in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), regarding the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities. Although national policies and Protestant theological commitments strongly support inclusive education, a significant gap remains between these ideals and classroom realities. Using the Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale – Short Form (CIES-SF), data were collected from 122 teachers across 10 schools. Results indicate that the primary concern among teachers is the lack of adequate resources, including financial support, infrastructure, and access to specialized personnel. Additional concerns vary by demographic and professional background, with female teachers, older educators, and those in technical disciplines expressing higher levels of concern. These findings suggest that resistance to inclusive education is not rooted in ideological opposition but in the practical challenges teachers face due to systemic underfunding and inadequate institutional support. The study concludes that bridging the gap between policy and practice requires targeted professional development, gender-sensitive training, and concrete investments in inclusive infrastructure and resources. Only through coordinated efforts can inclusive education move from policy aspiration to educational reality in Bukavu's Protestant schools.

Keywords: concerns, inclusion, education, disability

1. Introduction

This paper presents the rationale, process and results of an investigation conducted on the implementation of inclusive education, addressing disability in Protestant secondary

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schools in Bukavu/DRC. The rationale for selecting this topic is that inclusive education has become a prominent area of focus in the field of education, with numerous countries striving to ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, have access to quality learning opportunities. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the city of Bukavu has encountered considerable challenges in implementing inclusive education, particularly for students with disabilities.

Therefore, in order to properly analyse the current state of students living with disabilities in Bukavu secondary schools, it is first necessary to describe the context of inclusive education in the DRC in general, and in Bukavu in particular. This will be done with a particular emphasis on children living with disabilities. Following this, a brief description will be provided of the problem that motivated this research and the questions to which this investigation seeks to provide answers.

1.1. Context of Inclusive Education in DRC

Inclusive education, as defined by the 2008 National Education Development Report of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), is an educational approach aimed at promoting participation and reducing exclusion within mainstream school systems. It seeks to respond effectively to the diverse needs of all learners, particularly those from marginalized and vulnerable groups. These include street children, girls, ethnic minorities, children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, refugees and internally displaced persons, children affected by HIV/AIDS, gifted learners, and children with disabilities (RDC-CNP.ONESCO, 2008).

The legal foundation for inclusive education in the DRC is established in Article 33 of the Loi-cadre 14/004 of 11 February 2014, which emphasizes the fight against discrimination and inequality in education. This article explicitly identifies women and girls, orphans, displaced individuals, pygmies, overage students, and persons with disabilities as priority groups for educational inclusion.

Building upon this framework, the DRC's Education and Training Sector Strategy (SSEF) 2016–2025 outlines the development of programs dedicated to promoting inclusive and special education, particularly for learners with disabilities. These programs integrate provisions for both students with specific learning needs and those with physical, sensory, or cognitive impairments (MEPS-INC & MESU, 2015).

Understanding the implementation of these policies requires a closer examination of how inclusive education, particularly for students with disabilities, is interpreted and operationalized at the institutional level.

1.1.1. Congolese Education Policy for Disabled People

Over the past two decades, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has introduced several legislative initiatives aimed at promoting and safeguarding the rights of persons with disabilities, particularly in the areas of healthcare, education, and protection against discrimination. Within the education sector, the Loi-cadre 14/004 of 11 February 2014 articulates the principle of democratizing education by ensuring the right to quality

learning and equal access for all. Article 12 of this law underscores the state's commitment to maximizing the educational success of all learners, including those with disabilities.

Building on this legislative foundation, the DRC's Education and Training Sector Strategy (SSEF 2016–2025) outlines a two-pronged policy approach to improve educational access for children with disabilities. First, it proposes the development of partnerships with community organizations, alongside the construction of specialized institutions and health facilities designed to accommodate learners with disabilities. Second, it introduces preparatory measures to expand the inclusion of children with disabilities, including the collection of data on disability prevalence, the living conditions of affected children, and their access to care. The strategy also emphasizes fostering collaboration between educational authorities, civil society organizations focused on disability rights, and the health sector.

Despite these policy frameworks, the implementation of inclusive education in the DRC remains constrained by limited legal, financial, material, technological, and human resources. In response, both national and international organizations have partnered with the Congolese Ministry of Education to support inclusive practices. Notably, Handicap International (HI) has been involved in promoting inclusive education projects for children with disabilities (particularly girls) aimed at translating policy into action and fostering systemic change. A significant initiative in this context is the World Bank's 2018 program focused on the education of women and girls with disabilities, which includes efforts to develop a national database to inform policy and strategic planning.

Given these ongoing efforts and persisting challenges, it is essential to assess the concerns about the implementation of inclusive education policies in this context. This study focuses on Protestant secondary schools in Bukavu to assess teachers' concerns and understand the challenges.

1.1.2. Inclusion in Bukavu Secondary Schools

Bukavu is a city in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), situated in the extreme southwestern region of Lake Kivu. It is separated from Cyangugu/Rwanda by the Ruzizi River, which forms its eastern border. It is the capital of the South Kivu province. The most recent statistics from 2021 (Bisoka *et al.*, 2021) estimate the population to be in excess of one million. However, this increase in population is a relatively recent phenomenon. The expansion of Bukavu's population has been attributed to three primary factors, as identified by scientific research:

1) conflict-induced immigration from rural areas and the activity of armed groups;
2) business opportunities, and;
3) land use planning issues in the surrounding areas of the city where people lack access to essential services such as water, electricity, and roads (Bisoka *et al.*, 2021).

However, this demographic expansion has not resulted in a notable impact on the school enrollment rate. In the DRC as a whole, secondary and university education has, until now, been largely inaccessible to the majority of students, who come from less

affluent backgrounds (Ekwa, 2010). Statistical data indicate that only 25% of pupils who started secondary education in 2001 proceeded to the fifth year (UNESCO, 2003). This suggests that the Congolese educational system employs a selection process as students progress through their secondary and university education.

A special regard to the South Kivu province suggests that the social demand for education in this province is continuously increasing as a consequence of demographic changes, and the number of students and teachers is insufficient to meet this demand. Despite the fact that 645,067 individuals, representing 7.3% of the total population of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, were enrolled in educational institutions in 2001, only 3.3% of them were actively engaged in learning, with an additional 4% identified as requiring access to educational services (UNESCO, 2013). In general, schools are filled at the beginning of the academic year, with all parents enrolling their children (Bahogwerhe & Mwiha, 2022). Furthermore, a multitude of initiatives have been implemented with the objective of ensuring that all children are enrolled.

Unfortunately, the issue of the inclusion of children living with disabilities also remains unresolved. The country initiated an inclusive education programme that started almost a decade ago. The underlying premise was that all children, including those living with disabilities, should be under the purview of the Ministry of Education and be subject to a uniform set of rules and procedures (Tshiunza *et al.*, 2018). In this context, the concept of inclusion can be understood as a process of considering the diverse educational requirements of all children within the context of their local schools. The objective is to ensure that no child is excluded from the mainstream education system. It is thus the implementation of this programme that the present investigation aims to evaluate in the Protestant secondary schools of Bukavu.

1.2. Problem Statement

Despite the adoption of inclusive education policies and legal frameworks in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), including the Loi-cadre 14/004 of 2014 and the Education and Training Sector Strategy (SSEF 2016–2025), the effective inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education remains a significant challenge. These national policies promote equal access to quality education and propose structural and collaborative measures to support learners with disabilities. However, their implementation is frequently hindered by systemic obstacles such as inadequate infrastructure, limited specialized personnel, insufficient material and financial resources, and weak coordination among stakeholders.

In the city of Bukavu, Protestant secondary schools constitute a substantial portion of the educational landscape and are historically rooted in values of equity, justice, and inclusion (principles that trace back to the Protestant Reformation). Inclusion is thus not only a pedagogical imperative but also a theological and ethical commitment embedded in the very foundation of Protestant education. However, evidence suggests that these schools have not sufficiently fulfilled their role in advancing the inclusion of learners with disabilities, despite this foundational legacy.

This apparent disconnect between Protestant educational values and current practices raises critical questions about the internal dynamics of these institutions. Understanding why inclusion remains limited in Protestant schools, despite both national policy frameworks and theological orientation, is essential. This research, therefore, focuses specifically on Protestant secondary schools in the city of Bukavu to assess the implementation of inclusive education and to explore the concerns and challenges faced by teachers in accommodating students with disabilities. By doing so, the study seeks to illuminate the factors contributing to the gap between policy, faith-based values, and actual educational practice.

1.3. Research Question

Given the proven need for quality education, defined by equal opportunity and access for all children to develop their skills and reach their full potential, the present study seeks to answer the following research question:

- What are the key concerns of Bukavu teachers in Protestant secondary schools about implementing inclusive education for students with disabilities, despite supportive national policies and theological commitments?

1.4. Research Objectives

The objective of this research is twofold. Firstly, it aims to identify the specific concerns of teachers in Protestant secondary schools in Bukavu regarding the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities. Secondly, this study will also assess the discrepancy between policy/theological ideals and classroom realities in the context of inclusive education.

2. Literature Review

Two primary concepts will serve as the basis for a comprehensive summary of the existing literature on the subject of this study. These elements include "inclusive education" for general understanding as defined within the scientific discourse, and the foundational Protestant beliefs regarding inclusive education.

2.1. Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is the right of a child to participate in and benefit from the education system on an equal basis with his or her peers (Seitz *et al.*, 2023). It underscores the obligation of educational institutions (and education systems in their entirety) to cater to and, in principle, embrace all children. This commitment entails the active involvement of all students, including those with disabilities, and it safeguards their right to education as well as their broader social, civic, and cultural rights. This approach acknowledges and fosters the value of diversity, both within educational settings and in broader societal contexts, perceiving it as a strength rather than a weakness.

The scientific discourse delineates a distinction between specialized, integrated, and inclusive educational systems, underscoring their respective differences and conducting an analysis of their implementation across various nations. (1) Specialized education system is predicated on the education of exceptional learners in separate settings, such as specialized schools or centers. These institutions are often isolated from the community and mainstream schools. The oversight of these institutions does not invariably fall under the purview of the Ministry of Education; rather, it may be delegated to other ministries, such as the Ministry of Social Action, contingent upon the prevailing national policies (Corps *et al.*, 2012). (2) The integrated education system is one in which children with disabilities are educated in mainstream schools, but often in separate classrooms. While these students may interact with their peers, these interactions are generally limited. In certain instances, a student with a disability may attend a regular classroom for a portion of the day, receiving adapted support services. However, a significant proportion of specialized services are often provided outside the regular classroom, a practice that can impede the realization of true inclusion and integration (Florian, 2008; Slee, 2011). (3) The inclusive education system is designed to be more comprehensive in nature and is predicated on the principle of providing suitable education to all children within the same system. This objective entails the establishment of connections between specialized and general support services. The concept of inclusivity extends beyond the mere act of assigning students to classes, embracing a systemic approach that seeks to engage all students and address their diverse needs (United Nations, 2006).

The context analysis indicates that the education system in the DRC exhibits a tendency to oscillate between these divergent approaches. Notably, certain forms of inclusion are being implemented, particularly in integrated educational institutions where children with disabilities are placed in special classes within mainstream schools. This situation encapsulates the challenges associated with the comprehensive integration of exceptional students within the Congolese educational framework, underscoring the necessity for policy reform to foster greater inclusivity. The analysis underscores the necessity for ongoing reflection on educational structures and policies to guarantee equitable and suitable education for all children, irrespective of their distinctive characteristics or challenges.

2.1.1. Rationale for the Inclusion of Learners with Disabilities in Mainstream Schools

The rationale for inclusive education for children with disabilities encompasses legal, economic, social, and pedagogical dimensions (Tshiunza *et al.*, 2018).

Legally, inclusive education is grounded in the recognition of education as a fundamental human right, as affirmed by international conventions. Upholding this right requires integrating children with disabilities into mainstream schools to prevent inequality and protect their dignity and autonomy (Tshiunza *et al.*, 2018).

Economically, inclusive education is shown to be cost-effective for both governments and families. Lack of access to education increases the risk of poverty

among children with disabilities, while education improves their health, productivity, and societal participation (Rieser, 2012). Exclusion from the labor market due to disability leads to significant productivity losses (World Health Organization, 2011).

Socially, inclusive education contributes to the reduction of violence, abuse, and discrimination, enhancing the well-being of children with disabilities and their families. It also fosters more equitable and inclusive societies by shifting public attitudes and reducing stigma (UNESCO, 2009).

Pedagogically, inclusive education promotes the adaptation of teaching practices to accommodate diverse learning needs. This approach supports collaborative learning and improves outcomes for all students, encouraging broader educational reform (Tshiunza *et al.*, 2018).

2.2. The Main Ideas of Protestantism on Inclusive Education

The Protestant Reformation profoundly influenced educational paradigms by emphasizing religious instruction and the liberal arts. Reformation leaders promoted the education of children in Protestant doctrine, viewing religious knowledge as essential for nurturing faith in the younger generation (Uwajyiwabo, 2024). They also advocated for a comprehensive liberal arts education, believing it equipped individuals to serve both church and society, thereby glorifying God through their vocations.

Reformers viewed education as integral to spiritual well-being and salvation, positioning it as a central tool for both personal and communal religious life (Uwajyiwabo, 2024). This perspective marked a significant departure from earlier educational models, introducing values of inclusivity and equality. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers asserted the spiritual equality of all individuals, regardless of gender, social status, or ethnicity, underscoring the right and responsibility of every Christian to pursue knowledge and apply it in all areas of life (Kim *et al.*, 2018).

This theological foundation anticipated modern educational principles, such as those outlined in the UN Millennium Goals, which advocate for universal, non-discriminatory access to education (UNESCO, 2016). The Reformation's legacy thus contributed to the development of more inclusive and equitable educational systems that affirm every child's right to learn and grow.

Given this historical and ideological context, Protestant schools may be considered natural models for inclusive education. Even in the absence of explicit national policies or conducive local conditions, the foundational principles of Protestant education inherently support inclusion. This study, therefore, aims to explore the concerns about the actual implementation of this inclusive vision in educational practices.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research approach to investigate the concerns of teachers in Protestant secondary schools in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), regarding the implementation of inclusive education for students with

disabilities. Quantitative methodology was deemed appropriate for this research in order to systematically measure and analyze participants' concerns through standardized data collection and statistical analysis.

3.1. Data Collection Instrument

The primary tool for data collection was a structured questionnaire. In addition to general demographic questions, participants were provided with a definition of inclusive education to ensure a shared understanding. Following this, they completed the Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale – Short Form (CIES-SF) developed by Lozano *et al.* (2022).

The CIES-SF is a 12-item questionnaire where participants express their level of concern regarding various aspects of inclusive education on a 4-point unipolar Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all concerned) to 4 (extremely concerned). The items are grouped into four subcategories: Resources (concerns about the adequacy of support and materials), Difficulties (anticipated challenges in implementing inclusive practices), Appropriateness (perceived impact on academic expectations), and Workload (concerns related to increased teaching responsibilities).

Given that the participants' primary language is French, the questionnaire was translated from English into French by three bilingual language experts specializing in English and French. A translation, back-translation, and reconciliation process was carried out to ensure conceptual equivalence and linguistic accuracy.

To verify the reliability of the translated version of the CIES-SF, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess internal consistency. The result yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84, indicating good internal reliability. This value is comparable to the original McDonald's omega total of 0.89 reported by Lozano *et al.* (2022), suggesting that the translated questionnaire maintained its psychometric robustness.

3.2. Sampling and Participants

The study targeted teachers across Protestant secondary schools in Bukavu. A random sampling method was employed to select participants in order to minimize sampling bias. A total of 122 teachers from 10 different Protestant secondary schools participated in the study. The teachers represented a diversity of academic subjects and areas of professional training.

Table 1: Demographic Features of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	78	63.9
	Female	44	36.1
	Total	**122**	**100.0**
Age	20-29	17	13.9
	30-39	55	45.1
	40-49	30	24.6
	50-59	20	16.4
	Total	**122**	**100.0**
Qualification	State diploma	1	8.0
	Graduate diploma	42	34.4
	Bachelor's degree	78	63.9
	Master's degree	1	8.0
	Total	**122**	**100.0**
Domain of specialization	Languages	30	24.6
	Human sciences	40	32.8
	Health	2	1.6
	Natural sciences	30	24.6
	Technology	7	5.7
	Law, economic and management	7	5.7
	Technical	6	4.9
	Total	**122**	**100.0**

3.3. Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The research adhered to ethical standards concerning respect for persons, beneficence, and justice throughout the data collection and analysis process.

4. Results

In this section, the analysis of the data is presented beginning with the specific concerns of teachers regarding the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities. The section also shows how teachers' concerns vary by teachers' background such as sex, age, qualification and the domain of specialization.

4.1. Types of Concerns of Teachers Regarding the Implementation of Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities

This section describes the teachers' level of the concerns regarding the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities. These concerns include resources, difficulties, appropriateness (academic standards) and workload. The descriptive statistics on teachers' concerns were ranked on a scale ranging from 1standing for "not at all concerned" to 4 standing for "extremely concerned". Figure 1, gives an overview of

different concerns of teachers in terms of implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities.
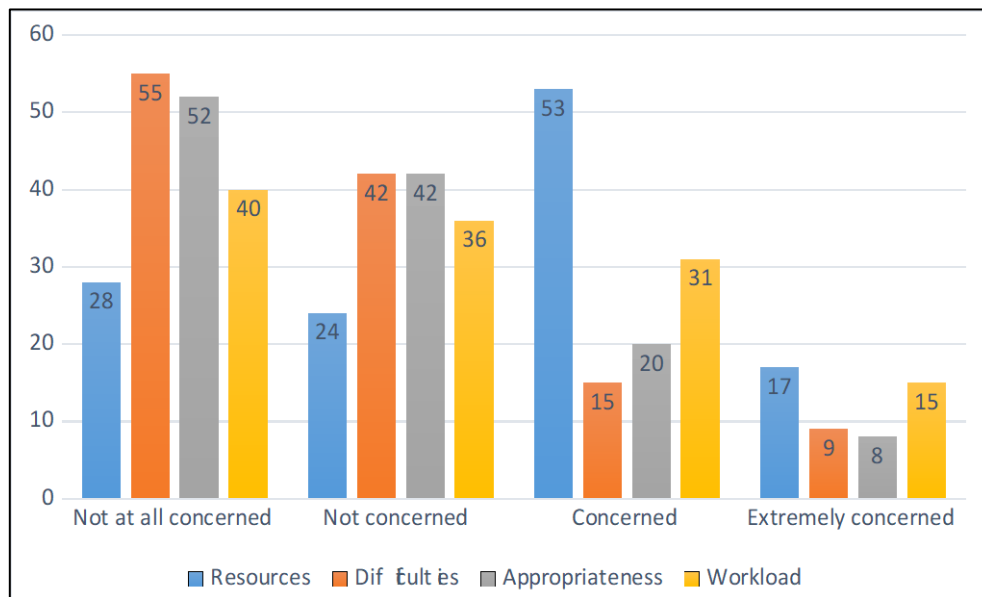

Figure 1: Types of Teachers' Concerns Regarding the
Implementation of Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities

As illustrated in Figure 1, a majority of teachers identified resources as a key concern in the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities. Specifically, 53 teachers (43.7%) indicated that resources are a concern, while an additional 17 (14.2%) reported being extremely concerned with it. Together, this represents 70 teachers (57.9%) acknowledging resource-related concerns. Regarding difficulties, 15 teachers (12.6%) noted these as a concern, and 9 teachers (7.7%) as an extreme concern, totalizing 24 respondents (20.3%) who viewed difficulties as a significant issue. Regarding the appropriateness or academic standards, 20 teachers (16.7%) expressed concern, and 8 (6.3%) expressed extreme concern. This brings the total to 28 teachers (23.0%) identifying appropriateness as an area of concern for inclusive education. Workload also emerged as a notable factor, with 31 teachers (25.4%) indicating it as a concern and 15 (12.3%) as an extreme concern. In total, 46 teachers (37.7%) viewed workload as a concern to implementing inclusive education.

In summary, Figure 1 highlights that teachers most frequently cited concerns related to resources (57.9%), followed by workload (37.7%), appropriateness or academic standards (23.0%), and difficulties (20.3%) in the context of implementing inclusive education for students with disabilities.

4.2. Teachers' Background and Concerns Regarding the Implementation of Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities

As indicated in the previous sections, teachers' concerns about inclusive education were also analyzed by teachers' background. The results are presented in this section, starting

with teachers' concerns about implementing inclusive education for students with disabilities by gender, by age, by qualification, and finally by domain of specialization.

4.2.1. Teachers' Concerns of Implementation of Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities by Gender

The types of concerns regarding the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities as indicated by teacher respondents were tabulated with gender and analysed to determine them by gender. Figure 2 shows the findings.
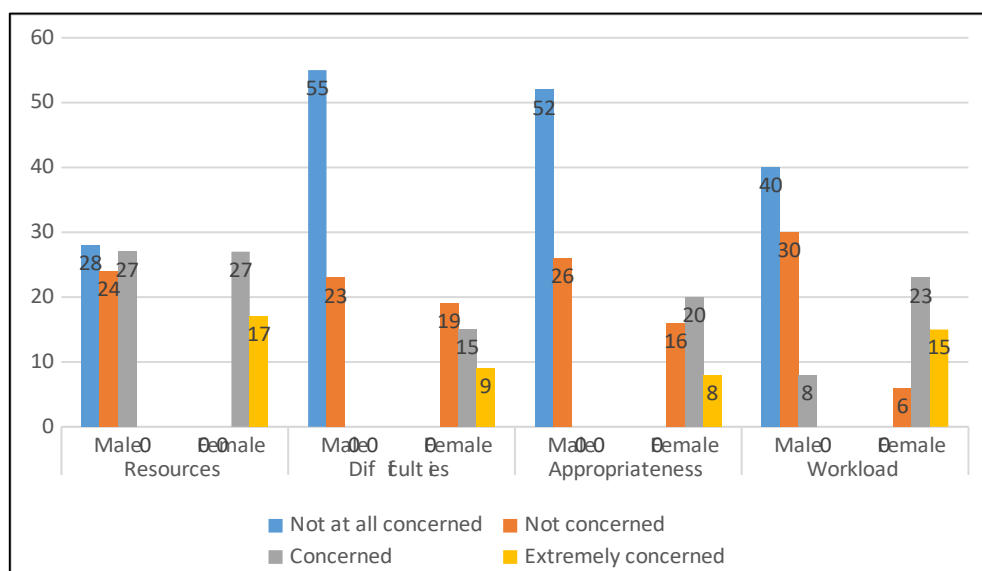

Figure 2: Teachers' Concerns on the Implementation of
Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities by Gender

As illustrated in Figure 2, a greater proportion of female teachers reported concerns related to resources required for implementing inclusive education for students with disabilities. Specifically, 44 female teachers (36.1%) indicated resource-related concerns, compared to 27 male teachers (21.9%). This suggests that female teachers were more likely than their male counterparts to perceive resources as a significant concern. Regarding difficulties in implementation, 24 female teachers (20.3%) reported this as a concern. Notably, no male teachers expressed concern in this category, implying that only female teachers perceived implementation difficulties as a challenge to inclusive education. A similar trend was observed concerning appropriateness or academic standards. Here, 28 female teachers (23.0%) indicated concern, while no male teachers reported this issue. This highlights that only female teachers regarded academic standards as a challenge in the context of inclusive education. As for workload, 38 female teachers (30.9%) and 8 male teachers (6.8%) indicated it as a concern. While both male and female teachers acknowledged workload as a concern, female teachers expressed this concern to a significantly greater extent.

The study also investigated whether significant differences exist between male and female teachers in terms of concerns of the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities. To achieve this, an independent sample t-test was computed and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Teachers' Concerns of Implementation of
Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities by Gender

Concerns	Groups	n	Mean	SD	SE	df	t	p
Resources	Male	78	2.06	0.87	0.098	120	9.386	0.000
	Female	44	3.40	0.49	0.074			
Difficulties	Male	78	1.28	0.45	0.051	120	12.029	0.000
	Female	44	2.56	0.72	0.109			
Appropriateness	Male	78	1.33	0.47	0.053	120	14.403	0.000
	Female	44	2.81	0.65	0.099			
Workload	Male	78	1.61	0.51	0.059	120	17.936	0.000
	Female	44	2.29	0.46	0.069			

Results in Table 2 indicate that concerns of the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities varied about gender. The results revealed that male teachers (*M* = 2.06, *SD* =0.87) indicated less resource concerns than females (*M* =3.40, *SD* = 0.49), male teachers (*M*= 1.28, *SD*=0.45) indicated less difficulties than females (*M*= 2.56, *SD*=0.72), male teachers (*M*= 1.33, *SD*= 0.47) indicated less appropriateness than females (*M*= 2.81, *SD*= 0.65), and male teachers (*M*=1.61, *SD*=0.51) indicated less workload than females (*M*= 2.29, *SD*=0.46). In particular, a statistically significant difference was found between male and female teachers in their concerns of implementation of inclusive education in terms of resources [$t(120) = 9.38$; $p < 0.05$], difficulties [$t(120) = 12.029$; $p < 0.05$]; appropriateness [$t(120) = 14.403$; $p < 0.05$], and workloads [$t(120) = 17.93$; $p < 0.05$]; where females indicated more resource concerns than their male counterparts. These findings infer that male teachers indicated less concerns in terms of resources, difficulties, appropriateness and workload than female teachers. The findings imply that the teachers' concerns of the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities vary by gender with female teachers rating these concerns more than male teachers do as indicate in Figure 3 below.
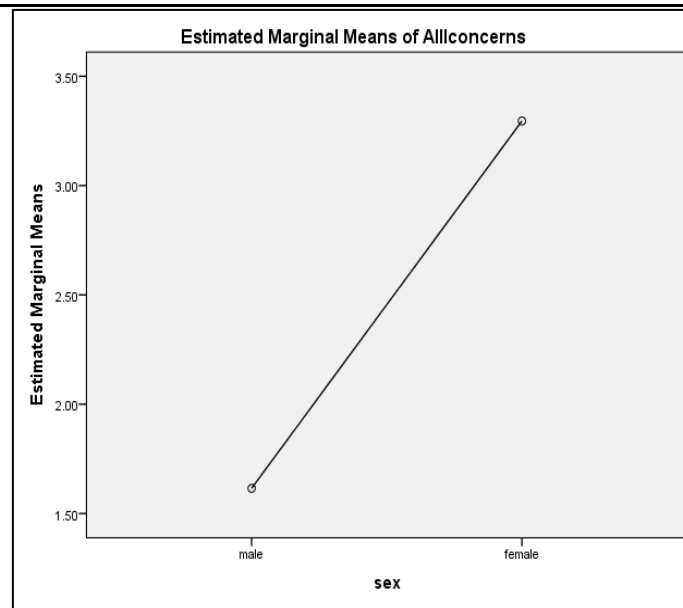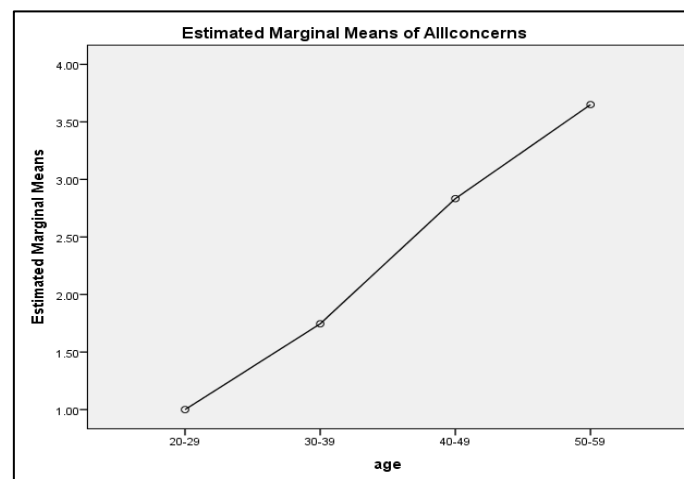
Figure 3: Means Plot for Total Teachers' Concerns of
Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities by Sex

4.2.2. Teachers' Concerns of Implementation of Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities by Age

The results of the comparative analysis of the concerns about implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities by age are presented in Table 3. To achieve this comparative analysis, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the Scheffe's test was used to ascertain the direction of the significant difference among the mean scores as a post-hoc measure.

Table 3: Teachers' Concerns of Implementation of
Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities by Age

Concerns	Groups	n	Mean	SD	SE	df	F	p	Sheaffe's test
Resources	20-29	17	1.00	0.00	0.000	3	103.31	0.000	4>3,2,1
	30-39	55	2.29	0.76	0.102				
	40-49	30	3.00	0.00	0.000				
	50-59	20	3.90	0.30	0.068				
Difficulties	20-29	17	1.00	0.00	0.000	3	156.51	0.000	4>3,2,1
	30-39	55	1.29	0.45	0.061				
	40-49	30	2.00	0.00	0.000				
	50-59	20	3.25	0.55	0.123				
Appropriateness	20-29	17	1.00	0.00	0.000	3	123.87	0.000	4>3,2,1
	30-39	55	1.36	0.48	0.065				
	40-49	30	2.33	0.47	0.087				
	50-59	20	3.33	0.47	0.085				
Workload	20-29	17	1.00	0.00	0.000	3	184.56	0.000	4>3,2,1
	30-39	55	1.74	0.43	0.059				
	40-49	30	2.83	0.37	0.069				
	50-59	20	3.65	0.48	0.109				

The results displayed in Table 3 indicate that there is a significant difference between teachers' concerns of resources, difficulties, appropriateness and workload based on their ages ($p < 0.05$). Teachers aged 50-59 years have significant concerns of resources, difficulties, appropriateness and workload than those aged 40-49, 30-39 or those aged 20-29 years. The findings imply that the teachers' concerns of the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities increase as the teachers' age increases as indicated in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Means Plot for Total Teachers' Concerns of
Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities by Ages

4.2.3. Teachers' Concerns of Implementation of Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities by Qualification

The results of the comparative analysis of the concerns of the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities by teacher qualification are presented in Table 4. To achieve this comparative analysis, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the Sheaffe's test were used to ascertain the direction of the significant difference among the mean scores as a post-hoc measure. The results displayed in Table 4 indicate that there is a significant difference between teachers' concerns of resources, difficulties, appropriateness and workload based on their qualification ($p < 0.05$). Teachers with master's degrees have significant concerns about resources, difficulties, appropriateness and workload compared to those with bachelor's and graduate degrees or those with a state diploma.

Table 4: Teachers' Concerns about the Implementation of Inclusive
Education for Students with Disabilities by Qualification

Concerns	Groups	n	Mean	SD	SE	df	F	p	Sheaffe's test
Resources	State diploma	1	1.00	0.00	.0000	3	97.952	0.000	4>3,2,1
	Graduate diploma	42	1.42	0.63	0.097				
	Bachelor's degree	78	3.15	0.48	0.054				
	Master's degree	1	4.00	0.00	0.000				
Difficulties	State diploma	1	1.00	0.00	0.000	3	26.115	0.000	4>3,2,1
	Graduate diploma	42	1.07	0.46	0.071				
	Bachelor's degree	78	2.08	0.74	0.083				
	Master's degree	1	4.00	0.00	0.000				
Appropriateness	State diploma	1	1.00	0.00	0.000	3	33.903	0.000	4>3,2,1
	Graduate diploma	42	1.07	.46	.071				
	Bachelor's degree	78	2.28	.75416	.085				
	Master's degree	1	4.00	0.00	0.00				
Workload	State diploma	1	1.00	0.00	0.00	3	40.155	0.000	4>3,2,1
	Graduate diploma	42	1.33	0.61	.094				
	Bachelor's degree	78	2.69	0.70	.080				
	Master's degree	1	4.00	0.00	0.00				

The findings imply that the teachers' concerns about the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities increase as the teachers' qualification increases, as indicated in Figure 5 below.
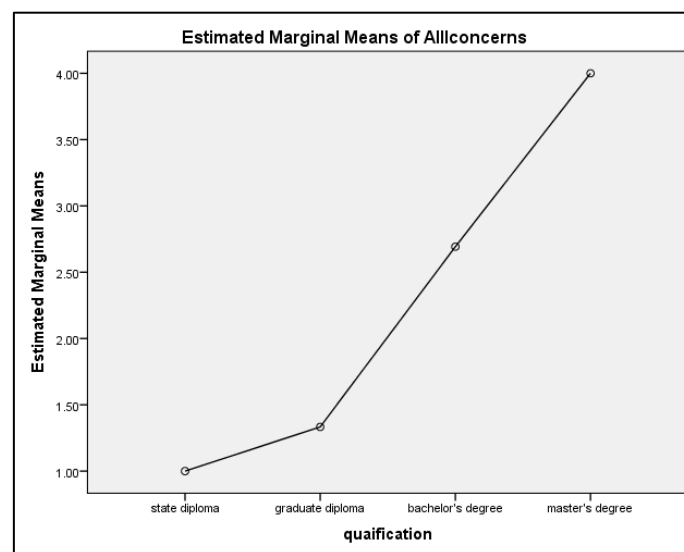

Figure 5: Means Plot for Total Teachers' Concerns of
Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities by Qualification

4.2.4. Teachers' Concerns of Implementation of Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities by Specialization

The results of the comparative analysis of the concerns of the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities by specialization are presented in Table 5. To achieve this comparative analysis, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the Sheaffe's test were used to ascertain the direction of the significant difference among the

mean scores as a post-hoc measure. The results displayed in Table 5 indicate that there is a significant difference between teachers' concerns of resources, difficulties, appropriateness and workload based on their specialization (p< 0.05). Teachers with specialization in technical subjects have significant concerns about resources, difficulties, appropriateness and workload compared to those with specialization in languages, human sciences, health, natural sciences, law, economics and management.

Table 5: Teachers' Concerns about the Implementation of Inclusive
Education for Students with Disabilities by Specialization

Factor	Groups	n	Mean	SD	SE	df	F	p	Sheaffe's test
Resources	Languages	30	1.10	0.30	0.0557	6	148.653	0.000	6>5,4,3,2,1
	Human sciences	40	2.60	0.49	0.0784				
	Health	2	3.00	0.00	0.0000				
	Natural sciences	30	3.00	0.00	0.0000				
	Technology	7	3.71	0.48	0.1844				
	Law, economics and management	7	4.00	0.00	0.0000				
	Technical	6	4.00	0.00	0.0000				
Difficulties	Languages	30	1.00	0.00	0.0000	6	144.688	0.000	6>5,4,3,2,1
	Human sciences	40	1.35	0.48	0.0763				
	Health	2	2.00	0.00	0.0000				
	Natural sciences	30	2.00	0.00	0.0000				
	Technology	7	2.85	0.37	0.1428				
	Law, economics and management	7	3.00	0.00	0.0000				
	Technical	6	4.00	0.00	0.0000				
Appropriateness	Languages	30	1.00	0.00	0.0000	6	94.100	0.000	6>5,4,3,2,1
	Human sciences	40	1.45	0.50	0.0796				
	Health	2	2.00	0.00	0.0000				
	Natural sciences	30	2.33	0.47	0.0875				
	Technology	7	3.00	0.00	0.0000				
	Law, economics and management	7	3.00	0.00	0.0000				
	Technical	6	4.00	0.00	0.0000				
Workload	Languages	30	1.00	0.00	0.0000	6	387.246	0.000	6>5,4,3,2,1
	Human sciences	40	1.97	0.15	0.0250				
	Health	2	2.00	0.00	0.0000				
	Natural sciences	30	2.83	0.37	0.0692				
	Technology	7	3.00	0.00	0.0000				
	Law, economics and management	7	4.00	0.00	.0000				
	Technical	6	4.00	0.00	.0000				

The findings imply that the teachers' concerns about the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities vary as the teachers' domain of specialization varies, as indicated in Figure 6 below.
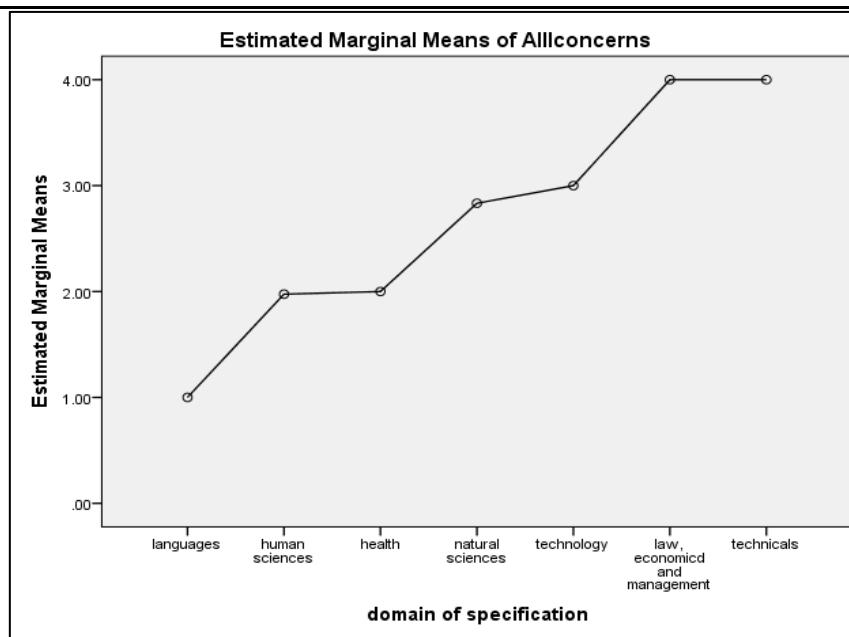
Figure 6: Means Plot for Total Teachers' Concerns about Inclusive
Education for Students with Disabilities by Domain of Specialization

5. Discussion

The findings presented in the previous section are discussed in this section in three major parts. The first part addresses the primary concerns that were revealed by the results. The subsequent section addresses the concerns as influenced by teachers' backgrounds. Finally, the implications for policy and practice will be discussed.

5.1. Primary Concern: Lack of Resources

This study sought to investigate the concerns of teachers in Protestant secondary schools in Bukavu regarding the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities. Despite supportive national policies and theological commitments, findings indicate that the most prominent concern among teachers is the lack of adequate resources. Teachers expressed particular concerns about insufficient financial support and the absence of specialized personnel, such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, and physiotherapists, to effectively support students with disabilities.

This concern aligns with existing literature and contextual realities in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where infrastructural and systemic constraints are widely documented. In Bukavu, a city marked by limited access to basic public services like water, electricity, and healthcare (Bisoka *et al.,* 2021), the implementation of inclusive education remains a significant challenge. Following the economic crisis of the 1980s and the ensuing structural adjustment policies, the national education budget declined sharply, reaching as low as 0.09% in 2005 and 0.37% in 2006 (Vitullo, 2006; UNESCO, 2006). Consequently, education in DRC has become highly dependent on parental contributions (Angotako, 2022), further burdening families already struggling to meet basic needs.

This financial strain is especially relevant when considering the additional costs associated with inclusive education, which include training, infrastructure modifications, and assistive technologies. The burden of financing these needs often shifts to parents, creating inequities and further complicating the realization of inclusive educational environments. Moreover, policy promises, such as those in the Sectoral Strategy for Education and Training (SSEF) 2016–2025, to partner with community organizations for resource provision have not been sufficiently realized. The unfulfilled nature of these promises underscores a critical gap between policy and practice.

5.2. Concerns Influenced by Teachers' Backgrounds

The study also revealed significant variation in concerns based on teachers' demographic and professional characteristics. Female teachers expressed more concerns about inclusive education than their male counterparts. This finding is consistent with psychological research suggesting that women tend to report higher levels of worry than men (Stavosky & Borkovec, 1988; cited in Robichaud *et al.*, 2003). This tendency may be partly rooted in gendered socialization and emotional expression, with women more likely to express vulnerability and concern. Moreover, Carol Gilligan (1982) posited that women often operate from an "ethic of care," emphasizing empathy, responsibility, and human dignity—values that align with Protestant theological principles such as the priesthood of all believers. Within this framework, female teachers may feel a deeper moral and spiritual responsibility toward ensuring equitable treatment of all students, including those with disabilities.

Additionally, the data indicate that concerns about inclusive education increase with age and academic qualification. Older and more experienced teachers, as well as those with advanced degrees, expressed greater concerns. This pattern corresponds with existing scientific discourse suggesting that seasoned educators may have a heightened awareness of the systemic and pedagogical barriers involved in inclusive education (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Sharma *et al.*, 2008). While more experience and education are generally associated with enhanced teaching competence, they may also amplify sensitivity to institutional deficiencies, such as the lack of training, support structures, and curriculum flexibility.

Differences in concern were also observed across subject specializations. Teachers in technical and scientific fields, in particular, reported higher levels of concern. This may stem from less exposure to inclusive pedagogical methods in their training or a perception that their subject matter is less adaptable to diverse learning needs. This is particularly significant in the context of the SSEF 2016–2025, which called for partnerships and infrastructural improvements to support students with disabilities in all disciplines. Given that the initiative is nearing its conclusion in 2025, the persistence of these concerns raises critical questions about the program's effectiveness and implementation: *Where are we now?*

5.3. Implications for Policy and Practice

Overall, these findings suggest that teacher concerns about inclusive education in Bukavu stem not from opposition to the idea itself, but from practical challenges and systemic inadequacies. While theological and policy frameworks may advocate for inclusion, their realization depends heavily on the provision of adequate resources, targeted training, and institutional support.

To move toward genuine inclusivity, professional development must be tailored to address the specific concerns of teachers, particularly those with more experience or from technical backgrounds. Gender-responsive training, as well as pedagogical tools suited to different disciplines, may also help bridge the gap between ideal and practice. Moreover, policy initiatives such as the SSEF must go beyond rhetoric and ensure tangible support reaches the school level.

In sum, while Protestant secondary school teachers in Bukavu recognize the value of inclusive education, their concerns highlight a stark disconnect between inclusive ideals and the material and institutional realities of their teaching environment. Addressing these concerns requires a coordinated effort among government bodies, religious institutions, and civil society actors to ensure that inclusive education is not only a policy goal but a lived reality.

6. Conclusion

This research set out to investigate the key concerns of teachers in Protestant secondary schools in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), regarding the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities. Despite the presence of supportive national policies, such as the Sectoral Strategy for Education and Training (SSEF) 2016–2025 ; and the strong theological commitment within Protestantism to justice, equality, and care for all individuals, teachers continue to express deep reservations about their capacity to realize inclusive education in practice.

The study clearly identified several interrelated concerns. The most prominent of these is the **lack of adequate resources**, which includes insufficient funding, inadequate infrastructure, and the near-complete absence of specialized support personnel like speech therapists and occupational therapists. Results indicate frustration that, although inclusion is promoted as a national and moral imperative, the practical tools necessary to support students with disabilities are lacking. This material deficiency reflects broader systemic issues in the DRC's educational landscape, including chronic underfunding, economic instability, and heavy reliance on parental contributions.

In addition to resource-related concerns, teachers expressed concerns about the **appropriateness and feasibility of inclusive education** within their specific classroom contexts. These concerns were amplified among educators in scientific and technical disciplines, who felt less prepared to adapt their content to diverse learning needs. Furthermore, more experienced and highly qualified teachers, along with female

teachers, demonstrated heightened levels of concern, suggesting that both pedagogical insight and gendered moral sensibilities influence perceptions of inclusion.

Thus, in response to the research question: **"What are the key concerns of Bukavu teachers in Protestant secondary schools about implementing inclusive education for students with disabilities, despite supportive national policies and theological commitments?"**. This study reveals that **teachers' concerns are rooted primarily in practical, rather than ideological, limitations**. While they are not opposed to the philosophy or moral imperative of inclusive education, they feel constrained by systemic inadequacies, particularly the lack of financial, human, and infrastructural support, as well as insufficient professional training tailored to inclusive practices.

Moreover, the findings highlight a **critical disconnection between inclusive policy/theology and classroom realities**. Although policies exist and theological frameworks promote care for all learners, these ideals have not been translated into actionable support at the school level. The result is a growing sense of disillusionment among teachers, who are asked to deliver inclusive education without the means to do so effectively.

To address these concerns, significant efforts must be made to close the policy-practice gap. This includes:

- **Targeted professional development** for teachers, especially those in technical subjects or with longer service histories;
- **Gender-sensitive training programs** that recognize and support the emotional and ethical burdens often felt more acutely by female educators;
- **Concrete investment in infrastructure and resources**, particularly at the local school level;
- **Accountability mechanisms** to ensure that promises made in national strategies like the SSEF are fulfilled.

It is therefore worth noting finally that if inclusive education in Bukavu Protestant secondary schools is to move beyond rhetoric, it must be grounded in a realistic appraisal of teachers' concerns and a commitment to systematically dismantling the barriers that hinder its implementation. Only through collaborative, well-resourced, and context-sensitive approaches can inclusive education become not just a policy ideal, but a lived and sustainable reality for all learners.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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