

ARTICLE TITLE: INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES AMONG TEACHERS OF
BANI EAST INTEGRATED SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The educational landscape has increasingly embraced the principles of inclusivity, recognizing the importance of accommodating diverse learners within the classroom. This study investigated the inclusive classroom strategies employed by 14 elementary teacher respondents at Bani East Integrated School in Bani Pangasinan and their impact on students' development. Through a purposive sampling technique, researchers gathered data on the educators' diverse perspectives on inclusive classroom practices. Moreover, it also aimed to address key questions concerning teacher profiles, learner characteristics, teaching strategies, challenges encountered, and benefits derived from these strategies. Using surveys and qualitative methods a multiple case study approach was used to delve deeper into essential questions surrounding teacher profiles,

learner characteristics, and the intricate dynamics of inclusive classrooms. Results showed that most respondents were female and 50% were master's degree graduates and had been teaching for more than 16 years. In addition, the study also revealed that normal learners exhibit exemplary mental capacities, as indicated by mean scores ranging from 3.86 to 4.92. Also, they demonstrate adeptness in understanding instructions, maintaining focus during learning sessions, efficiently managing tasks, showcasing learning progress, and actively engaging socially within the classroom environment. Additionally, it is closely followed by their consistent demonstration of learning progress (4.12), effective task management (3.93), ease in comprehending instructions (3.86), and sustained focus during learning activities (3.86). Based on the results it is recommended that there should be continuous professional and culturally responsive training for inclusive classroom teacher and regular training assessment and assessment for teacher.

Keywords: Inclusive education, adeptness, classroom, learning sessions, progress,

INTRODUCTION

In today's diverse educational landscape, creating inclusive classroom environments has become a vital objective. Inclusivity refers to accommodating students of varied abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles within mainstream classrooms, fostering a sense of belonging and equity. Internationally, initiatives such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4) highlight the significance of inclusive education. The Philippines, through its educational laws like Republic Act No. 7277 (Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities), emphasizes equal access to education for individuals with disabilities, mandating the development of inclusive practices (NCDA, 2024). Additionally, Republic Act 10533 (K-12 Program) aims to enhance educational quality and inclusivity, encouraging curricula that cater to diverse learning needs. It redefines the country's basic education system and includes provisions that align with the goal of providing equitable educational opportunities for all students, including those with diverse learning needs. RA 10533 encourages the development of a curriculum that addresses the various needs of learners, promoting a more inclusive and responsive educational environment. It emphasizes the importance of accommodating different learning styles and ensuring that education is accessible to all, considering individual capabilities. To frame this study, several theoretical frameworks underpin the investigation of inclusive education practices. Social Constructivism emphasizes the role of social interactions and cultural contexts in learning, supporting the creation of collaborative environments where diverse learners can succeed. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory examines how different environments influence human development, stressing the need for meaningful interactions and equitable policies in inclusive education. Diffusion of Innovations Theory provides insights on how inclusive education practices spread and gain acceptance among educators. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) aims to create accessible and engaging learning experiences for all students which aligns with the goals of inclusivity. Lastly, the concept of a Community of Practice involves collaborative networks that enhance inclusive teaching through shared expertise and resources. Embracing inclusive education enables schools

to create environments where all students feel valued, thereby promoting academic excellence and preparing students for a diverse, global society. The study aims to investigate the inclusive strategies and practices employed by teachers at Bani East Integrated School and their influence on elementary students' development, contributing to the wider discourse on the implications of inclusive education in fostering a harmonious and equitable society

METHODS

This study made use of a multiple case study method, employing descriptive surveys to explore on inclusive classroom strategies among elementary teachers at Bani East Integrated School during the 2023-2024 academic year. The case study aimed to provide a broad overview of strategies and practices, while the qualitative descriptive design offered in-depth insights. The purposive sampling technique was used. A total of 14 elementary teachers from the Bani East Integrated School's faculty were chosen for their active involvement in teaching and capturing in-depth insights. Part one of the questionnaire focused on the profile of the respondents, part two pertained to the characteristics of the learners, Part three focused on the strategies and practices of teachers ensuring classroom inclusivity and part four focused on the challenges that the teachers encountered in the diverse learners and part five were the benefits from the different strategies and practices.

For the profile of the respondents, data were gathered through a structured questionnaire that categorizes participants based on age, sex, educational attainment, specialization, years of teaching experience, and the number of trainings or seminars attended related to inclusive education.

To address the second problem regarding different learner types, a Likert scale questionnaire was used to evaluate three groups: average learners, learners with special needs, and advanced learners. Each group was assessed on specific behaviors: average learners' understanding, focus, task management, progress, and social engagement; learners with special needs' understanding of support, response to extra help, social engagement, task struggles, and following along; and advanced learners' eagerness, perseverance, critical thinking, performance comparison, and perfectionism. Ratings ranged from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always).

For problem four, respondents answered an open-ended question about challenges faced in meeting the diverse learning needs of students, highlighting obstacles teachers encounter. For problem five, they describe the benefits gained from strategies and practices used to address these needs, revealing positive impacts on teachers. This approach enabled systematic data collection, which was then analyzed by the researchers.

This structured approach facilitated the systematic gathering of relevant data to address the research objectives. The results were tallied, tabulated, and interpreted by researchers. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and weighted mean were statistical tools used in the study. Appropriate statistical techniques were applied not only to describe the data but also to draw reliable conclusions and make informed decisions based on empirical evidence.

To effectively interpret the data, the study used percentages and the Average Weighted Mean as tools.

RESULTS

Profile

Based on the conducted survey, majority of the respondents were female, within the age range of 41-50 years old, with a master’s degree, graduate, and with the specialization in General Education. Meanwhile, for the number of teaching years, most of them are within the bracket of 6-10 years and 11-15 years and have attended 7 and above training courses.

Learners in terms of Mental Capacity: Normal or average learners.:

Table 2
Characteristics of learners in terms of Mental Capacity: Normal or average learners.

Indicator	Mean	Description	Rank
1. Understands instructions easily.	3.86	Agree	4.5
2. Focuses during learning.	3.86	Agree	4.5
3. Manages tasks effectively.	3.93	Agree	3
4. Shows learning progress.	4.14	Agree	2
5. Engages socially in class.	4.92	Strongly Agree	1
	Overall Mean: 4.02	Agree	

1.0 - 1.50 – Strongly Disagree; 1.51 – 2.50 – Disagree; 2.51 – 3.50 – Neutral; 3.51 – 4.50 – Agree; 4.51 – 5.0 – Strongly Agree

Results of the study showed that normal or average learners demonstrate positive characteristics in terms of mental capacity, with mean scores ranging from 3.86 to 4.92. Specifically, they tend to understand instructions easily, focus during learning, manage tasks effectively, show learning progress, and engage socially in class. The highest-ranked characteristic is their social engagement in class (4.92), followed by showing learning progress (4.12), managing tasks effectively (3.93), understanding instructions easily (3.86), and focusing during learning (3.86).

Mental Capacity: Learners with unique or special needs

Table 3 shows that learners with unique or special needs demonstrate characteristics that indicate they require additional support compared to normal or average learners. Indicator 1, with a weighted mean of 3.64, shows that learners with special needs generally understand the assistance provided by the teacher. While they may not always excel in this area, they still acknowledge and grasp the support offered to them. Indicator 2, with a weighted mean of 3.93, shows that learners with special needs benefit from additional support. Despite facing challenges, they show improvement when provided with extra assistance, indicating the effectiveness of tailored support strategies. Indicator 3, with a weighted mean of 3.57, shows that while learners with special needs may engage well with their classmates, the lower rank indicates that there is room for improvement in fostering social interactions within the classroom environment. Indicator 4, with a weighted mean of 3.93, indicates that learners with special needs encounter difficulties with regular tasks. This suggests that they may require additional assistance or modifications to successfully complete these tasks. Indicator 5, which got the highest rating a weighted mean of 4, suggests that learners with special needs often find it challenging to follow along with classroom activities or instructions. Addressing this challenge may involve personalized teaching methods and adaptations to the curriculum.

Mental Capacity: Advanced learners

As gleaned in Table 4, advanced learners possess a range of positive characteristics, including eagerness to learn, determination, critical-thinking skills, self-assessment, and a drive for perfection. Indicator 1, with a weighted mean of 4.64, shows that advanced learners exhibit a high level of enthusiasm and eagerness toward learning, demonstrating a proactive approach to their education. Indicator 2, with a weighted mean of 4.43, indicates that advanced learners display determination when faced with challenges, indicating resilience and a willingness to persevere through difficulties to achieve their academic goals. Indicator 3, with a weighted mean of 4.21, shows that advanced learners exhibit strong critical-thinking skills, which enable them to analyze information, solve problems, and make informed decisions effectively. Indicator 4, with a weighted mean of 4, suggests that advanced learners may benchmark their own performance with that of their peers, potentially as a means of self-assessment or motivation to excel further. In indicator 5, who got the highest rating with a weighted mean of 4.97, shows that advanced learners strive for perfection in class activities, which demonstrates a thorough approach to their academic work and a commitment to achieving excellence.

Teaching Strategies and Practices in Inclusive Education

Ensuring Inclusivity Inside the Classroom

Based on the statements provided by the respondents to the question, as a teacher, how do you ensure classroom inclusivity. It's evident that creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment is a priority for teachers in Bani East Integrated School. They emphasize 1.) understanding the specific needs of each child, promoting equality, fostering a sense of belonging, and encouraging participation. 2.) They also let students feel that they belong in the

class and have a feeling of a welcoming environment, providing them equal opportunities to experience learning in their day-to-day school activities. Aligned with that, 4.) They also set specific standards for behavior for them to follow and make sure that these standards are always observed. 5.) They thoroughly examine learners on what level of learning or capability they belong to. After that, provision of varied activities will be given depending on what their capabilities.

Teachers in Bani East Integrated School strive to treat all learners equally, regardless of differences in gender, learning style, or ability, and they are committed to accommodating diverse needs, including those of students with special needs. These teaching strategies are essential as inclusive education aims to mainstream students with special needs in a flexible learning environment for acquiring quality education as confirmed by the study of Dela Fuente (2021).

Addressing the Learning Needs of Diverse Learners

Based on respondents 1.) Regular assessment through observation allows them to adapt their approach and ensure that every student receives the support they need to succeed. The respondents highlighted the importance of using differentiated materials and teaching styles to accommodate the diverse needs of students. 2.) Providing varied learning materials and allowing self-provisioning, they ensure that each student has access to resources that suit their individual learning preferences and abilities. 3.) Creating a friendly and accepting environment is also essential for promoting inclusivity and recognizing the value of each student's unique strengths and differences. This result confirms in the study of Tomlinson (2014), which emphasized the importance of teachers being proactive in understanding the unique learning requirements of each student.

In addition, the 4.) Respondents also emphasized the importance of providing direct and differentiated instruction to students, tailored to their individual needs. Collaborative opportunities further enhance the learning experience by fostering engagement and peer interaction. The respondents underscore the significance of identifying the specific needs of learners and offering learning activities that align with those needs and are appropriate for their level of understanding.

Challenges in Addressing Diverse Needs of Diverse Learners

Based on the respondents' challenges that they encountered in addressing the learning needs of diverse learners, including 1.) Managing discipline and behavioral problems in the classroom, 2.) Issues such as inadequate playground space, lack of parental support, learner attitudes, and lack of instructional materials can contribute to disruptions in the learning environment. Hence, teachers must work to address issues such as students failing to recognize and respect each other based on race, culture, and ethnicity.

Benefits of Using Inclusive Classroom Strategies and Practices

As to the benefits of using Inclusive Classroom Strategies, respondents said that 1.) strategies help teachers connect with students and make learning more exciting. This conforms to the result

of Grant and Jones (2016), which discusses the role of strategies in instilling discipline and patience among teachers. Employing effective teaching strategies can help teachers manage diverse classrooms and foster positive behavior among students.

Additionally, teachers 2.) find joy in seeing their students actively participating and achieving high scores in activities. Practicing these strategies helps develop creativity, resourcefulness, and compassion in teachers as they cater to the needs of their learners. Overall, these strategies contribute to increased student engagement and positive behavior in the classroom, ultimately enhancing the learning experience for both students and teachers.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident that addressing the learning needs of diverse learners poses significant challenges for teachers, particularly in managing discipline and behavioral issues within the classroom. Factors such as limited resources, inadequate parental support, and varying learner attitudes contribute to disruptions in the learning environment. However, teachers employ a variety of strategies to overcome these challenges, including the implementation of engaging activities, differentiation of instruction, and fostering a sense of inclusivity and mutual respect among students. These strategies not only enhance student engagement and academic performance but also contribute to the development of essential skills such as discipline, patience, and empathy in both students and teachers. By effectively addressing the diverse needs of learners, teachers play a crucial role in creating a positive and conducive learning environment that promotes academic success and holistic development.

In response to the problems identified and conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are proposed to offer viable solutions and capitalize on the benefits of effective teaching strategies.

1. Implement comprehensive professional development programs for teachers focused on classroom management techniques, behavior modification strategies, and culturally responsive teaching practices to address discipline and behavioral issues in diverse classrooms.
2. Allocate additional resources and support services, including counseling and parental involvement initiatives, to address the underlying factors contributing to disruptive behavior and inadequate parental support.
3. Foster a culture of inclusivity and mutual respect within the school community through the implementation of diversity training workshops and seminars for both students and teaching staff.
4. Conduct regular assessments and evaluations of teaching practices and student outcomes to monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and inform the continuous refinement of instructional strategies and interventions.

5. Promote research and knowledge sharing among educators to further explore innovative teaching approaches and best practices for addressing the diverse needs of learners, with a focus on promoting engagement, academic success, and social-emotional development.

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DECLARATION ON THE USE OF AI TOOLS

The researcher employed advanced artificial intelligence (AI) tools, specifically Gemini, to enhance grammar accuracy and optimize the formatting of data tables throughout the preparation of this study. Nonetheless, the conceptual framework, data interpretation, and overall composition of the work are solely the original efforts of the author, ensuring academic integrity and original contribution.

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