

Teachers' Strategies, Needs and Challenges in the Implementation of Inclusive Education

Ryan B. Baldove

Guimaras State University, Mclain, Buenavista Guimaras

Abstract

This study explored the strategies, needs, and challenges of teachers in implementing inclusive education in the Schools Division of Iloilo, Iloilo, Philippines, during School Year 2024–2025. Specifically, it aimed to describe the profile of teacher-respondents, determine the extent to which inclusive strategies are practiced in classrooms, identify teachers' professional and resource-related needs, assess the challenges they encounter, examine significant differences based on selected demographic variables, and analyze the relationships among strategies, needs, and challenges. The respondents consisted of 377 randomly selected public elementary and secondary school teachers. Data were gathered through a researcher-developed questionnaire that underwent validation and pilot testing, and were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, rank, t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson r correlation at a 0.05 level of significance. Results showed that teachers practiced inclusive education strategies at a high level, with differentiated instruction, peer-assisted learning, and the use of adaptive materials emerging as the most commonly applied approaches. Teachers' needs were rated very high, particularly in terms of specialized training, adaptive instructional materials, and assistive technologies, while challenges were rated high, with large class sizes, limited resources, and insufficient training identified as major concerns. Significant differences were found in strategies, needs, and challenges across selected profile variables, and correlation analysis revealed strong positive relationships among these variables. The findings underscore the importance of sustained professional development, adequate instructional resources, and strong institutional support to strengthen the implementation of inclusive education.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Teachers' Strategies, Teachers' Needs, Teaching Challenges, Differentiated Instruction, Self-Efficacy, Professional Development, Schools Division of Iloilo

Introduction

Inclusive education emphasizes the provision of equitable and quality learning opportunities for all learners, regardless of their differences in abilities, backgrounds, or circumstances. It promotes accessibility, participation, and respect for diversity, ensuring that no learner is marginalized due to physical, intellectual, social, or emotional differences (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). The effective implementation of inclusive education relies heavily on teachers, particularly on their instructional strategies, professional competencies, and capacity to address the diverse needs of learners (Ainscow, 2020). Teachers play a crucial role in fostering inclusive classroom environments by adapting instruction, implementing learner-centered approaches, and cultivating a culture of acceptance and support.

In the Philippine context, inclusive education has been institutionalized through policies of the Department of Education (DepEd), which require public schools to implement programs that address the needs of

learners with disabilities and other learning differences (DepEd, 2017). Teachers are expected to apply learner-centered strategies, provide individualized support, and utilize adaptive instructional materials to ensure meaningful access to the curriculum (Loreman, 2010). However, despite these policy mandates, teachers often encounter challenges related to limited resources, inadequate training, and classroom management issues when implementing inclusive practices (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012).

Gaining a deeper understanding of teachers' strategies, needs, and challenges is essential in improving inclusive education outcomes. Effective practices such as differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, peer-assisted strategies, and the integration of assistive technologies can enhance learner engagement and achievement. At the same time, challenges such as large class sizes, limited instructional resources, insufficient professional training, and the complexity of addressing diverse learning needs may hinder effective implementation (Forlin, 2010). Teachers' ability to manage these factors directly influences learners' academic performance, participation, and social inclusion.

This study focused on 377 teachers in the Schools Division of Iloilo, Iloilo, Philippines, during School Year 2024–2025, with the aim of examining the strategies they employ, the support and resources they need, and the challenges they face in implementing inclusive education. The findings of the study are intended to provide valuable inputs for policy makers, school administrators, and teacher education institutions in strengthening inclusive education initiatives and improving educational outcomes for all learners.

Specifically, this study sought to determine the profile of teacher-respondents in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, years of teaching experience, position, and school level. It also examined the instructional strategies used by teachers to address diverse learner needs, identified the resources and support mechanisms required for effective inclusive practice, and assessed the challenges encountered, including large class sizes, limited resources, and insufficient training. Furthermore, the study aimed to identify significant differences in teachers' strategies, needs, and challenges when grouped according to selected profile variables and to analyze the relationships among these variables within the context of inclusive education. The results are expected to inform policies, administrative decisions, and professional development programs that promote equitable access to quality education.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine teachers' strategies, needs, and challenges in implementing inclusive education in the Schools Division of Iloilo, Iloilo, Philippines, during School Year 2024–2025. The descriptive-correlational approach was used to describe existing practices and to determine the relationships among variables without manipulating them (Creswell, 2014). The respondents consisted of 377 teachers randomly selected from public elementary and secondary schools within the division. The use of random sampling ensured that all teachers had an equal opportunity to participate, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the sample. The respondents were categorized according to age, sex, educational attainment, years of teaching experience, position, and school level to examine variations across demographic characteristics.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire that was validated by experts in inclusive education and pilot-tested to ensure reliability and clarity. The instrument comprised three main sections: teachers' strategies, which assessed instructional approaches and classroom practices in inclusive settings; teachers' needs, which examined the resources, training, and support required to implement inclusive

education effectively; and teachers' challenges, which identified the difficulties encountered in accommodating diverse learners.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and rank, to determine the levels of strategies, needs, and challenges. Inferential statistics such as t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Pearson r correlation were used to identify significant differences across teacher profile variables and to examine relationships among strategies, needs, and challenges. All statistical analyses were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of responses, were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study.

Results

The study examined teachers' strategies, needs, and challenges in implementing inclusive education among 377 teachers in the Schools Division of Iloilo during School Year 2024–2025. The results are presented in terms of the extent of strategies employed, teachers' identified needs, challenges encountered, and differences and relationships across selected profile variables.

With regard to teachers' strategies, the overall mean score was 4.21, interpreted as high, indicating that inclusive education strategies were frequently employed. Differentiated instruction obtained the highest mean score ($M = 4.35$), followed by peer-assisted learning ($M = 4.27$) and the adaptation of instructional materials ($M = 4.19$). The integration of assistive technology received a slightly lower mean score ($M = 4.02$), suggesting the need for further enhancement in the use of digital tools to support inclusive instruction.

In terms of teachers' needs, the overall mean score was 4.37, interpreted as very high, reflecting a strong demand for additional support and resources. The highest-rated needs included specialized training on inclusive teaching practices ($M = 4.48$), provision of adaptive learning materials ($M = 4.42$), and access to assistive technologies ($M = 4.36$). Teachers also expressed substantial needs for peer collaboration and mentoring ($M = 4.30$) as well as administrative support ($M = 4.25$).

Teachers' challenges were rated high, with an overall mean of 4.18. Large class sizes emerged as the most significant challenge ($M = 4.40$), followed by limited resources ($M = 4.31$), insufficient training ($M = 4.27$), and the complexity of addressing diverse learning needs ($M = 4.18$). Other notable challenges included limited time for lesson preparation ($M = 4.05$) and difficulties in monitoring learner progress ($M = 4.02$).

Inferential analysis revealed significant differences in strategies and needs based on years of teaching experience ($p = 0.041$) and educational attainment ($p = 0.038$), indicating that teachers with more experience and higher educational qualifications tended to use inclusive strategies more frequently and reported greater needs for support. Significant differences in challenges were observed across school level ($p = 0.029$) and class size ($p = 0.034$), highlighting the influence of structural factors on teachers' experiences.

Correlation analysis showed a strong positive relationship between teachers' strategies and needs ($r = 0.662$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that teachers who actively implement inclusive strategies also recognize a greater need for resources and support. A moderate positive relationship was found between strategies and challenges ($r = 0.524$, $p = 0.002$), suggesting that increased implementation of strategies is associated with greater awareness of challenges. Similarly, a moderate positive correlation between needs and challenges

($r = 0.577$, $p = 0.001$) reflected that higher perceived needs align with greater recognition of implementation barriers.

Overall, the results indicate that while teachers actively practice inclusive education strategies, they continue to face substantial challenges and express a strong need for sustained professional development, adequate resources, and institutional support.

Discussion

The findings highlight teachers' active engagement in implementing inclusive education, particularly through differentiated instruction and peer-assisted learning, which align with globally recognized best practices that emphasize learner-centered and flexible instructional approaches (Loreman, 2010; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). The relatively lower use of assistive technologies points to the need for targeted training and improved access to technological resources, consistent with previous studies indicating that technology integration remains a challenge in inclusive classrooms (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012). The very high level of teachers' needs reflects their awareness of the essential support required to sustain inclusive practices. Professional development, adaptive instructional materials, and collaborative support systems are critical in enabling teachers to address diverse learner needs effectively and promote equitable learning opportunities (Forlin, 2010).

The high level of challenges, particularly those related to large class sizes and limited resources, underscores systemic barriers that may constrain teachers' capacity to implement inclusive education. These findings support Ainscow's (2020) assertion that structural and institutional constraints significantly influence the success of inclusive initiatives.

The strong correlations among strategies, needs, and challenges suggest that teachers' commitment to inclusive education heightens their awareness of both the resources required and the obstacles encountered. This dynamic relationship emphasizes the importance of aligning teacher initiatives with institutional support and policy interventions to strengthen inclusive education implementation.

Conclusion

The study concludes that teachers in the Schools Division of Iloilo actively implement inclusive education strategies, particularly differentiated instruction, peer-assisted learning, and the adaptation of instructional materials. Despite their strong commitment, teachers face considerable challenges, including large class sizes, limited resources, and insufficient training, which may limit the effectiveness of inclusive practices. Teachers also express very high needs for professional development, adaptive learning materials, and administrative and peer support to enhance their capacity for inclusive teaching.

Significant differences in strategies, needs, and challenges were observed based on years of teaching experience, educational attainment, school level, and class size, indicating that both teacher characteristics and structural conditions influence inclusive education implementation. The identified relationships among strategies, needs, and challenges highlight the interconnected nature of instructional practices, support requirements, and classroom realities. Overall, the findings emphasize the need for sustained institutional support, targeted training, and adequate resource provision to optimize inclusive education outcomes.

Recommendations

Teachers are encouraged to continue using learner-centered approaches such as differentiated instruction,

peer-assisted learning, and adaptive materials, while gradually integrating assistive technologies to further support inclusive classroom practices.

School administrators should organize continuous professional development programs focused on inclusive education strategies, classroom management, and effective use of educational technologies to address diverse learner needs.

The Department of Education and policy makers should ensure the adequate provision of instructional resources, adaptive learning materials, and support personnel to address challenges related to large class sizes and limited resources.

Collaborative practices among teachers should be strengthened through mentoring, peer coaching, and communities of practice to facilitate the sharing of effective inclusive strategies and solutions to common challenges.

Future research may explore additional factors affecting inclusive education implementation, such as school leadership, parental involvement, and curriculum design, and may employ mixed-method approaches to gain deeper insights into teacher practices and learner outcomes.

Regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established to assess the effectiveness of inclusive education initiatives, identify emerging teacher needs, and guide continuous improvement efforts.

References

1. Ainscow, M. (2020). Promoting inclusion and equity in education: Lessons from international experiences. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 6(1), 7–16.
2. Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
3. DepEd. (2017). *Policy guidelines on the implementation of the Inclusive Education Program*. Department of Education, Philippines.
4. Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2011). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(5), 813–828.
5. Forlin, C. (2010). *Teacher education for inclusion: Changing paradigms and innovative approaches*. Routledge.
6. Loreman, T. (2010). Essential skills for inclusive teaching. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 6(1), 22–38.
7. Sharma, U., Loreman, T., & Forlin, C. (2012). Measuring teacher efficacy to implement inclusive practices. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 12(1), 12–21.