

Teaching Strategies for Learners with Special Needs in Mainstream Classes

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Abstract

This study examined the teaching strategies employed for learners with special needs in mainstream classes in selected public secondary schools in the Binangonan District during the School Year 2025–2026. Utilizing a descriptive survey research design, the study involved 96 teachers from Don Jose M. Ynares Sr. Memorial National High School, Guronasyon Foundation Incorporated National High School, and Mahabang Parang National High School. A researcher-made questionnaire-checklist was used to gather data on the extent of teaching strategies applied, specifically in terms of differentiated instruction, individualized instruction, multisensory instruction, and technology-based instruction, as well as the challenges encountered by teachers. Findings revealed that most respondents were middle-aged, female, and married, with diverse educational backgrounds and teaching experiences. The majority specialized in Araling Panlipunan and Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE), and frequently attended school-level trainings. Teachers often employed varied teaching strategies to support learners with special needs, with differentiated and individualized instruction being the most prominent. Statistical analysis showed that age, length of service, and area of specialization significantly influenced the use of teaching strategies, while sex, civil status, educational attainment, position title, and in-service training did not. Moreover, teachers commonly faced challenges such as lack of learning resources, difficulty in managing student behavior, stressful teaching conditions, and overcrowded classrooms. The study concluded that certain teacher-related factors influence the effective use of inclusive teaching strategies. It is recommended that learners with special needs be provided with diverse instructional approaches, and that educational authorities allocate sufficient resources to support inclusive education. The implementation of the proposed action plan and further research involving additional variables are also encouraged.

Keywords: special needs education, inclusive education, teaching strategies, differentiated instruction, mainstream classes, teacher factors

1. Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and a vital instrument for national development, equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to become productive members of society. In the Philippine context, the commitment to equitable and inclusive education is strengthened through policies such as Republic Act No. 11650, also known as the Inclusive Education Act, which ensures that learners with disabilities are provided access to quality, equitable, and accessible education. Complementing this, Department of Education policies, particularly DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2021, emphasize the systematic provision of programs and services tailored to learners with disabilities within mainstream educational settings. These policies underscore the increasing importance of inclusive education, where learners with special needs are integrated into regular classrooms and supported through appropriate teaching strategies.

Inclusive education requires teachers to employ a wide range of instructional strategies to address the diverse needs of learners. Among the most commonly utilized approaches are differentiated instruction, individualized instruction, multisensory instruction, and technology-based instruction. Studies have consistently shown the effectiveness of these strategies in enhancing learner engagement and academic performance. For instance, Gur and Yikmis (2021) found that teachers utilize varied instructional practices but face challenges such as large class sizes and limited time for individualized attention. Similarly, Ngong (2022) and Nada (2021) highlighted the positive impact of multisensory approaches in improving learning outcomes among students with disabilities. Kuboja (2023) emphasized the effectiveness of student-centered approaches, while Bakar (2023) and Boholano (2021) underscored the role of technology integration in improving teaching and learning processes.

Local studies further support these findings. Palanca (2021) revealed that non-special education teachers apply inclusive practices such as task modification and flexible assessment, although these are often insufficient to fully address diverse learner needs. Samson (2022) pointed out that mainstreaming moderately affects learners' academic performance and highlighted the need for teacher training. Similarly, Romantico (2022) and Campilla (2021) identified challenges in instructional strategy implementation, particularly in terms of limited resources and insufficient training. Suizo (2023)

demonstrated the effectiveness of differentiated instruction, while Faunillan (2023) affirmed the benefits of multisensory approaches in improving learners' performance.

Despite the growing body of literature, several research gaps remain evident. First, many studies focus on elementary-level learners or specific subject areas such as Mathematics, leaving a gap in understanding the application of teaching strategies for learners with special needs in public secondary schools. Second, while experimental studies establish the effectiveness of specific strategies, there is limited descriptive research examining the extent to which these strategies are actually implemented by teachers in real classroom settings. Third, existing studies often focus on a single instructional approach, with minimal integration of multiple strategies such as differentiated, individualized, multisensory, and technology-based instruction within one framework. Lastly, there is insufficient emphasis on how teacher-related factors—such as age, length of service, and area of specialization—influence the use of these strategies, as well as the specific challenges encountered in mainstream classrooms.

In view of these gaps, this study was conducted to assess the teaching strategies employed for learners with special needs in mainstream classes in selected public secondary schools in the District of Binangonan. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of current practices and challenges, thereby contributing to the development of more effective and inclusive teaching strategies.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study applied the descriptive method of research utilizing a researcher-made questionnaire-checklist to gather the needed data.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in selected public secondary schools in the District of Binangonan Schools Division of Rizal. These schools include Don Jose M. Ynares Sr. Memorial National High School, Guronasyon Foundation Inc. National High School and Mahabang Parang National High School. These schools offer special needs of education for learners with exceptional abilities.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The study considered the total population of teachers handling students with special education needs in selected public secondary schools in Binangonan District as respondents of the study. This consists of 96 teachers. They were described in terms of their age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, position title, length of service, area of specialization and in-service trainings attended.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study employed purposive sampling in selecting the respondents. Specifically, teachers who were currently handling learners with special needs in mainstream classes in the selected public secondary schools were intentionally chosen based on their direct involvement and relevant experience. This sampling technique ensured that only those who possess adequate knowledge and exposure to inclusive classroom practices were included in the study, thereby providing reliable and meaningful data aligned with the objectives of the research.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire-checklist as the primary instrument for data collection. The instrument was divided into three parts: Part I gathered the respondents' personal profile, including age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, position title, length of service, area of specialization, and in-service trainings attended. Part II measured the extent of teaching strategies employed for learners with special needs in mainstream classes, covering four areas: differentiated instruction, individualized instruction, multisensory instruction, and technology-based instruction, with ten items for each area, totaling 40 items. Responses were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Never" to "Always." Part III assessed the extent of challenges encountered by teachers in mainstream classrooms using a similar five-point scale, ranging from "Never Encountered" to "Always Encountered." The instrument underwent content validation by experts in research and education, including the thesis adviser, statistician, graduate school lecturers, dean, and SNED professionals such as a master teacher and principal, whose feedback was incorporated to enhance its validity and reliability.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The conduct of the study was based on the Gantt Chart of Activities. This included the formulation of research problems up to the revision of the manuscript and submission of the final copy. Validation of the research instrument was conducted with the technical assistance of the experts. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent. After receiving the permit to conduct the study, the validated questionnaire-checklist were administered to the respondents using Google form in consideration of the Data Privacy Act of 2012. After the retrieval, the data were encoded and processed utilizing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) in the College

Statistics Center. Data were analyzed and interpreted based on the sub problems. Summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations were formulated. After the oral defense, the manuscript was revised considering the comments and suggestions of the members of the Oral Examination Committee. The study was also subjected to anti-plagiarism test. After finalization, hardbound copies were submitted to the office of the Graduate Studies Program and other offices.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The data gathered in the study were systematically tallied, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. Frequency, percentage, and rank distribution were utilized to describe the profile of the respondents in terms of selected variables. To determine the extent of teaching strategies employed for learners with special needs in mainstream classes across the identified aspects, the weighted mean was computed. Likewise, weighted mean was also used to assess the extent of challenges encountered by the respondents in handling learners with special needs. Furthermore, to determine whether there is a significant difference in the extent of teaching strategies employed when respondents are grouped according to their profile variables, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied. These statistical methods ensured accurate interpretation and analysis of the collected data.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

This study strictly adhered to ethical standards in the conduct of research. Prior to data collection, permission was sought from the school authorities and concerned officials to ensure proper coordination and approval. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and their participation was entirely voluntary. Informed consent was obtained, assuring them that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were strictly maintained by not disclosing their identities and ensuring that all collected data were used solely for academic purposes. Additionally, the researcher ensured that no harm, discomfort, or bias would affect the participants throughout the process. All information gathered was treated with utmost respect and integrity, and results were presented honestly and objectively.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Profile of the Respondents in Terms of the Selected Variables

As shown in the table, with regard to the personal data of the respondents, in terms of age, most respondents are 31-40 years old (39.6%), followed by 41-50 years old (33.3%). The oldest group (51 years old and above) has the lowest frequency (11.5 %). In terms of sex, majority are female (70.8%) while most of them are married (56.2%). With regard to their professional profile, in terms of educational attainment, half have MA units (51%), and 21.9% have a Master's degree. As regard to their position title, most are Teacher I (38.5%), followed by Teacher II (31.3%). In terms of length of service, majority have 1-10 years of service (55.2%). In terms of area of specialization, most are major in Araling Panlipunan (29.2%), followed by TLE (23.9%). In terms of in-service trainings attended, 25% have attended school level trainings while 22.9 % have attended in the district level.

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents in Terms of the Selected Variables

Age	Frequency	Percent	Rank
51 years old and above	11	11.5	4
41-50 years old	32	33.3	2
31-40 years old	38	39.6	1
21-30 years old	15	15.6	3
Total	96	100.0	
Sex			
Male	28	29.2	2
Female	68	70.8	1
Total	96	100.0	
Civil Status			
Single	42	43.8	2
Married	54	56.2	1
Total	96	100.0	
Educational Attainment			
Master's Degree	21	21.9	3
With MA units	49	51.0	1
Bachelor's Degree	26	27.1	2
Total	96	100.0	
Position Title			
Master Teacher I	8	7.3	4
Teacher III	21	21.9	3

Teacher II	30	31.3	2
Teacher I	37	38.5	1
Total	96	100.0	
Length of Service			
21 years and more	7	7.3	4
11-20 years	26	27.1	2
1-10 years	53	55.2	1
Below 1 year	10	10.4	3
Total	96	100.0	
Area of Specialization			
Math	10	10.4	5
Araling Panlipunan	28	29.2	1
Filipino	14	14.6	4
Science	21	21.9	3
TLE	23	23.9	2
Total	96	100.0	
In-Service Trainings Attended			
National Level	14	14.6	5
Regional Level	16	16.7	4
Division Level	20	20.8	3
District Level	22	22.9	2
School Level	24	25.0	1
Total	96	100.0	

3.2 Extent of Teaching Strategies Employed for Learners with Special Needs in Mainstream Classes in Public Secondary Schools as Perceived by the Respondents with Respect to the Different Aspects

As shown in the table, all aspects are interpreted Often with a composite weighted mean of 4.22. Differentiated instruction and individualized instruction are first and second in ranks while multisensory instruction and technology-based instruction are third and fourth in ranks. It could be deduced from the results that teachers often employ varied teaching strategies in handling students with special needs in mainstream classes. Findings indicate that teachers employ appropriate teaching strategy based on the needs of learners and based on available resources. Findings imply that effective teaching strategies for special needs learners in mainstream classrooms focus on creating an inclusive, structured environment through differentiated instruction, multisensory approaches, and assistive technology. These strategies ensure that students with special needs can effectively participate and succeed within a mainstream educational setting. Findings conform with the statements of Soccer (2021) that teachers employ varied teaching strategies to ensure that students learn academic content. The goal of instructional strategies is to produce independent learners who are able to apply what is learned and expand upon it as necessary. Teaching strategies play an important role in classroom instruction. Strategies help learners participate, connect and add excitement to the content being delivered.

Table 2

Extent of Teaching Strategies Employed for Learners with Special Needs in Mainstream Classes in Public Secondary Schools as Perceived by the Respondents with Respect to the Different Aspects

Aspects	W $\bar{X}$	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Differentiated Instruction	4.33	Often	1
Individualized Instruction	4.28	Often	2
Multisensory Instruction	4.25	Often	3
Technology-Based Instruction	4.01	Often	4
Composite W$\bar{X}$	4.22	Often	

3.3 Significant Difference on the Extent of Teaching Strategies Employed for Learners with Special Needs in Mainstream Classes as Perceived by the Respondents with Respect to the Different Aspects in Terms of Their Profile

The table shows that with respect to the different aspects, the F-test results show significant differences on the teaching strategies employed for learners with special needs in terms of age, length of service and area of specialization as indicated by probability values less than .05. On the other hand, in terms of sex, civil status, educational attainment, position title and in-service trainings attended no significant difference exists on the extent of teaching strategies employed for learners with special needs. Findings indicate that age, length of service and area of specialization influence the extent of teaching strategies employed for learners with special needs. On the other hand, sex, civil status, educational attainment,

position title and in-service trainings attended are not influential on the teaching strategies employed for learners with special needs. Findings imply that younger teachers might be more familiar with diverse learning needs and adaptive strategies. Older teachers might rely on traditional methods, while younger ones use modern approaches. This also implies that more experienced teachers might have developed effective strategies but might resist change. Less experienced teachers might be more open to new approaches. Findings further imply that teachers with special education backgrounds might be more equipped to handle learners with special needs. Personal characteristics including sex and civil status do not dictate teaching approach. Moreover, findings imply that having a higher degree does not guarantee effective teaching strategies and position title does not determine teaching approach. Moreover, quantity of trainings is not a predictor of quality of teaching. This is in relation with the findings of the study of Campilla (2021), which showed significant differences in the extent of utilization of the teaching strategies by mathematics teachers across sex and type of school. Moreover, findings revealed that significant relationships exist between the extent of utilization of the teaching strategies by mathematics teachers and the profile variables age, sex, relevant training at the national level, and type of school.

Table 3

Result of the F-test on the Significant Difference on the Extent of Teaching Strategies Employed for Learners with Special Needs in Mainstream Classes as Perceived by the Respondents with Respect to the Different Aspects in Terms of Their Profile

Aspects/Variables	F-value	p-value	Ho	Verbal Interpretation
Age				
Differentiated Instruction	4.433	0.042	Rejected	Significant
Individualized Instruction	5.221	0.004	Rejected	Significant
Multisensory Instruction	7.643	0.018	Rejected	Significant
Technology-Based Instruction	8.332	0.022	Rejected	Significant
Sex				
Differentiated Instruction	0.032	0.934	Accepted	Not Significant
Individualized Instruction	0.049	0.933	Accepted	Not Significant
Multisensory Instruction	0.743	0.332	Accepted	Not Significant
Technology-Based Instruction	2.932	0.195	Accepted	Not Significant
Civil Status				
Differentiated Instruction	2.209	0.843	Accepted	Not Significant
Individualized Instruction	1.232	0.365	Accepted	Not Significant
Multisensory Instruction	1.387	0.723	Accepted	Not Significant
Technology-Based Instruction	1.232	0.843	Accepted	Not Significant
Educational Attainment				
Differentiated Instruction	0.639	0.621	Accepted	Not Significant
Individualized Instruction	0.621	0.687	Accepted	Not Significant
Multisensory Instruction	2.198	0.438	Accepted	Not Significant
Technology-Based Instruction	0.521	0.787	Accepted	Not Significant
Position Title				
Differentiated Instruction	0.514	0.076	Accepted	Not Significant
Individualized Instruction	1.825	0.098	Accepted	Not Significant
Multisensory Instruction	0.711	0.445	Accepted	Not Significant
Technology-Based Instruction	1.165	0.987	Accepted	Not Significant
Length of Service				
Differentiated Instruction	5.723	0.003	Rejected	Significant
Individualized Instruction	3.751	0.008	Rejected	Significant
Multisensory Instruction	6.623	0.031	Rejected	Significant
Technology-Based Instruction	8.022	0.030	Rejected	Significant
Area of Specialization				
Differentiated Instruction	3.423	0.004	Rejected	Significant
Individualized Instruction	3.032	0.011	Rejected	Significant
Multisensory Instruction	4.139	0.009	Rejected	Significant
Technology-Based Instruction	6.722	0.001	Rejected	Significant
In-Service Trainings Attended				
Differentiated Instruction	1.422	0.098	Accepted	Not Significant
Individualized Instruction	0.499	0.874	Accepted	Not Significant
Multisensory Instruction	1.178	0.852	Accepted	Not Significant
Technology-Based Instruction	0.776	0.993	Accepted	Not Significant

3.4 Extent of the Challenges Encountered in Teaching Learners with Special Needs in Mainstream Classes

It could be gleaned from the table that with respect to the extent of the challenges encountered in teaching learners with special needs in mainstream classes, lack of appropriate materials and resources, managing diverse learners and creating an inclusive environment, emotional and psychological pressure, stress, and potential burnout and overcrowded classrooms are often encountered with weighted means ranging from 3.50-3.70 all interpreted Often Encountered. All the other six items are interpreted Sometimes encountered with the least challenging is the item “Some policies are not properly implemented at the school due to a lack of understanding or clear budgetary plans” with a weighted mean of 3.00. Findings suggest that there are varied challenges encountered by teachers in teaching learners with special needs in mainstream classes. These challenges highlight the need for resource allocation, teacher support and infrastructure improvements. Findings imply that emotional and psychological pressure can lead to decreased job satisfaction and high turnover rates. Lack of resources and overcrowding hinder students with special needs from receiving adequate support. Inadequate facilities restrict participation and engagement for students with disabilities. Inflexible curricula hinder adaptive teaching, affecting learning outcomes. Insufficient staff and resources strain teachers, impacting student growth. This conforms with the citation of Limpante (2023), that in the mainstreaming classes, challenges like inadequate funding, insufficient teacher training, and social stigma still need to be addressed.

Table 4
Extent of the Challenges Encountered in Teaching Learners with Special Needs in Mainstream Classes

Challenges Encountered	W $\bar{X}$	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Lack of specific training and skills to handle the diverse needs of students in an inclusive classroom	3.40	Sometimes Encountered	6
2. Difficulties to coordinate lessons and activities for all learners.	3.01	Sometimes Encountered	9
3. Teachers face emotional and psychological pressure, stress, and potential burnout due to the increased workload and demands of inclusive education.	3.60	Often Encountered	3
4. Teachers struggle with managing diverse learners, and creating an inclusive environment where all students can fully participate	3.61	Often Encountered	2
5. Lack of appropriate materials, specialized equipment, assistive technology, and other resources needed to support students with special needs.	3.70	Often Encountered	1
6. School facilities are not designed to accommodate students with disabilities, lacking features like ramps, wide doors, and accessible bathrooms	3.20	Sometimes Encountered	8
7. There is an inflexible curriculum that does not allow for the necessary adjustments and different teaching methods to cater to diverse learning styles and needs	3.30	Sometimes Encountered	7
8. Some policies are not properly implemented at the school due to a lack of understanding or clear budgetary plans	3.00	Sometimes Encountered	10
9. Overcrowded classrooms make it harder for teachers to provide individual attention to students with diverse needs.	3.50	Often Encountered	4
10. Lack of sufficient support staff to assist teachers and students with diverse needs within the mainstream classroom.	3.41	Sometimes Encountered	5
Overall W$\bar{X}$	3.37	Sometimes Encountered	

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that certain teacher-related factors significantly influence the teaching strategies employed for learners with special needs in mainstream classes. Specifically, age, length of teaching experience, and area of specialization were found to have a significant impact on the extent to which teachers apply differentiated, individualized, multisensory, and technology-based instructional strategies. In contrast, variables such as sex, civil status, educational attainment, and position title were not found to be significant contributors to the use of varied teaching strategies. These findings suggest that practical experience and specialization play a more vital role than demographic characteristics in shaping effective inclusive teaching practices.

In light of these conclusions, it is recommended that learners with special needs be continuously exposed to diverse and appropriate teaching strategies to enhance their academic performance and engagement. Educational authorities are encouraged to allocate sufficient funding for the provision of learning resources and instructional materials necessary for inclusive education. Furthermore, the implementation of the proposed action plan is highly recommended to address the identified gaps and challenges in mainstream classrooms. Future researchers are also encouraged to conduct further studies incorporating additional variables to deepen the understanding of effective teaching strategies for learners with

special needs.

Compliance with ethical standards

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