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Factors Shaping Teachers' Perceptions of Assessment Concessions: Evidence from South Africa

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Abstract: This study investigated the internal and external factors influencing South African teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment concessions for learners with barriers to learning. Grounded in the context of inclusive education, the study draws on data from a cross-sectional survey of 261 teachers from independent schools across all nine provinces. Although assessment concessions form a core mechanism for ensuring equity in South Africa's inclusive education system, limited research has examined the combined influence of teachers' internal dispositions and external systemic conditions on perceptions of their effectiveness. This study addresses this gap by offering one of the first large-scale

quantitative analyses in the South African independent-school sector. Exploratory factor analysis identified key dimensions related to attitudes, beliefs, policy challenges, and resource access. The findings reveal that, while teachers generally perceive assessment concessions as effective, internal factors, such as beliefs and values about inclusion and inequality, are not significantly associated with these perceptions. In contrast, external factors — particularly bureaucratic complexity and reluctance to attend training — were negatively associated with perceived effectiveness. These results suggest that practical barriers, rather than ideological resistance, pose the most significant challenge to implementation. The scientific novelty of the study lies in demonstrating that teachers' broader ideological orientations toward inclusion do not significantly shape their views on the effectiveness of concessions—contrary to dominant assumptions in international research. Instead, external system-level constraints emerge as the primary determinants. Methodologically, the study contributes a validated, multidimensional factor structure for investigating concession-related perceptions, offering a tool that can be adapted for future national monitoring. Theoretically, the findings extend inclusive education scholarship by highlighting the primacy of structural and procedural factors over attitudinal ones in shaping teacher behaviour. These insights have practical significance for policy and practice: strengthening administrative efficiency, improving district-level support, and providing contextually relevant teacher training may yield greater improvements than attempts to shift teacher beliefs. The study underscores the need for policy refinement, reduced administrative burdens, and enhanced professional development to bridge the gap between inclusive policy intent and classroom practice.

Keywords: assessment, concessions, external factors, inclusive education, internal factors, inclusive policy, teachers, perceptions.

Introduction

Since the adoption of inclusive education in South Africa through White Paper 6 (Department of Education [DoE], 2001), the Department of Basic Education has introduced successive policies—most notably the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (Department of Basic Education [DoBE], 2014) and the National Policy on Assessment Concessions (DoBE, 2011b)—to promote equitable assessment for learners experiencing barriers. Despite these reforms, significant implementation challenges persist: unclear guidelines, inadequate teacher training, resource shortages, and excessive administrative demands continue to frustrate practitioners (Grobbelaar, 2020; Hess, 2020; Malahlela & Johnson, 2024; Tshiloane & Sefotho, 2025).

A more profound and growing concern is whether assessment concessions genuinely support diverse learning needs or have become mere procedural accommodations that may undermine validity and fairness (Nisbet & Shaw, 2024; Townend & Alonzo, 2025). Teachers frequently report feeling disempowered to implement flexible, needs-based strategies, leading to confusion, inconsistent practice, and disillusionment (Malahlela & Sadiki, 2024; Moosa & Bekker, 2021).

Part of the explanation lies in the original policy design. Influenced by global inclusive education agendas and post-apartheid political imperatives, South African policy prioritised rapid, centrally driven reform (“efficiency”) over the sustained, context-sensitive processes required for genuine effectiveness (Rinquest & Simba, 2024). Two decades later, structural barriers—inadequate infrastructure, limited expert support, and chronic resource deficits—continue to undermine inclusion (Chirowamhangu, 2024; Motitswe, 2025). As Smit et al. (2020) observe, the transformation from “what was” to “what should be” remains stalled at “what is” (p. 7).

International evidence mirrors these tensions: even where inclusive assessment policies exist, teachers often perceive concessions as bureaucratic rather than pedagogically transformative (Nieminen, 2022; Tai et al., 2021). South African studies confirm that resource constraints, inconsistent district guidance, and prescriptive departmental directives shape negative perceptions among teachers of concessions (Johnson & Erasmus, 2025; Maree et al., 2023; Tshiloane & Sefotho, 2025). However, these studies essentially treat external barriers in isolation and pay less attention to how teachers' own attitudes, beliefs, values, and professional identities interact with these conditions when judging the effectiveness of concessions (Malahlela & Johnson, 2024; Moosa & Bekker, 2021). This interaction is critical. Assessment concessions sit at the intersection of policy intention and classroom reality; their success depends not only on external supports but on whether teachers see them as legitimate, fair, and educationally meaningful.

While assessment concessions form a key mechanism for supporting learners with barriers to learning, limited research has explored how teachers' internal and external factors shape their perceptions of concession effectiveness in South Africa's inclusive education context. This study aims to examine how internal (beliefs, values, attitudes) and external (structural, procedural, and resource-related) factors shape South African teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment concessions within an inclusive education system. By foregrounding these influences, the study seeks to move the conversation beyond compliance toward the design and implementation of concessions that genuinely enhance equity, learning outcomes, and inclusive practice for learners with diverse barriers.

Research Problem

Despite progressive policy efforts, teachers in South Africa continue to face systemic and administrative challenges in implementing assessment concessions. The gap between policy intent and classroom practice limits the effectiveness of inclusive education and undermines equitable assessment.

Research Focus

This study focuses on teachers' perceptions of assessment concessions and examines how internal (attitudes, beliefs, and values) and external (resources, training, policy structures) factors influence these perceptions.

Research Aim and Research Questions

This study aimed to determine how internal and external factors influence South African teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment concessions. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How are internal factors such as attitudes, beliefs, and values associated with teachers' perceptions of assessment concessions?
2. How do external factors such as training, resources, and policy constraints influence these perceptions?

Literature review

The effectiveness of assessment concessions in South Africa's inclusive education system hinges on the interplay between teachers' internal orientations and external structural conditions.

Internal Factors

Internal factors such as teachers' attitudes, beliefs, values, and ideologies significantly influence how they interpret and implement assessment concessions. Research shows that teachers' attitudes toward

inclusive assessment are influenced by external factors such as teacher training, self-efficacy, resource constraints, and the presence (or absence) of support structures within the school system, which reflects the dynamic reciprocal interplay between internal and external factors (e.g., Mahlaule et al., 2024; Malahlela & Johnson, 2024). Teachers who feel adequately equipped are more confident and optimistic about implementing concessions, whereas limited resources and weak support structures often lead to scepticism and perceptions that concessions are impractical (Maree et al., 2023). Thus, attitudes are deeply interconnected with teachers' access to support.

Beliefs also shape how teachers align assessment practices with learning objectives. Discrepancies between what teachers believe and what they do in practice often arise from gaps in training and assessment literacy (Doyle et al., 2021; Latif & Wasim, 2022; Singh et al., 2022). International and local scholarship highlights that strengthening assessment literacy, collaborative "assessment communities," and shared professional learning can help bridge these gaps (Fernández-Batanero et al., 2022; Nieminen, 2022). Research indicates that professional development on assessment should go beyond technical skills to include reflective, equity-oriented training that challenges teachers' beliefs about fairness, validity, and learner diversity (Shapovalov & Evans, 2022; Varier et al., 2024).

Teachers' worldview values — particularly views on equity, diversity, and historical inequalities — also influence how they perceive the purpose and fairness of concessions. In South Africa, persistent educational inequities shape whether teachers view concessions as necessary support or as preferential treatment (Johnson & Erasmus, 2025; Moosa & Bekker, 2021). When teachers prioritise standardisation and accountability over learner needs, they may resist concessions, perceiving them as threats to academic rigour or fairness (Hardy, 2021)

Ideologies embedded within broader policy and institutional systems further shape teachers' interpretations. Despite the Department of Basic Education's commitment to inclusive practices, slow policy implementation and entrenched traditional assessment norms continue to hinder progress (Mpu & Adu, 2021). Teachers often default to familiar forms of assessment because they perceive them as clearer markers of learners' abilities, thereby reinforcing ideological resistance to flexible assessment strategies.

External Factors

While internal attitudes and beliefs shape teachers' conceptual understanding, external conditions determine whether assessment concessions are seen as feasible. Chronic resource shortages—such as assistive technology, specialist personnel, and time—lead teachers to view concessions as administratively burdensome rather than supportive (Chakraborty et al., 2024; Darwish et al., 2025; Mpu & Adu, 2021).

In South Africa, district-level inconsistencies further complicate implementation: some districts provide strong support to SBSTs, while others are marked by delays and unclear communication, undermining teachers' trust in the process (Motitswe, 2025).

Rigid departmental policies, including the SIAS and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (DoBE, 2011a), are frequently criticised for emphasising compliance and documentation over flexibility and responsiveness. Strict procedural requirements and administrative load often disempower teachers and weaken their professional autonomy (Motitswe, 2025; Mpu & Adu, 2021). When teachers feel constrained by bureaucracy, their willingness to apply concessions meaningfully diminishes.

Gaps in initial teacher education and in-service training reinforce these challenges. Many teachers feel underprepared to respond to learner diversity, and existing training often focuses on conventional assessment tools rather than inclusive assessment principles. Without deeper assessment literacy,

concessions risk being applied mechanically rather than as intentional, learner-centred support (Mpu & Adu, 2021).

In summary, both internal orientations and external systemic constraints shape teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment concessions. Addressing training quality, reducing administrative burden, improving district support, and increasing resource availability are essential for transforming concessions from procedural requirements into meaningful mechanisms that advance inclusive education.

Materials and Methods

This study primarily sought to examine teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment concessions. Because perceptions are inherently subjective, a key methodological challenge was to capture these views in a way that ensured reliability and reduced researcher bias. For this reason, a quantitative research approach was employed, allowing the study to analyse patterns across a large, invited population and to generate findings that, while based on voluntary participation, offer broader analytical generalisability.

A quantitative paradigm was well-suited to the study's aims because it enabled the identification of underlying dimensions in teachers' perceptions and the statistical examination of how internal and external factors relate to these perceptions. This required measuring latent constructs and applying factor-analytic and correlational techniques. In addition to describing teachers' beliefs, the study aimed to provide a systematic, data-driven foundation that could inform and guide future research in the field. Collecting high-quality, generalisable data was therefore essential to enhancing the long-term value and applicability of the findings.

Sample and Participants

After obtaining approval from school management, the teachers were informed about the research study via a communal website accessible to the entire study population. A census-based sampling approach was used, in which the entire population of 3,579 teachers was invited to participate. Completion was voluntary, resulting in 261 usable responses. No incentives were offered to complete the survey. The survey was available for 6 weeks, allowing teachers to participate at their convenience. Two hundred sixty-five unique visitors completed the survey, with a 100% recruitment rate (all completed the survey). Survey completion time: 95% confidence interval for the mean was 4.45–8.95 minutes. Four respondents were excluded because their completion time was under 4.5 minutes, based on pilot study findings. The final sample size analysed was 261 respondents.

Instrument and Procedure

The survey was voluntary, anonymous, and self-developed, consisting of 47 questions. It was piloted and reviewed by four knowledgeable professionals to ensure relevance. During piloting, reviewers assessed item clarity, content validity, and alignment with the constructs being measured. Feedback led to minor wording revisions, the removal of redundant items, and reordering to improve flow. Pilot data were also used to check completion time, identify items with ambiguous wording, and review preliminary internal consistency, which informed the decision to exclude surveys completed in less than 4.5 minutes.

The survey consisted of four biographical questions, two questions on respondents' familiarity with White Paper 6 and the SIAS policy, and 41 Likert-type questions relating to respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment concessions and internal and external factors that could be related to these perceptions.

While biographical questions were not randomised, the main content items were randomised. Respondents had to answer all questions before proceeding, and could review their responses using a back button before final submission. Survey Monkey was configured to prevent duplicate submissions via cookies and IP tracking, ensuring each participant completed the survey only once. SurveyMonkey captured IP addresses to ensure unique participation. While IP tracking is not always entirely reliable, all respondents used their own computers, enhancing data validity.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the institutional research ethics committee (University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education: Ethics Protocol No: EDU122/22). Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained electronically before access to the survey. No identifying personal data was collected, and all responses were anonymous. SurveyMonkey's security features, including password-protected access and encrypted data storage, were used to protect participant information. IP addresses were used only to prevent duplicate submissions and were not stored in the final dataset. Participants could withdraw at any time before submission.

Data Analysis

As stated earlier, a total of 261 teachers completed the survey, with the majority indicating their job description as "classroom teacher" (96.6%), followed by 1.5% indicating "site-based support teacher", 1.1% "remedial teacher", and 0.8% "special needs teacher". The majority of teachers had 10 to 20 years of teaching experience (28.7%), followed closely by 5 to 10 years (25.3%), more than 20 years (24.1%), and 1 to 5 years (21.8%). The sample represented all 9 provinces in South Africa, with Gauteng having the highest representation (53.6%) and the Free State the lowest (1.9%). When asked about the highest qualification, almost half indicated they hold Bachelor's degrees (49.8%), almost a quarter had an honours degree (26.4%), almost one-fifth had a Diploma in education (18.0%), and the remaining 5.8% indicated they hold a master's or doctoral degree.

The respondents were also asked how familiar they were with White Paper 6 and the SIAS Policy, with the majority (69.0% White Paper 6; 68.2% SIAS Policy) indicating they were familiar with 60% or less of it, with only around one-tenth of teachers indicating they were familiar with 80% or more of the content of these two documents.

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to explore the underlying factor structure of the Likert-type items with response options 1 = "strongly disagree" to 4 = "strongly agree". A couple of iterations were done, as the first round involved using all the items; however, some items were dropped iteratively because the communalities and factor loadings were too low. We removed items with communalities below 0.4 (Eaton et al., 2019) and factor loadings below 0.5 (Steenkamp & Maydeu-Olivares, 2023). As this was an iterative process, the EFA was conducted a couple of times, with items not meeting the cut-off criteria being dropped at each iteration, and only the final EFA is reported here. Eight factors were extracted, explaining 63.8% of the variance, and the component correlation matrix is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Component Correlation Matrix of the EFA

Component	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	1.000	0.223	0.041	-0.126	0.293	-0.152	-0.115	0.202
2	0.223	1.000	-0.103	-0.038	0.336	-0.055	0.019	0.212

3	0.041	-0.103	1.000	0.208	0.005	0.166	0.054	-0.102
4	-0.126	-0.038	0.208	1.000	-0.004	0.037	0.130	-0.099
5	0.293	0.336	0.005	-0.004	1.000	-0.098	0.026	0.322
6	-0.152	-0.055	0.166	0.037	-0.098	1.000	0.055	0.014
7	-0.115	0.019	0.054	0.130	0.026	0.055	1.000	-0.008
8	0.202	0.212	-0.102	-0.099	0.322	0.014	-0.008	1.000

From Table 1, it can be seen that 8 components were extracted, exhibiting correlations (in absolute values) spanning from 0.004 to 0.336; thus, using an oblique rotation, specifically Promax rotation, was used as it allows for components to be correlated, which, from Table 1, we see they are (some are so highly correlated that the correlations have a medium to large effect size¹). The KMO value of the final EFA is 0.726, which is above the minimum cut-off of 0.5 (Schreiber, 2021), indicating that the data are suitable for factor analysis. The p -value of Bartlett's test of sphericity is statistically significant ($\chi^2(300) = 1,829.01, p < 0.001$), indicating that sufficient correlations exist among the items to proceed with an EFA (Hair et al., 2019). The extracted factors and the corresponding items are shown in Table 2, with items with negative factor loadings being reverse-scored before factor creation.

Table 2

Eight Extracted Factors and Corresponding Items and Item Loadings

Factor, number of items, and interpretation	Items	Factor loading
Factor 1: Perception of the effectiveness of assessment concessions (7 items)	V13: Assessment concessions enable learners with barriers to learning to achieve according to their potential.	0.817
	V16: Assessment concessions minimize the barrier to learning.	0.747
	V22: I support the idea of assessment concessions for learners with barriers to learning.	0.711
	V24: Assessment concessions give learners with concessions an unfair advantage over learners who do not have concessions.	-0.693
	V23: I do not believe assessment concessions are an effective way to assess learners with barriers to learning.	-0.679
	V15: Assessment concessions give the learner with barriers to learning an unfair advantage over their peers.	-0.611
	V25: Assessment concessions are not an effective way to assess learners with barriers because they only accommodate the barrier and do not help the learner overcome the barrier.	-0.500
Factor 2: Challenges in implementing assessment concessions due to bureaucracy and policy (3 items)	V40: Strict requirements in terms of the paperwork for the application of assessment concessions make it impossible for teachers to implement assessment concessions.	0.896
	V39: Strict policy guidelines on the procedures that must be followed during assessment concessions make it impossible for teachers to implement assessment concessions.	0.867
	V37: I am reluctant to implement assessment concessions because the process which starts at identifying a learner who needs assessment concessions up to the time it is approved, takes too long.	0.521
Factor 3: Access to training and resources (3 items)	V41: I receive adequate training from School Management in supporting learners with barriers to learning.	0.774
	V42: I received adequate resources like augmentative devices (for deaf learners), support staff and technological aids to	0.726

¹ The correlation coefficient itself is a measure of effect size with values of 0.1, 0.3 and 0.5 representing small, medium and large effect sizes, respectively (Téllez et al., 2015); thus, for any correlations larger than small effect size (> 0.1), Promax rotation, allowing for factors to be correlated, is an appropriate rotation method to use.

	support learners with barriers to learning during assessment concessions.	
	V44: School Management provide sufficient training opportunities with assessment concessions; teachers are just reluctant to attend these opportunities.	0.716
Factor 4: Teacher self-perception of teaching and support effectiveness (3 items)	V26: Assessment outcomes reflect how well I teach.	0.888
	V28: I believe that assessment outcomes do not necessarily reflect my ability to teach.	-0.788
	V27: Assessment outcomes reflect how well I provide support and intervention to learners with barriers to learning.	0.592
Factor 5: Reluctance to attend training due to misalignment with classroom reality (2 items)	V45: I do not attend training sessions because policy requirements and what is workable in my classroom do not align.	0.922
	V46: I do not attend training sessions on concession assessments because if I attend these sessions, the school will expect me to do all the administration regarding concessions.	0.878
Factor 6: School and teachers' personal beliefs in supporting inclusive education (3 items)	V7: The school I work at has enough resources in terms of staff and classrooms to conduct assessment concessions.	0.752
	V8: My school supports inclusive education.	0.729
	V9: I believe in the principles of inclusive education.	0.587
Factor 7: Perceptions of inequality and the role of assessment concessions (2 items)	V30: Inequality exists and is inevitable even if learners are supported with assessment concessions.	-0.854
	V31: No inequality exists, everyone is equal, and even if a learner is assisted with assessment concessions it does not mean the learner is inferior to their peers.	0.770
Factor 8: Beliefs on independence in implementing assessment concessions (2 items)	V35: I am resourceful enough to access the necessary equipment such as augmentative devices, technology, venues and knowledge to implement assessment concessions without the help or training from School Management.	0.827
	V12: Learners with barriers to learning will do better in special education classrooms.	-0.596

It should be noted that some researchers have advocated against there being only 2 items on a factor; for example, according to Raubenheimer (2004), while it is occasionally possible to identify multi-factor scales using only 2 items per factor, this should be considered an exception. Typically, at least three items need to load substantially on each factor to establish the validity of a multidimensional scale. The likelihood of a factor being replicable increases with the number of items associated with it (Little et al., 1999; Velicer & Fava, 1998). Therefore, maintaining at least three items per factor is generally advised. Nevertheless, many reliable and valid scales being used today have factors with only 2 items per scale; see, for example, the GAD-2 scale used to assess the severity of an individual's anxiety symptoms (Hughes et al., 2018) and the PHQ-2 scale, which is a 2-item Patient Health Questionnaire (Gómez-Gómez et al., 2023). Accordingly, the factors with 2 items have been retained in this study.

Factor 1 concerns perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment concessions. Factors 4, 6, 7 and 8 are internal factors, such as attitudes and beliefs, beliefs which could be associated with teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment concessions (RQ1), and Factors 2, 3 and 5 are external factors such as training and support that could be associated with teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment concessions (RQ2). Before these associations can be tested, the survey's reliability and validity are assessed.

Reliability and Validity

To establish the instrument's reliability, the composite reliability (CR) values for each factor, which represent the internal consistency of each factor, were calculated. A CR of 0.6 or greater is deemed acceptable in exploratory research and a value of 0.7 in general (Hair et al., 2019). Since this instrument was used for the first time in this context, the EFA factor loadings (see Table 3) were used to compute the CR, with a cut-off point of 0.6. Table 3 shows the CR values for all factors above 0.6, thereby establishing the instrument's reliability.

Table 3

Reliability and Convergent Validity Measures

Factor/Construct	Number of items	CR	AVE
Factor 1: Perception of the effectiveness of assessment concessions.	7	0.859	0.471
Factor 2: Challenges in implementing assessment concessions due to bureaucracy and policy.	3	0.816	0.609
Factor 3: Access to training and resources.	3	0.783	0.546
Factor 4: Teacher self-perception of teaching and support effectiveness.	3	0.806	0.587
Factor 5: Reluctance to attend training due to misalignment with classroom reality.	2	0.895	0.810
Factor 6: School and teachers' personal beliefs in supporting inclusive education.	3	0.733	0.481
Factor 7: Perceptions of inequality and the role of assessment concessions.	2	0.796	0.661
Factor 8: Beliefs on independence in implementing assessment concessions.	2	0.678	0.520

To establish the instrument's validity, construct validity was assessed, comprising convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity reflects the extent to which all items of a construct converge, thereby explaining the variance of the items and is established when the average variance extracted (AVE) of the construct is higher than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019). The AVE values for Factors 1 and 6 are slightly below the cut-off acceptable value of 0.5, and, accordingly, for each factor, the item with the weakest factor loading was removed. After doing this, Factor 1 consisted of 6 items with a CR of 0.806 and an AVE of 0.508, and Factor 6 consisted of 2 items with a CR of 0.708 and an AVE of 0.548, meeting the acceptable cut-off criteria for CR and AVE, respectively.

Discriminant validity is the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs and is verified when the value of correlations between constructs is less than the square root of the AVEs of their constructs (Hair et al., 2019). Table 4 shows the correlations between the constructs, with the square root of the AVE in brackets; the absolute values of the correlations are less than the square root of the AVE, thereby establishing discriminant validity. Thus, by demonstrating both convergent and discriminant validity, the instrument's construct validity has been established.

Table 4

Discriminant Validity Measures

	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Factor4	Factor5	Factor6	Factor7	Factor 8
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Factor 1	(0.712)							
Factor 2	-0.263	(0.780)						
Factor 3	-0.019	-0.182	(0.739)					
Factor 4	0.080	-0.082	0.167	(0.766)				
Factor 5	-0.273	0.280	-0.177	-0.095	(0.900)			
Factor 6	0.041	-0.165	0.274	0.057	-0.160	(0.741)		
Factor 7	0.112	-0.041	-0.001	0.167	-0.105	0.147	(0.813)	
Factor 8	0.120	-0.179	0.222	0.096	-0.073	0.101	0.039	(0.721)

Results

First, we present the descriptive statistics for the factors (see Table 5) before examining associations. In Table 5, the mean (*M*), median (*Mdn*), standard deviation (*SD*) and the interquartile range (*IQR*) are given for each factor.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Each Factor

Factor and their interpretation	<i>M (Mdn)</i>	<i>SD (IQR)</i>
Factor 1: Perception of the effectiveness of assessment concessions. The higher the value, the stronger the perception that assessment concessions are effective.	3.06 (3.00)	0.46 (0.50)
Factor 2: Challenges in implementing assessment concessions due to bureaucracy and policy. The higher the value, the more strongly in agreement teachers are that bureaucracy and policy are creating challenges in implementing assessment concessions.	2.49 (2.33)	0.58 (1.00)
Factor 3: Access to training and resources. The higher the values, the more strongly in agreement teachers are that they have adequate access to training and resources relating to supporting learners with barriers.	2.19 (2.00)	0.55 (0.67)
Factor 4: Teacher self-perception of teaching and support effectiveness. The higher the values, the more strongly in agreement teachers are that assessment outcomes reflect how well they teach and support learners with barriers	2.27 (2.33)	0.52 (0.67)
Factor 5: Reluctance to attend training due to misalignment with classroom reality. The higher the values, the more reluctance there is from teachers to attending training due to misalignment with classroom reality	2.14 (2.00)	0.59 (0.50)
Factor 6: School and teachers' personal beliefs in supporting inclusive education. The higher the values, the more strongly teachers and their schools believe in the concept of inclusive education	2.91 (3.00)	0.60 (0.50)
Factor 7: Perceptions of inequality and the role of assessment concessions. The higher the values, the more strongly teachers agree that no inequality exists and that everyone is equal	2.41 (2.50)	0.62 (1.00)
Factor 8: Beliefs on independence in implementing assessment concessions. The higher the values, the more strongly teachers agree learners should not be in special ed classes and that they believe they are resourceful enough to look after these learners in their own classrooms	2.11 (2.00)	0.56 (1.00)

Since the Likert scale ranged from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 4 ("strongly agree"), the midpoint is 2.5. For Factor 1, both the mean and median are above this midpoint, suggesting that teachers generally perceive assessment concessions as effective. Factor 2 shows mean and median values below 2.5, indicating that teachers do not believe bureaucracy and policy present significant challenges to implementing these

concessions. For Factor 3, mean and median values are also below the midpoint, suggesting teachers feel they lack sufficient access to training and resources to support learners with barriers. Factor 4 results, with values below 2.5, indicate disagreement among teachers about whether assessment outcomes accurately measure how well they support such learners. Factor 5's mean and median below 2.5 indicate that teachers are generally willing to attend training on working with learners with barriers.

In contrast, the values for Factor 6, above 2.5, reveal strong support for inclusive education among schools and teachers. Factor 7 presents a borderline case, with a median of 2.5, indicating teachers are undecided about the existence of inequality. Lastly, for Factor 8, values below 2.5 reflect teachers' belief that learners with special needs are better served in specialised education settings rather than mainstream classrooms.

In summary, the analysis of Likert-scale responses reveals varying perceptions among teachers regarding assessment concessions and related factors, with many not viewing bureaucracy and policy related to it as a significant obstacle. There is also a prevalent belief that teachers lack sufficient training and resources to effectively support learners with barriers. However, most are open to receiving training on supporting learners with barriers and strongly support the concept of inclusive education. Teachers express mixed views on whether assessment outcomes accurately reflect their teaching effectiveness, with the majority feeling that they do not. Opinions are divided on the existence of educational inequality, with some uncertainty remaining. Finally, the majority of teachers believe that learners with special needs are better suited to specialised educational environments rather than mainstream classrooms.

In addressing the research questions, we examine the correlations between Factor 1 and the other factors. Nonparametric Spearman correlations (r_s) were utilised instead of parametric Pearson correlations (r), as the factors were not normally distributed (Shapiro-Wilk p -value < 0.05).

RQ1: How are internal factors like attitudes, beliefs, worldview values, and ideologies associated with teachers' perception of the effectiveness of assessment concessions?

Factors 4, 6, 7, and 8 speak to internal factors, and their correlations with Factor 1 (perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment accommodations) are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Correlations between Factor 1 (Perception of the Effectiveness of Assessment Concessions) and the Internal Factors

		Factor1
Factor 4: Teacher self-perception of teaching and support effectiveness	r_s	0.080
	p	0.198
Factor 6: School and teachers' personal beliefs in supporting inclusive education	r_s	0.041
	p	0.511
Factor 7: Perceptions of inequality and the role of assessment concessions	r_s	0.112
	p	0.070
Factor 8: Beliefs on independence in implementing assessment concessions	r_s	0.120
	p	0.054

From Table 6, it can be seen that there are no statistically significant associations between the internal factors and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment concessions.

RQ2: How do external factors like training, resources, support from district offices, and Departmental prescriptions influence teachers' perception of the effectiveness of assessment concessions?

Factors 2, 3, and 5 speak to external factors, and their correlations with Factor 1 (perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment accommodations) are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Correlations between Factor 1 (Perception of the Effectiveness of Assessment Concessions) and the External Factors

		Factor1
Factor 2: Challenges in implementing assessment concessions due to bureaucracy and policy	<i>rs</i>	-0.263
	<i>p</i>	<0.001*
Factor 3: Access to training and resources	<i>rs</i>	-0.019
	<i>p</i>	0.760
Factor 5: Reluctance to attend training due to misalignment with classroom reality	<i>rs</i>	-0.273
	<i>p</i>	<0.001*

From Table 7, it can be seen that there are two statistically significant associations between the external factors and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment concessions. The negative correlation between Factors 1 and 2 ($rs = -0.263, p < 0.001$) indicates that the less that teachers believe that bureaucracy and policy create challenges for implementing assessment concessions, the stronger their perception that assessment concessions are effective. The negative correlation between Factors 1 and 5 ($rs = -0.273, p < 0.001$) indicates that the less teacher reluctance to attend training related to learners with barriers, the stronger their perception that assessment concessions are effective.

Discussion

This study explored how internal and external factors influence South African teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment concessions in inclusive education. The analysis of Likert-scale data provided nuanced insights, revealing that while teachers generally view assessment concessions as effective, the underlying factors shaping these perceptions differ in impact.

The findings show that internal factors — such as teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and values about inclusive education and inequality — were not significantly associated with their perceptions of assessment concessions. This is somewhat unexpected, given prior research emphasising the role of internal dispositions in shaping teachers' engagement with inclusive practices (Jatileni et al., 2023; Mamabolo et al., 2021).

Despite theoretical alignment between support for inclusion and the goals of assessment concessions, personal beliefs did not appear to significantly influence whether teachers perceived these concessions as effective (de Boer et al., 2022; Mamabolo et al., 2021).

One possible explanation is that assessment concessions constitute an efficient component of policy implementation, in which logistical and systemic constraints weigh more heavily than ideological orientation. Teachers' perceptions in this context may be more immediately shaped by tangible factors—such as workload, procedural clarity, and access to resources—than by their broader beliefs about equity or inclusion (Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), 2023; Mahlaule et al., 2024; Tshiloane & Sefotho, 2025).

In contrast, external factors did show statistically significant associations with perceptions of effectiveness. Specifically, teachers who reported fewer challenges related to bureaucracy and policy (Factor 2) and those who were less reluctant to attend training (Factor 5) were more likely to view assessment concessions as effective. These findings align with international studies (e.g., Hollings, 2021) and recent African research demonstrating that systemic barriers—such as policy overload, insufficient training, and administrative inefficiencies — are significant impediments to the implementation of inclusive assessment strategies (Chirowamhangu, 2024; Mahlaule et al., 2024).

These results underscore a key concern: when teachers feel overwhelmed by bureaucratic procedures or unsupported in their professional development, their confidence in assessment accommodations diminishes. For many, the process of applying for and managing concessions is not only time-consuming but also complicated by unclear responsibilities and inconsistent support from district offices (DoBE, 2024; Matolo & Rambuda, 2022; Ndou & Omidire, 2022).

Encouragingly, the data also suggest that teachers remain broadly supportive of inclusive education, even if their experience with implementing concessions is mixed. Their willingness to engage in professional development — when adequately supported — may represent an important lever for improving both practice and perceptions. Therefore, the emphasis should shift toward creating conditions that enable meaningful participation in ongoing training and reduce the procedural barriers that limit the perceived and actual utility of concessions (Sepadi & Themane, 2025).

Ultimately, these findings highlight the need for policy refinement, with an emphasis on streamlining administrative processes, increasing the availability of school-based support, and enhancing practical training on implementing concessions. Without such changes, even the most well-intentioned policies risk being undermined by the very systems meant to uphold them (Mahlaule et al., 2024; Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022).

Conclusion

In summary, this study revealed that external factors — particularly bureaucratic and procedural burdens, and teachers' willingness to engage in professional development — emerged as the dominant influences on South African teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of assessment concessions. At the same time, internal beliefs and values showed no significant association. Teachers who experience fewer administrative hurdles and lower reluctance toward training are markedly more likely to view concessions positively. These findings, which align with recent evidence from both South Africa and diverse global contexts, underscore the urgent need to streamline administrative processes and strengthen practical, ongoing professional development. Only by reducing these systemic barriers can assessment concessions truly serve as equitable tools of inclusion rather than additional burdens on already overstretched educators.

Suggestions for Future Research

Building on the findings of this study, several avenues for future research emerge that could deepen understanding of how assessment concessions function within South Africa's inclusive education system. Because the results indicate that external, systemic factors—rather than teachers' internal beliefs—most strongly influence perceptions of concession effectiveness, future research should prioritise examining the broader organisational and policy environments in which teachers work. Mixed methods approaches, in particular, would offer valuable insight by combining the statistical patterns identified here with rich qualitative accounts of teachers' lived experiences. Such designs could illuminate how concession procedures unfold in practice, where teachers encounter barriers, and how these processes differ across diverse school settings.

Given the persistent inequalities that characterise South Africa's education landscape, comparative studies between public and independent schools would help determine whether systemic challenges, such as bureaucratic complexity or limited training opportunities, are experienced uniformly or disproportionately affect specific sectors. Understanding these contextual differences would support more targeted policy interventions to enhance the fairness and consistency of concession implementation.

In addition, research is needed to examine the long-term impacts of policy refinement—particularly efforts to simplify concession procedures—on teachers' capacity to implement inclusive assessment practices effectively. Longitudinal studies could shed light on whether reducing administrative demands improves not only teachers' perceptions of concessions but also the actual quality of support learners receive. Such evidence would be valuable for informing ongoing policy development and guiding the Department of Basic Education in refining systems that currently hinder practice.

Finally, given the significance of training reluctance in shaping teachers' perceptions, future research should examine how teacher education programmes and in-service training initiatives incorporate assessment literacy for inclusive education. Investigating the adequacy of current training models and how they can be strengthened to enhance teachers' confidence and competence would contribute to building a more robust support system for inclusive assessment nationwide.

Collectively, these research directions would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how assessment concessions can function as meaningful tools for inclusion. They would also help ensure that policy reforms, professional development strategies, and school-level practices are informed by evidence that reflects the realities faced by South African teachers.

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Conflict of Interest

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