Exploring the Influencing Factors on Inclusive Classroom Practices of Teachers in a Public School

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HOW TO CITE:
Aisa Vera H. Olaso (2026). Exploring the Influencing Factors on Inclusive Classroom Practices of Teachers in a Public School. International Journal of Special Education, 41(17s), 1338-1343

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ABSTRACT:
This descriptive-correlational study examined factors associated with inclusive classroom practices among 49 inclusion teachers in two public elementary schools in Bohol, Philippines. An adapted semi-structured questionnaire gathered data on teacher profiles, attitudes toward inclusion, collaboration, professional-development needs, logistical concerns, and inclusive classroom practices for learners with special educational needs (LSENs). Most respondents held bachelor's degrees and had one to five years of experience teaching LSENs. Teachers reported positive attitudes toward inclusion and valued collaboration but identified continuing needs for training, resources, assistive technology, and expert support. Multiple regression analysis showed that attitudes, collaboration, professional-development needs, and logistical concerns did not significantly predict reported inclusive classroom practices. The findings suggest that school-specific conditions may influence inclusive implementation beyond the variables examined. A school-based enhancement plan is recommended.

Keywords: inclusive education, learners with special educational needs, teacher attitudes, collaboration, professional development, inclusive classroom practices, Bohol, Philippines

1. Introduction

Inclusive education aims to ensure meaningful participation and learning for students with diverse needs in regular classroom settings. Teachers are central to this process because their attitudes, competence, confidence, and classroom decisions influence how learners with special educational needs are supported. Positive teacher attitudes and self-efficacy are associated with greater readiness to implement inclusive practices (Lindner et al., 2023; Savolainen et al., 2022; Yada et al., 2022).

However, teachers may encounter barriers such as inadequate training, limited instructional materials, lack of assistive technology, large classes, and limited access to specialists. These constraints may affect teachers' capacity to adapt instruction and respond to learner diversity effectively (Jardinez & Natividad, 2024; Wray et al., 2022).

Although research has examined teachers' attitudes and inclusive practices in different settings, local evidence remains limited in Bohol. This study examined the influence of teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, collaboration, professional-development needs, and logistical concerns on their reported inclusive classroom practices for LSENs.

2. Methodology

Theoretical and Policy Framework. The study was anchored in the Theory of Planned Behavior, Social Cognitive Theory, and Contact Theory.

The Theory of Planned Behavior explains that behavior is influenced by intention, which is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). In inclusive education, positive attitudes, supportive work environments, and strong self-efficacy may encourage teachers to implement inclusive practices (Urton et al., 2023).

Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the interaction among personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. It also highlights observational learning, modeling, and self-efficacy as influences on behavior (Bandura, 1977). Teachers may strengthen inclusive practices through collaboration, professional learning, peer observation, and feedback.

Contact Theory explains that structured, positive interaction among people from different groups may reduce prejudice and foster acceptance (Allport, 1954). In inclusive classrooms, cooperative learning and positive peer interaction may promote belongingness and acceptance among learners with and without disabilities.

The study was also guided by Philippine laws and policies supporting inclusive education. Republic Act No. 11650 establishes a policy of inclusion and services for learners with disabilities. Republic Act No. 10533 supports the K to 12 Basic Education Program, while Republic Act No. 9442 promotes the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2021 provides guidelines for educational programs and services for learners with disabilities (Department of Education [DepEd], 2021; Republic Act No. 9442, 2007; Republic Act No. 10533, 2013; Republic Act No. 11650, 2022).

Research Design and Participants. The study used a descriptive-correlational design. It examined the relationship between selected teacher-related factors and inclusive classroom practices without manipulating variables. Complete enumeration was used. The respondents were 49 inclusion teachers from Garcia-Hernandez Central Elementary School and Canayaon Elementary School in Bohol, Philippines during School Year 2024–2025. An adapted semi-structured questionnaire was administered online and in person.

The questionnaire gathered information on teacher profile, attitudes toward inclusion, collaboration, professional-development needs, logistical concerns, and reported inclusive classroom practices. Descriptive statistics summarized the data, while multiple regression analysis examined whether the selected factors significantly predicted inclusive classroom practices.

3. Results

Most respondents were female, held bachelor's degrees, and had one to five years of experience teaching LSENs. Teachers handled multiple general subjects and encountered learners with intellectual and developmental disabilities, learning disabilities, visual impairments, and autism.

Teachers generally reported positive attitudes toward inclusive education. They recognized the importance of adapting instruction, promoting learner participation, and collaborating with administrators, parents, colleagues, and special education personnel. They also expressed strong needs for training in differentiated instruction, curriculum adaptation, behavior support, and the use of assistive technology.

The average weighted mean ratings showed positive perceptions of attitudes toward inclusion (AWM = 3.4), collaboration (AWM = 3.5), and professional-development needs (AWM = 3.6). Logistical support received a comparatively lower rating (AWM = 3.1), indicating concerns regarding materials, assistive technology, and specialist support.

Multiple regression analysis showed that attitudes toward inclusion, collaboration, professional-development needs, and logistical concerns did not significantly predict teachers' reported inclusive classroom practices. All reported p-values were greater than .05; therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

4. Discussion

The findings indicate that teachers generally support inclusive education and recognize the importance of collaboration and professional learning. However, limited experience in teaching LSENs and concerns regarding training, resources, and specialist support remain important challenges. Teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy are important for inclusive practice, but they may not be sufficient when practical and organizational support is limited (Savolainen et al., 2022; Wray et al., 2022; Yada et al., 2022).

The findings also show that positive perceptions of inclusion may coexist with concerns about resources and implementation. Previous studies emphasize that professional development, collaboration, and teacher beliefs can support inclusive practice, particularly when schools provide adequate structures and resources (Dignath et al., 2022; Paju et al., 2022). Teachers' training should therefore focus on practical strategies, including differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning, curriculum adaptation, and disability-responsive teaching (Alsarawi & Sukonthaman, 2023).

Although the selected factors did not significantly predict inclusive classroom practices, this does not mean that they are unimportant. Rather, the findings suggest that other school-specific factors may influence implementation, including workload, class size, administrative support, access to specialists, and availability of instructional resources. Collaborative support systems may help teachers translate their positive attitudes and professional learning into effective classroom practice (Fohlin et al., 2024; Garcia-Melgar et al., 2022; San Martin et al., 2021).

5. Conclusion

Teachers in the two participating public elementary schools generally demonstrated positive attitudes toward inclusive education and valued collaboration. However, they also identified a need for continuing training, resources, assistive technology, and specialized support.

Attitudes toward inclusion, collaboration, professional-development needs, and logistical concerns did not significantly predict reported inclusive classroom practices. This finding suggests that inclusive implementation may be shaped by conditions beyond the variables examined. Schools should therefore address both teacher capacity and structural conditions that affect daily classroom practice.

As a recommendation, Garcia-Hernandez Central Elementary School and Canayaon Elementary School should implement a school-based enhancement plan that provides sustained training on differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning, curriculum adaptation, behavior support, and disability-responsive strategies.

The schools should also strengthen collaboration among teachers, school leaders, parents, and special education personnel through case conferences, mentoring, coaching, and Learning Action Cell sessions. School administrators should improve access to instructional materials, assistive technology, and specialist support. The enhancement plan should include regular monitoring of teacher participation, classroom implementation, resource use, and continuing support needs.

Future studies may include more schools and respondents and use classroom observations and interviews to examine additional factors, such as workload, class size, leadership support, and specialist availability.

The proposed enhancement plan is presented in Table 1 and outlines the areas of concern, objectives and strategies, persons responsible, implementation timeline, and indicators of accomplishment.

Table 1. Proposed School-Based Enhancement Plan for Inclusive Classroom Practices

Area of concern	Objective and strategy	Persons responsible	Timeline	Indicator of accomplishment
Limited teacher experience in teaching LSENs	Enhance teachers' competence through intensive training, monthly workshops, peer observation, and feedback on inclusive teaching practices	District supervisor, school principal, HRMO, teachers, SPED teachers, and SPED experts	8 months	At least 90% of teachers complete the training and demonstrate improved inclusive-teaching skills in post-training assessments or classroom observations
Gaps in understanding and applying Universal Design for Learning	Improve UDL application through specialized workshops, provision of UDL resources, lesson-planning support, and mentoring between experienced and novice teachers	School principal, HRMO, teachers, UDL experts, mentors, and SPED personnel	6 months	At least 80% of observed classrooms demonstrate UDL-based lesson planning, instructional adaptation, or learner-access supports
Lack of collaboration among educators	Strengthen collaboration through Learning Action Cell sessions, case conferences, online resource-sharing, meetings with SPED personnel, and parent consultations	School principal, ICT officer, HRMO, teachers, SPED personnel, parents, and external experts	10 months	At least 85% of teachers participate in documented collaborative activities, meetings, case conferences, or learner-support planning
Logistical barriers to inclusion	Address priority needs by conducting a resource inventory, procuring or developing adapted instructional materials, and improving access to assistive technology and specialist support	Division superintendent, district supervisor, school principal, property custodian, SPED coordinator, and teachers	6 months	Resource inventory is completed, prioritized materials are acquired or developed, and progress reports are submitted to stakeholders
Lack of a continuous-improvement framework	Establish regular monitoring through teacher reflection logs, feedback forms, quarterly reviews, and action plans based on identified needs	School principal, teachers, research coordinator, SPED coordinator, and internal or external evaluators	10 months	Quarterly monitoring reports and revised action plans are completed, with full teacher participation in required monitoring activities
Gap between positive attitudes and classroom practices	Bridge the attitude-practice gap through reflective-practice sessions, action research, instructional coaching, and sharing of effective inclusive practices	School principal, HRMO, teachers, research coordinator, master teachers,	8 months	Pre- and post-assessment results show a reduction in identified practice gaps, and teachers document or share

		and SPED personnel		inclusive classroom strategies

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Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to her research advisor, committee members, university leaders, family and friends for their guidance, expertise, encouragement and support throughout the development and completion of this study.

Author Declaration

The author hereby confirms that this work is original and solely prepared by the author. Any sources, ideas, or materials from other authors have been properly acknowledged and cited where applicable.

The author further declares that there are no conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, that could have influenced the preparation, content, or submission of this work