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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INCLUSIVE PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES OF INCLUSIVE STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education has become a pivotal focus in the global educational landscape, as systems worldwide strive to provide equitable learning opportunities for students with special needs. The push for inclusivity is not merely a trend but a fundamental shift towards recognizing the rights of all students to receive quality education alongside their peers. While national policies and legislative frameworks in the Philippines and elsewhere highlight the importance of equitable educational opportunities, practical implementation is often hindered by insufficient resources, limited teacher training, and inconsistent support services. This study seeks to systematically investigate the current practices, challenges, and outcomes of mainstreaming students with special needs, with the aim of providing evidence-based recommendations for more effective and sustainable inclusive education. Through an in-depth examination of these experiences and outcomes, the study aims to generate meaningful insights into the effectiveness of inclusive strategies in fostering an equitable learning environment that supports the diverse needs of students with special needs. Furthermore, the findings of the study will serve as the basis for the development of a teacher resource guide on

sustainable inclusive practices, which may assist educators in strengthening the implementation of inclusive education and promoting sustainable educational opportunities for all learners.

Keywords: *Equitable opportunities, Inclusive education, Mainstreaming, Special needs, Sustainable practices*

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become a pivotal focus in the global educational landscape, as systems worldwide strive to provide equitable learning opportunities for students with special needs. The push for inclusivity is not merely a trend but a fundamental shift towards recognizing the rights of all students to receive quality education alongside their peers. This movement is deeply rooted in international frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 4, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education for all (United Nations, 2023).

Globally, inclusive education practices have evolved significantly, with countries adopting various strategies to accommodate students with special needs in mainstream classrooms. The emphasis is on creating environments that support diverse learning needs through tailored instructional methods, adaptive technologies, and supportive classroom dynamics (Dhakal, 2024; Sibley et al., 2025). Research indicates that inclusive practices not only benefit students with special needs by enhancing their academic and social skills but also foster empathy and acceptance among all students (Rohadatul 'Aisy and Aprilia, 2025).

In the Philippines, inclusive education is supported by national legislation such as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10533) and the Inclusive Education Act of 2022 (Republic Act No. 11650), both of which affirm the right of every child to quality, equitable, and culturally responsive education in a safe and motivating environment. The

Inclusive Education Act of 2022 specifically mandates the creation of Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs) and requires that learners with disabilities receive appropriate support services, individualized education plans (IEPs), and necessary accommodations. Policies from the Department of Education, such as DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2009, further institutionalize inclusive education in all public schools, aligning with the Philippines' commitments to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). Despite these progressive mandates, challenges persist, including inadequate training, limited resources, inconsistent administrative support, and insufficient parental and community engagement. (Obcial et al., 2024). Nonetheless, ongoing reforms and increased policy focus underscore the nation's commitment to mainstreaming students with special needs and advancing inclusive educational practices.

However, the implementation of inclusive education is not without challenges. Teachers often report a lack of adequate training and resources to effectively support diverse learners, leading to inconsistencies in practice and outcomes (Hodkinson, 2023). Additionally, systemic barriers such as reluctance and policy gaps can hinder the full realization of inclusive education goals (Factor and Saen, 2024).

In local context, Camarin High School, District I face unique challenges and opportunities in implementing inclusive practices. With a diverse student population and varying levels of resource availability, the district serves as a microcosm for examining the successes and obstacles of mainstreaming strategies for students with special needs. The district's commitment to inclusive education is evident in its policies and initiatives aimed at fostering a supportive learning environment for all students

Nationally and globally, policy directions continue to shape the context of inclusive education. The Philippine government's AmBisyon Natin 2040 vision and the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) emphasize the importance of inclusive growth and educational equity. According to National Economic Development Authority,

these initiatives align with international goals and reinforce the societal relevance of addressing the barriers to inclusive education.

Despite the progress made, unresolved issues in the literature persist. Questions remain about the most effective strategies for mainstreaming students with special needs, particularly in diverse and resource-constrained settings. Furthermore, the impact of teacher attitudes and school culture on the success of inclusive practices warrants further exploration (Manzoor et al., 2024).

With a background in special education, the researcher positionality informs this study's focus on practical, evidence-based strategies for inclusion. This research seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice by examining the strategies, experiences, and outcomes of mainstreaming students with special needs. The study aims to identify best practices and challenges, offering insights that can inform policy and practice.

By focusing on this specific context, the study intends to contribute to the broader discourse on inclusive education. The expected outcomes include a set of actionable recommendations for educators and policymakers, aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of inclusive practices and promoting sustainable development in education. These findings will not only support the school but also provide valuable insights for other educational systems striving to achieve inclusivity and equity.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the experiences and perceived outcomes of inclusive strategies implemented for students with special needs in promoting sustainable and equitable educational development. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the inclusive strategies employed to support the learning, participation, and holistic development of students with special needs; examine the experiences of students, teachers, and other relevant stakeholders regarding the implementation of these strategies; and investigate the educational, social, and developmental outcomes associated with inclusive

practices.

Through an in-depth examination of these experiences and outcomes, the study aims to generate meaningful insights into the effectiveness of inclusive strategies in fostering an equitable learning environment that supports the diverse needs of students with special needs. Furthermore, the findings of the study will serve as the basis for the development of a Teacher Resource Guide on Sustainable Inclusive Practices, which may assist educators in strengthening the implementation of inclusive education and promoting sustainable educational opportunities for all learners.

Significance of the Study

The practical findings of this research hold significant value for multiple stakeholders in the education sector.

Students with special needs. The study aims to identify and recommend mainstreaming strategies that support not only their academic achievement but also their social integration and overall well-being. Enhanced inclusive practices can foster greater self-confidence, increased participation, and better learning outcomes for these students, ensuring they are not left behind in the pursuit of quality education.

Teachers. Teachers stand to benefit from the study by gaining insights into effective mainstreaming techniques and approaches. By understanding the challenges and best practices in inclusive education, teachers can refine their professional skills, adopt evidence-based instructional strategies, and build more supportive classroom environments. This improved professional practice can reduce teacher burnout and increase job satisfaction, contributing to more sustainable teaching careers.

School administrators. School administrators will find the findings useful in developing and implementing institutional policies that promote inclusive education. The

study's recommendations can guide resource allocation, teacher training, and the establishment of support systems, enabling administrators to create environments where all students can thrive.

Policymakers. The research provides empirical evidence to support the development or refinement of laws, regulations, and programs that advance inclusive education at local and national levels. Policy decisions grounded in research can lead to more responsive and effective interventions that address the real needs of schools and communities.

Future researchers. Future researchers can build upon the study's findings to explore related issues, develop new frameworks, or assess the long-term impact of inclusive practices. By contributing to the growing body of literature on mainstreaming and inclusive education, the study supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4, which advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Additionally, the research aligns with AmBisyon Natin 2040's vision of inclusive growth and human capital development and responds to the reform priorities of the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) by providing actionable insights for strengthening the Philippine education system. In this way, the study demonstrates both societal relevance and policy value, helping to shape a more equitable and sustainable future for education.

Scope and Delimitations

This study focuses on mainstreaming strategies, experiences, and outcomes for students with special needs in the Camarin High School, District I, Schools Division of Caloocan City. It covers the period from School Year 2025–2026 and targets special education teachers who have direct experience with inclusive practices. The research explores both successes and challenges in the implementation of mainstreaming, with particular attention to institutional support, teacher preparedness, and student outcomes.

The study is geographically limited to Camarin High School, District I Division of Caloocan City and does not extend to private or specialized schools outside this jurisdiction. It primarily examines secondary education settings, excluding early childhood or tertiary education contexts. The investigation centers on qualitative data gathered through interviews, focus groups, and document analysis, rather than quantitative measures or large-scale surveys.

The research does not attempt to generalize findings to all districts, given the unique characteristics of the locale. Instead, it seeks to provide in-depth, context-specific insights that can inform practice and policy within similar settings. The study's scope is further limited by the availability and willingness of participants, as well as institutional constraints related to resources and access.

Theoretical /Conceptual Framework

In the evolving landscape of inclusive education, conceptual clarity and theoretical grounding are essential for understanding how diverse policies, practices, and personal factors interact to shape the experiences of students with special needs in mainstream classrooms. This study draws on two complementary theoretical perspectives Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory to provide a nuanced lens for examining the complex interplay of school systems, stakeholder roles, and individual agency in fostering sustainable and effective inclusive practices.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (EST) offers a holistic framework for understanding the phenomenon of inclusion by situating the learner within a nested system of relationships and influences. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2005), human development is shaped by multiple, interacting environments ranging from the immediate microsystem (classroom, peers, family) to the more distant exosystem (school policy, community resources), and the overarching macrosystem (cultural values, national policy).

The chronosystem adds the dimension of time, considering how changes and transitions affect development.

For inclusive education, EST elucidates how the success of mainstreaming depends not only on classroom-level interventions, but also on the broader institutional, community, and policy contexts. For example, a student's inclusion is influenced by family involvement, teacher collaboration, school leadership, resource allocation, and national frameworks like SDG 4 and AmBisyon Natin 2040. This perspective underscores the importance of synergy among systems when school policies (exosystem) align with supportive classroom practices (microsystem) and inclusive cultural values (macrosystem), the likelihood of positive outcomes for students with special needs is greatly enhanced.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), on the other hand, centers on the mechanisms of learning and change at the level of the individual and the group. SCT posits that learning and behavior are shaped by the dynamic interplay of personal factors, behavioral patterns, and environmental influences, a process Bandura (1986, 1997) calls reciprocal determinism. Central to SCT is the concept of self-efficacy the belief in one's capacity to organize and execute the actions required to manage prospective situations. In the context of inclusive education, teacher self-efficacy is repeatedly shown to be a strong predictor of willingness to implement inclusive practices and adapt to the needs of diverse learners. SCT also highlights the importance of observational learning and modeling within communities: when teachers observe effective inclusive strategies among their peers, they are more likely to adopt and sustain similar practices. This theory therefore contributes to our understanding of how professional development, peer learning, and positive school culture can drive meaningful change in inclusive education.

Together, these theoretical perspectives inform the present study by framing inclusion as both a system-level and an individual-level phenomenon. On the one hand, EST guides the analysis of how institutional policies, administrative support, teacher preparation programs,

community engagement, and national legislation create the structural conditions for successful or unsuccessful inclusion. On the other hand, SCT directs attention to the agency of teachers, students, and other stakeholders their beliefs, attitudes, interactions, and learning processes in translating policy and resources into lived experience. For example, while EST explains why disparities in funding or administrative support can hinder inclusion, SCT offers insight into how teacher attitudes, self-efficacy, and collaborative mindset mediate the effect of these conditions on classroom practice. This dual lens enables a more complete analysis of both the barriers and facilitators of inclusive practice, as well as the interplay between personal and systemic factors.

The selected theories also help clarify the relationships among the variables and support the research model. Ecological Systems Theory suggests that the effectiveness of mainstreaming strategies, student experiences, and outcomes are shaped by the alignment or lack thereof of multiple systems. Social Cognitive Theory provides a framework for examining how professional development (an environmental input) enhances teacher self-efficacy (a personal factor), which in turn influences the adoption of inclusive classroom practices (behavior). The reciprocal determinism at the core of SCT highlights how successful inclusion can lead to improved student outcomes, which then reinforce teachers' sense of efficacy and commitment to inclusive education, creating a virtuous cycle of growth and adaptation.

The theoretical propositions underlying EST and SCT are highly relevant to the research problem. Bronfenbrenner's theoretical proposition is that optimal development and learning occur when there is alignment and mutual reinforcement across ecological systems; breakdowns at any level (policy, leadership, classroom practice) can undermine inclusion. Bandura's proposition is that self-efficacy and modeling are central to individual and collective behavior change; people are more likely to act inclusively when they believe in their capacity to do so and when they see successful models in their environment. These propositions are borne out in the reviewed literature: teacher self-efficacy emerges as a key predictor of inclusive practice, while systemic barriers such as underfunding, lack of training, and weak

policy enforcement repeatedly impede progress. The integration of these theories thus provides a robust lens for interpreting findings and crafting recommendations that address both macro-level structures and micro-level agency.

In summary, the combination of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory offers a powerful and comprehensive framework for investigating inclusive education. These perspectives illuminate how sustainable, effective inclusion depends on the alignment of system-level supports (policy, resources, community, and leadership) with the agency, self-efficacy, and collaborative mindset of teachers and other stakeholders. This dual perspective not only enriches the analysis and interpretation of research findings but also informs the design of interventions and policies that are sensitive to both the complexity of educational systems and the lived realities of those within them. Ultimately, grounding the study in these theories ensures that the research addresses the full spectrum of influences on inclusive practice and provides actionable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers committed to the advancement of equitable and high-quality education for all.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



The framework illustrates how inclusive strategies serve as the foundation for equitable and sustainable education for students with special needs. At the top, Inclusive Strategies Implementation functions as the independent variable, representing the structured practices schools adopt to ensure accessibility and participation. These strategies encompass differentiated instruction, assistive technologies, and scaffolding under learning support; peer tutoring and cooperative learning under participation; individualized education plans and socio-emotional programs under developmental strategies; and teacher training, resource allocation, and policy support under equity and sustainability practices. Together, these components form a comprehensive framework that promotes inclusion and responsiveness to diverse learner needs.

Flowing from these strategies is the Stakeholder Experiences node, which acts as the mediating variable. This stage captures the lived realities of students, teachers, and parents as they engage with inclusive practices. Their experiences, whether empowering or challenging, reflect how effectively these strategies are implemented in real classrooms. Positive experiences often indicate strong collaboration, empathy, and adaptability among stakeholders, while negative ones highlight gaps in training, resources, or institutional support. The mediating role of stakeholder experiences is crucial because it determines how inclusive strategies translate into meaningful educational outcomes.

Finally, the model leads to Perceived Outcomes, the dependent variable, which manifests in three domains: educational, social, and developmental. Educational outcomes include improved academic achievement and literacy; social outcomes involve stronger peer relationships and reduced stigma; and developmental outcomes encompass enhanced self-esteem, resilience, and independence. These outcomes collectively represent the success of inclusive education in fostering sustainable and equitable development. The DAG thus demonstrates a clear causal flow, from strategic implementation to stakeholder experiences and ultimately to measurable outcomes, emphasizing that inclusive education thrives when strategies are holistic, experiences are supportive, and outcomes reinforce continuous

improvement.

Research Gap

Despite substantial global and national policy support for inclusive education, there remain critical gaps in understanding how mainstreaming strategies translate into meaningful academic, social, and emotional outcomes for students with special needs, particularly in diverse and resource-constrained contexts such as the Philippines. Much of the existing literature documents best practices and recurring challenges, but relatively few studies have systematically explored the interplay of instructional adaptation, teacher competency, technology integration, and holistic management within actual classroom and institutional settings. Furthermore, previous research often focuses on either teacher perspectives or systemic barriers in isolation, without fully examining how these factors intersect to impact student experiences and inclusive outcomes.

A recurring pattern in the literature is the recognition of multidimensional influences ranging from professional capacity and stakeholder engagement to infrastructure and policy environments yet there is a notable lack of empirical studies that capture these dimensions through a unified, contextualized lens. While studies (Hasanah et al., 2024; Marisana, 2023) affirm the value of differentiated instruction and professional development, they often stop short of investigating how these practices interact with digital transformation, multicultural inclusion, or family and community engagement. Additionally, gaps persist in understanding the lived realities and nuanced challenges faced by Filipino educators and students as they navigate ongoing reforms and policy mandates aligned with SDG 4, AmBisyon Natin 2040, and EDCOM II.

The present study seeks to bridge these gaps by adopting a holistic, systems-based approach that integrates both the structural and agentic variables influencing inclusive education. By examining not just the presence of inclusive policies and professional training, but also their practical implementation and the experiences of teachers, administrators, and

learners, this research aims to provide a more comprehensive and actionable understanding of what drives or hinders successful mainstreaming. The study is particularly attentive to the contextual challenges of the Philippine education system, exploring the nuanced ways in which resources, stakeholder attitudes, and institutional supports shape inclusive practices on the ground.

This research extends and refines previous work by employing a mixed methods design that triangulates data from multiple sources: teacher and administrator interviews, classroom observations, document analysis, and student outcome measures. Theoretical grounding in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory allows for a nuanced analysis of both contextual influences and individual agency. By doing so, the study aims to capture the complex interplay between policy, practice, and lived experience, offering evidence-based recommendations that are both theoretically robust and practically relevant.

Ultimately, the study contributes to the advancement of knowledge by addressing the persistent disconnect between policy aspirations and classroom realities. By situating its findings within both local and international frameworks, the research not only informs the ongoing discourse on inclusive education in the Philippines but also offers transferable insights for other contexts facing similar challenges. This comprehensive approach helps fill the empirical and conceptual voids identified in the literature, paving the way for more effective, equitable, and sustainable models of inclusive education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of related literature and studies explores previous research on the current state of knowledge in the field is summarized, along with pertinent theories, research techniques, and project-related gaps. The collected materials show how the study will add new insights and how it is related to previous research.

Thematic Synthesis of Literature

The thematic synthesis of literature presents an integrated discussion of scholarly works related to the key concepts and phenomena of the study. Rather than listing individual studies, the discussion should be organized around conceptual themes that reflect the major dimensions of the research problem. Each theme should synthesize multiple sources, highlighting convergences, divergences, and emerging directions in the field.

Strategies implemented to support students with special needs in regular classrooms

Recent literature underscores the multidimensional nature of inclusive education, emphasizing the interplay of instructional adaptation, teacher competency, educational technology, and holistic management as foundational components for supporting students with special needs. A recurring theme across the studies (Subarna et al., 2022; Hasanah et al., 2024; Boiliu, 2024; Angco et al., 2025) is the centrality of differentiated instruction and adaptive learning strategies. Teachers who are well-versed in a range of pedagogical techniques such as modifying materials, using alternative assessments, and leveraging technology are better equipped to address the diverse needs of learners, contributing to more equitable and effective learning environments.

The importance of professional development and ongoing teacher training is highlighted as a vital strategy for fostering inclusive practices (Hasanah et al., 2024; Marisana, 2023). Intensive training helps educators identify and respond to individual needs, while building confidence and competence in managing diverse classrooms. Such training aligns with broader calls from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, which advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education for all. The Philippine national vision articulated in AmBisyon Natin 2040 and sectoral reforms from EDCOM II further reinforce the importance of investing in teacher capacity to achieve inclusive growth and social protection.

Educational technology emerges as both an enabler and a challenge within the literature. The integration of assistive tools (Dapa, 2022) and digital applications (Thomas, 2024) enhances accessibility, engagement, and fairness in educational assessment and instruction. Technology is also seen as a driver of organizational change, encouraging a culture of innovation and continuous improvement (Mukhid, 2023). However, the literature cautions that technology must be thoughtfully implemented and supported by adequate training and infrastructure to realize its full potential for inclusion.

Holistic educational management is another key construct identified across multiple studies (Efendi, 2023; Mustaqim, 2024; Traya and Lopez, 2023). Effective leadership, collaborative planning, family involvement, and the provision of comprehensive support services are seen as critical for creating sustainable, inclusive educational environments. This systems-oriented approach resonates with the ecological frameworks promoted by global policy, which call for coordinated efforts across different levels of the educational ecosystem.

Debates in the literature center around the best approaches to fostering inclusion. Some scholars argue for a primarily teacher-led, adaptive approach (Subarna et al., 2022; Marisana, 2023) emphasizing direct instructional adaptation and teacher agency. Others advocate for a more systemic or holistic perspective, focusing on leadership, policy, community engagement, and organizational culture (Efendi, 2023; Fadhilah, 2024; Mustaqim, 2024). There is growing recognition of the need to integrate both perspectives, as successful inclusion often requires alignment of classroom practices with supportive institutional policies and community partnerships.

Additionally, there is discussion about the role of multiculturalism and tolerance in shaping inclusive practices. As Fadhilah (2024) notes, education management that prioritizes multicultural understanding and community engagement builds social harmony and reduces prejudice, broadening the conceptualization of inclusion to encompass not just disability, but also cultural and religious diversity.

In summary, the evolving field of inclusive education is marked by a convergence toward differentiated, technology-enabled, and systemically supported practices, while debates continue regarding the most effective balance of teacher agency and systemic support. National and global policy frameworks provide a strong mandate for inclusion, underscoring its societal relevance and the need for ongoing, context-sensitive research and policy innovation. The integration of these insights points toward a holistic, multi-layered approach to mainstreaming students with special needs, one that is responsive to individual differences, empowered by professional capacity, and sustained by collaborative, inclusive systems.

Impact of Mainstreaming in academic, social, and emotional outcomes

The contemporary literature on mainstreaming students with special needs reveals a nuanced and evolving understanding of inclusion's impact on academic, social, and emotional outcomes. Across numerous studies, a recurring theme emerges: while inclusion policies are grounded in global and national frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4), AmBisyon Natin 2040, and EDCOM II which advocate for equitable and quality education for all, the actual experiences and outcomes for students with special needs in mainstream settings are highly variable and contingent on multiple factors.

Academically, Dell'Anna et al. (2022) and Mansouri et al. (2023) report moderate gains in achievement and adaptive skills for students with mild to severe cognitive disabilities and those with extensive support needs when inclusion is paired with adequate instructional support and peer engagement. However, Gatchalian (2025) and Webster (2022) caution that academic benefits are often limited by insufficient individualized support, lack of teacher training, and resource constraints. Dalgaard et al. (2022) further argue that mere placement in mainstream settings is unlikely to drive significant academic or psychosocial improvements, emphasizing the critical importance of targeted interventions and instructional adaptations.

Socially, inclusion offers enhanced opportunities for interaction, peer modeling, and relationship building (Mansouri et al., 2023). Yet, findings by Dell'Anna et al. (2022), Horgan

et al. (2023), and Wang et al. (2023) highlight persistent issues of marginalization, strained peer relationships, and social isolation. While some students thrive socially, others report feeling misunderstood and excluded, suggesting that the social benefits of inclusion are not uniformly realized. The literature underscores the need for schools to foster genuinely supportive environments and structured opportunities for collaboration, moving beyond physical placement toward meaningful social participation.

Emotionally, inclusive settings can reduce behavioral challenges and support emotional regulation (Dell'Anna et al., 2022), and emotional resilience may serve as a protective factor for students with learning disabilities (Feraco et al., 2022). Nevertheless, Webster (2022) and Casali et al. (2023) find that the lack of tailored interventions and the pressure to conform can result in heightened anxiety, stress, and lower self-esteem for some students. The interplay between academic, social, and emotional outcomes is evident, as studies consistently report a positive correlation between social integration and academic achievement (Gatchalian, 2025).

Theoretical debates persist regarding the most effective pathways to inclusion. One school of thought emphasizes the necessity of individualized and context-sensitive support such as differentiated instruction, social-emotional interventions, and ongoing teacher development to achieve meaningful inclusion. Others question whether inclusion, as currently practiced, too often amounts to superficial "placement" without the requisite systemic and cultural supports, thus risking the perpetuation of the "inclusion illusion" (Webster, 2022). The literature calls for holistic, whole-school approaches that integrate academic, social, and emotional supports, echoing policy frameworks that prioritize inclusive growth and human capital development.

In line with international and national policy directions, the collective findings advocate for moving beyond policy rhetoric and placement mandates toward a model of inclusion characterized by robust, evidence-based practices, sustained resource investment,

and continuous professional development. The societal relevance of these issues is underscored by their alignment with SDG 4, AmBisyon Natin 2040, and EDCOM II, all of which envision an education system that enables every learner regardless of ability to flourish academically, socially, and emotionally. However, achieving this vision remains an ongoing challenge, requiring both systemic reform and school-level innovation.

The literature converges on the idea that inclusion, when meaningfully and holistically implemented, holds significant promise for supporting the comprehensive development of students with special needs. However, persistent implementation gaps and evolving perspectives in the field reinforce the necessity for continuous research, policy refinement, and collaborative practice to realize the full potential of inclusive education.

Teachers' perspectives and readiness on the effectiveness of inclusive practices

Across studies from the Philippines and internationally, a recurring theme is the importance of comprehensive and targeted teacher training as a foundation for successful inclusive practices (Cayabyab, 2023; Crispel and Kasperski, 2021; Donath et al., 2023). Teachers who receive formal training in special education consistently demonstrate higher self-efficacy, more adaptive instructional strategies, and greater willingness to embrace inclusion (Chan, 2021; Lualhati, 2022; Medina et al., 2022). Empirical evidence suggests that professional development yields significant gains in teachers' knowledge and skills, moderately improves instructional effectiveness, and leads to more positive attitudes towards inclusion, with corresponding improvements in student behavior and engagement (Donath et al., 2023).

Despite the recognized benefits of professional development, the literature highlights ongoing gaps in both pre-service and in-service training. Many teachers report insufficient exposure to inclusive practices during their initial preparation and a lack of practical, short-term training opportunities (Zegeye, 2022; Dioso et al., 2022). This disconnects leaves teachers feeling ill-equipped to manage the realities of diverse classrooms and hinders the

effective integration of students with special needs. In the Philippine context, these challenges are compounded by disparities in resource allocation, infrastructural limitations, and inconsistent administrative support, resulting in uneven implementation of inclusive education across regions (Cayabyab, 2023; Nunez and Rosales, 2021).

Conceptually, the literature underscores the interconnectedness of teacher attitudes, self-efficacy, and direct contact with individuals with disabilities in shaping inclusive mindsets and readiness (Kunz et al., 2021; Lualhati, 2022). Studies show that experiential learning and meaningful interactions foster openness and empathy, suggesting the need for teacher education programs to embed practical experiences and diversity-focused coursework (Medina et al., 2022). Moreover, the presence of supportive institutional policies and access to specialized resources such as interpreters for deaf students are critical for positive inclusive experiences (Dela Fuente, 2021; Faragher et al., 2021).

These empirical insights align with international policy directives such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4), which advocate for inclusive and equitable quality education, as well as national priorities articulated in AmBisyon Natin 2040 and EDCOM II. Both frameworks emphasize the need for inclusive growth, social protection, and human capital development, reinforcing the societal imperative of equipping teachers and schools to serve all learners effectively.

Theoretical debates persist regarding the best strategies for promoting inclusion. While some scholars emphasize the primacy of teacher training and professional development as levers for change, others point to the necessity of broader systemic reforms including policy enforcement, community involvement, and resource investment for achieving meaningful and sustainable inclusion (Faragher et al., 2021; Cayabyab, 2023). There is also discussion about the relative weight of teacher attitudes versus structural supports in shaping inclusive outcomes, with emerging consensus that both must be addressed in tandem.

The literature points to professional development, resource allocation, and supportive

policy environments as essential drivers of effective inclusive education. However, persistent gaps in training and systemic support highlight the need for ongoing reform and innovation. Integrating these findings with global and national policy frameworks underscores the broader societal and policy relevance of advancing inclusive education as a pathway to quality, equity, and sustainable development.

Challenges and barriers encountered in the implementation of mainstreaming strategies for students with special needs

Recent scholarship on inclusive education consistently reveals a complex web of barriers that impede its effective implementation, despite widespread policy support at the national and global levels. Across diverse contexts, including the Philippines, Indonesia, and other developing nations, studies highlight the persistent challenges faced by teachers and schools in mainstreaming learners with special needs. These challenges span from resource deficits and inadequate school infrastructure (Jardinez & Natividad, 2024; Alvarez et al., 2025; Lubin & Fernal, 2022) to insufficient training and professional development, which leave teachers feeling ill-prepared to address diverse classroom needs (Sumayang et al., 2022; Yeboah et al., 2023; Al Jaffal, 2022).

A recurring conceptual pattern is the interplay among structural, professional, and attitudinal barriers. Many teachers report high levels of difficulty managing learner behavior, adapting instruction, and accessing adequate teaching materials and facilities (Alvarez et al., 2025; Sumayang et al., 2022). These operational challenges are compounded by personal factors such as low resilience, self-efficacy, and negative attitudes toward inclusion, all of which significantly undermine teacher readiness and willingness to implement inclusive practices (Yeboah et al., 2023; Gibbs, 2023). Notably, school leaders and administrators also face obstacles such as time constraints for planning and implementation and, in some cases, resistance from experienced staff to adopting new, differentiated instructional methods (Gibbs, 2023).

At the systemic level, studies emphasize that the absence of ongoing professional development, robust legislation, and supportive policies aligned with inclusive practice further hinder progress (Jardinez & Natividad, 2024; Lubin & Fernal, 2022). In many cases, legal loopholes, ambiguous definitions of inclusion, and insufficient government commitment exacerbate disparities, especially in smaller or less-resourced communities (Sijuola & Davidova, 2022; Sari et al., 2022). National and global policy frameworks, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4), AmBisyon Natin 2040, and EDCOM II, all underscore the need for inclusive and equitable education, increased investment in resources, and comprehensive strategies that address both the structural and human dimensions of inclusion.

Theoretical debates within the field often center on the relative importance of structural versus attitudinal change. Some scholars argue that merely providing resources or enacting policies is insufficient without corresponding shifts in teacher beliefs, school culture, and community engagement. Others contend that without systemic investment in professional development, infrastructure, and leadership efforts to change attitudes and classroom practice will remain fragmented and unsustainable. There is growing consensus, however, that effective inclusion requires an integrated approach: one that addresses funding, capacity building, legal clarity, stakeholder attitudes, and the unique needs of local communities (Ratheeswari & Nallathambi, 2023; Sari et al., 2022).

In summary, the literature highlights that advancing inclusive education is not simply a matter of policy declaration but requires sustained, multi-level action. Addressing the recurring issues of inadequate resources, limited training, and negative societal or stakeholder attitudes is essential for meaningful progress. Framing these challenges within the context of SDG 4, AmBisyon Natin 2040, and EDCOM II further reinforces the societal and developmental urgency of building inclusive, equitable, and sustainable educational systems. Ultimately, the evolving perspectives in the field point to a need for holistic, context-sensitive solutions that bridge policy intentions with the realities of classroom and community practice.

Enhancing inclusive practices in mainstream classrooms

Recent research consistently highlights that enhancing inclusive education in mainstream classrooms is a multifaceted and collaborative undertaking one in which teaching efficacy, evidence-based instructional strategies, and robust stakeholder participation are central variables. Studies by Sharma et al. (2021) and Drexel University School of Education (2022) emphasize that strong teaching efficacy, cultivated through professional development and targeted support, is the most potent predictor of successful implementation of inclusive practices. These findings are complemented by Cortes (2024), who underscores the importance of structured support systems such as co-teaching, differentiated instruction, and positive teacher attitudes, all contributing to improved learning environments for students with disabilities.

A recurring conceptual pattern in the literature is the pivotal role of stakeholders, teachers, parents, administrators, policymakers, and community members in shaping the accessibility, quality, and sustainability of inclusive education (Aleño et al., 2024; Baidya and Baidya, 2024). Active and meaningful engagement of stakeholders leads to stronger collaboration, resource mobilization, and culturally relevant practices, all of which directly affect the integration and achievement of students with special needs. Studies by Saani (2024) and Nigam and Kumar (2023) further highlight those positive attitudes, a willingness to adapt, and continuous advocacy among stakeholders are essential for dispelling misconceptions and overcoming resistance, thereby fostering environments where diversity is celebrated, and every learner feels valued.

National and global policy frameworks, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4), AmBisyon Natin 2040, and EDCOM II, provide the backdrop for these research findings. These policies advocate for equitable quality education, the celebration of diversity, and the mobilization of resources to ensure no learner is left behind. Ari et al. (2022) and Cortes (2024) point out that, despite alignment with institutional visions

and policy rhetoric, practical challenges such as funding gaps, digital access, and research quality remain emphasizing the need for government and community collaboration to bridge these divides.

Within this landscape, theoretical debates persist. Some scholars argue that teacher training, efficacy, and classroom strategies are the most critical levers for advancement, while others contend that systemic, structural, and attitudinal barriers must be addressed in parallel. There is also discussion regarding the extent to which stakeholder engagement outside of the classroom especially parental and community involvement shapes meaningful inclusion. The emerging consensus, however, is that no single factor is sufficient; rather, a holistic, systems-based approach that integrates professional development, stakeholder collaboration, supportive policies, and continuous advocacy is necessary for sustainable progress.

In sum, the literature converges on the view that the effective promotion of inclusive education depends on the interplay of well-prepared educators, engaged stakeholders, supportive policies, and sustained advocacy. This aligns with both national and global development goals, reinforcing the societal relevance and urgency of advancing inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education for all learners.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the study, Inclusive Practices for Sustainable Development: Understanding the Experiences and Outcomes of Inclusive Strategies for Students with Special Needs, the effective integration of students with special needs into mainstream classrooms remains a significant challenge. While national policies and legislative frameworks in the Philippines and elsewhere highlight the importance of equitable educational opportunities, practical implementation is often hindered by insufficient resources, limited teacher training, and inconsistent support services. These gaps can negatively impact academic achievement, social

integration, and overall well-being of students with special needs. Understanding the strategies, experiences, and outcomes associated with mainstreaming in diverse school contexts is crucial for informing policy, guiding practice, and ensuring that inclusive education goals are met.

Therefore, this study seeks to systematically investigate the current practices, challenges, and outcomes of mainstreaming students with special needs, with the aim of providing evidence-based recommendations for more effective and sustainable inclusive education.

Central Question:

1. What are the experiences and perceived outcomes of inclusive strategies implemented for students with special needs in promoting sustainable and equitable educational development?

Corollary Questions:

1. What inclusive strategies are implemented to support the learning, participation, and development of students with special needs?
2. How do students with special needs, teachers, and other stakeholders describe their experiences with the implementation of inclusive strategies?
3. What educational, social, and developmental outcomes are perceived to result from the implementation of inclusive strategies for students with special needs?
4. What teacher resource guide on sustainable inclusive practices may be developed based on the findings of the study?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Rationale

This study Inclusive Practices for Sustainable Development: Understanding the Experiences and Outcomes of Inclusive Strategies for Students with Special Needs will employ a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore and understand the experiences of individuals involved in implementing inclusive practices for students with special needs. Phenomenology is a qualitative approach that focuses on examining and describing the lived experiences of individuals who have directly encountered a particular phenomenon. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenological research seeks to uncover the essence and common meanings of human experiences by exploring how individuals perceive, interpret, and make sense of a phenomenon in their everyday lives. In the context of this study, the phenomenological approach enables the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how inclusive strategies are experienced, implemented, and perceived by those directly involved in supporting students with special needs.

The phenomenological research design was considered appropriate because the study aims to capture the authentic voices, perspectives, and experiences of participants regarding inclusive practices and their perceived outcomes. Rather than measuring variables or testing hypotheses, this design emphasizes understanding the meanings participants attach to their experiences within inclusive educational settings. Through in-depth interviews and reflective discussions, the researcher can identify recurring themes, shared insights, and common challenges that characterize the implementation of inclusive strategies. By examining these lived experiences, the study seeks to reveal the essence of inclusive practices and provide valuable insights that may inform educational policies, professional development initiatives, and sustainable approaches to supporting students with special needs.

Data will be gathered through in-depth interviews with participants who have direct experience with inclusive education. The collected data will be analyzed following

phenomenological procedures, including identifying significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering themes, and developing textual and structural descriptions of the participants' experiences. These processes will facilitate the identification of the essence of inclusive practices as experienced by the participants.

The findings of the study will provide a deeper understanding of how inclusive strategies are implemented and experienced within educational settings. Furthermore, the results will serve as the basis for the development of a Teacher Resource Guide on Sustainable Inclusive Practices, which may assist educators in strengthening inclusive education and promoting equitable learning opportunities for students with special needs.

Research Locale and Context

This study is conducted in Camarin High School, District I, Schools Division of Caloocan City which is known for their diverse student populations and active implementation of inclusive education policies. The district is part of the Department of Education (DepEd) system, representing a mix of urban settings with established Special Education (SPED) programs and mainstreaming initiatives. Schools Division of Caloocan City is an ideal locale due to its concentration of resources, trained personnel, and exposure to national reforms such as those outlined in the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 and the Inclusive Education Act of 2022. Choosing this locale allows the study to capture a broad spectrum of experiences and challenges in mainstreaming students with special needs, reflecting both the progress and persistent gaps in inclusive practices. The selected locale is appropriate because it offers a microcosm of the country's efforts and ongoing challenges in implementing inclusive education, making the findings relevant for broader application.

Selection of Participants

The participants of this study consist of eleven (10) junior high school teachers from school implementing inclusive education practices. A purposive sampling technique is employed to select participants who possess firsthand knowledge and experience in teaching

students with special needs within inclusive classroom settings. This sampling method ensures that the selected participants can provide rich and relevant information regarding the implementation of inclusive strategies, their experiences, and the perceived outcomes of these practices.

To qualify for participation, teachers must be currently teaching at the junior high school level and have at least one year of experience working with students with special needs in an inclusive educational environment. The participants may include teachers handling different subject areas and grade levels to provide diverse perspectives on the implementation of inclusive practices.

The selection of eight junior high school teachers is appropriate for a phenomenological study, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences while maintaining manageable and meaningful data analysis. Through their narratives, the study seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of the inclusive strategies employed in the classroom, the challenges and successes encountered, and the educational, social, and developmental outcomes observed among students with special needs.

Participants will be identified through coordination with school administrators and will be invited to participate voluntarily. Prior to data collection, informed consent will be obtained, and participants will be assured of the confidentiality, anonymity, and ethical handling of all information shared throughout the study. This selection strategy enables the study to capture rich, context-specific insights into the challenges and successes of inclusive education. By involving a range of stakeholders, the research can triangulate data across different viewpoints, enhancing the depth and credibility of the findings.

Data Generation Methods

Consistent with the qualitative transcendental phenomenological research design, data for this study will be generated primarily through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the ten junior high school teachers who have direct experience in implementing inclusive

strategies for students with special needs. In phenomenological research, in-depth interviews are considered the most appropriate method for exploring and understanding participants lived experiences and the meanings they attach to a particular phenomenon.

The interview guide will consist of open-ended questions aligned with the study's central and corollary questions, focusing on the inclusive strategies employed by teachers, their experiences in implementing these practices, and the perceived educational, social, and developmental outcomes for students with special needs. The semi-structured format allows participants to freely describe their experiences while ensuring that essential aspects of the phenomenon are explored.

During the interviews, participants will be encouraged to share detailed narratives and reflections regarding their experiences with inclusive education. Follow-up and probing questions will be used to clarify responses and obtain deeper insights into the meanings and essence of their experiences. This process enables the researcher to gather rich, descriptive data that capture the realities of implementing inclusive practices in junior high school settings.

All interviews will be conducted individually, either face-to-face or through an online platform when necessary, and will be audio-recorded with the participants' informed consent. The recordings will be transcribed verbatim to preserve the accuracy and authenticity of participants' responses. Field notes will also be maintained to document nonverbal cues, observations, and reflections that may contribute to the interpretation of the data.

The collected narratives will serve as the primary source of information for understanding the lived experiences and perceived outcomes of inclusive strategies. These data will provide the foundation for identifying significant statements, formulating meanings, and developing themes that describe the essence of inclusive practices for students with special needs. The findings will subsequently inform the development of a Teacher Resource Guide on Sustainable Inclusive Practices.

Role of the Researcher and Reflexivity

The researcher serves as the primary instrument in the data collection and analysis process, facilitating interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations. As an educator with knowledge of inclusive education, the researcher brings both expertise and personal investment to the study attributes that enhance rapport with participants but also necessitate vigilant reflexivity.

Reflexivity is maintained through the use of a reflective journal, in which the researcher documents preconceptions, emotional reactions, and observations about the research process. This ongoing self-examination helps mitigate the impact of personal biases and ensures that the voices of participants remain central.

To further support reflexivity, the researcher regularly engages in peer debriefing with colleagues experienced in qualitative research and inclusive education. These sessions provide opportunities to challenge assumptions and interpret data from multiple perspectives.

By committing to transparency, self-awareness, and ongoing reflection, the researcher aims to balance professional expertise with the ethical responsibility to authentically represent participants' experiences and uphold the integrity of the research process.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are central to every phase of this study. All participants are provided with clear, accessible information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights as participants. Informed consent is obtained in writing before any data collection takes place, ensuring that participation is entirely voluntary.

Confidentiality is rigorously maintained by assigning pseudonyms to participants and removing identifying details from transcripts and research reports. Data are stored on password-protected devices, with access limited to the researcher and authorized collaborators.

Given the potentially sensitive nature of discussing experiences related to special needs, inclusion, and school challenges, interviews and focus groups are conducted in private, comfortable settings. The researcher is prepared to provide information on counseling or support services if participants experience distress during or after participation.

Participants are reminded that they may withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty or explanation, and that their decision will not affect their relationship with the school or researcher.

Institutional ethical approval is obtained before the commencement of data collection, and all procedures adhere to the ethical guidelines established by the relevant research ethics board and the Department of Education.

Data Transcription and Management

Audio recordings of interviews and focus groups are transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and capture the nuances of participants' speech. The researcher reviews each transcript while listening to the recording, making corrections and clarifying inaudible or ambiguous segments.

Transcripts are anonymized by replacing names and identifying details with pseudonyms and codes. This process is carried out immediately after transcription to protect participant confidentiality.

All data, transcripts, observation notes, and documents, are stored in encrypted digital files and organized in a secure, access-controlled research database. Physical materials are kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office.

A systematic file-naming scheme is used to facilitate data retrieval and cross-referencing during analysis. Backups are maintained on encrypted drives to prevent data loss.

The researcher maintains a detailed log documenting the data management process,

ensuring transparency and enabling replication or audit if required by supervisors or ethical review boards.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis begins with the systematic coding of transcripts, observation notes, and documents. An inductive approach is used initially, with codes emerging from the data rather than being imposed a priori. This allows for the identification of themes that are grounded in participants lived experiences.

Once initial codes are established, the researcher engages in thematic analysis, grouping codes into broader categories and identifying relationships between themes. This process is iterative, with data revisited multiple times to refine themes and ensure their validity.

Triangulation is achieved by comparing data from different sources such as interviews, focus groups, observations, documents and participant groups. Discrepancies and convergences are carefully examined and used to enrich interpretations.

The researcher maintains analytic memos throughout the process, documenting insights, questions, and emerging hypotheses. These memos support reflexivity and trace the development of analytical thinking.

Findings are contextualized within the study's theoretical framework, drawing on Ecological Systems Theory and Social Cognitive Theory to interpret how systemic and individual factors influence inclusive practices and outcomes.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

Trustworthiness is established through multiple strategies. Credibility is enhanced by prolonged engagement in the research setting, persistent observation, and member checking, where participants are invited to review and validate key findings or themes. Transferability

is supported by providing rich, detailed descriptions of the context and participants, allowing others to determine the relevance to their own settings.

Dependability is ensured by maintaining a comprehensive audit trail, including field notes, analytic memos, coding records, and methodological decisions. This enables external reviewers to trace the research process and assess its consistency and reliability.

Confirmability is addressed by practicing reflexivity, triangulating data sources, and engaging in regular peer debriefing. These practices reduce the influence of researcher bias and promote the objective interpretation of data.

By rigorously applying these strategies, the study aims to produce findings that are credible, dependable, and relevant for informing inclusive education policies and practices in the Philippines and comparable contexts.

FINDINGS

This section presents a synthesis of the major findings of the study. The summary is organized according to the research questions and the major themes that emerged from the participants' lived experiences. The findings provide insights into the inclusive practices implemented by teachers, the experiences of stakeholders involved in inclusion, the outcomes of these practices, and the proposed sustainable resource guide developed from the study.

1. What inclusive strategies are implemented to support students with special needs?

The findings revealed the major theme Differentiated and Flexible Instruction for Diverse Learners. Participants emphasized the implementation of differentiated instruction, flexible assessment practices, individualized accommodations, strength-based learning opportunities, peer-assisted learning, cooperative learning activities, positive behavior

support, and collaborative engagement with parents and stakeholders. Teachers adapted instructional strategies, classroom activities, and assessment methods according to learners' diverse abilities, needs, and learning preferences. These inclusive strategies enabled students with special needs to access the curriculum more effectively, participate meaningfully in classroom activities, and experience equitable learning opportunities alongside their peers.

2. What are the experiences of teachers, students with special needs, parents, and other stakeholders regarding inclusive practices?

The findings generated the theme Transformative and Collaborative Inclusive Education Experiences. Participants generally described inclusive education as a challenging yet transformative process that required continuous adaptation, collaboration, patience, empathy, and commitment. Teachers reported professional growth as they became more flexible, innovative, and responsive to learner diversity. Students with special needs experienced greater acceptance, participation, and belongingness, while regular students developed empathy, respect, and understanding toward their peers. Parents, school leaders, and other stakeholders emphasized the importance of collaboration, shared responsibility, and active involvement in supporting inclusive education. Despite encountering challenges such as limited resources, diverse learner needs, and insufficient training opportunities, participants viewed inclusion as a meaningful and rewarding educational experience.

3. What outcomes result from the implementation of inclusive practices for students with special needs and other members of the school community?

The findings revealed the theme Holistic Growth and Empowerment Through Inclusive Education. Participants observed positive outcomes across academic, social, emotional, and developmental domains. Students with special needs demonstrated improvements in academic participation, communication skills, confidence, independence, leadership, and social interaction. Inclusive practices fostered a stronger sense of belonging and encouraged active engagement in classroom and school activities. Regular learners

became more empathetic, accepting, and respectful of diversity, while teachers gained increased confidence and competence in addressing learner needs. Parents and stakeholders also reported greater satisfaction and involvement in supporting learners. Overall, inclusive education contributed to learner empowerment, positive relationships, social inclusion, and holistic development within the school community.

4. What teacher resource guide can be developed to sustain inclusive and responsive classroom practices?

The findings generated the theme Developing a Sustainable Teacher Resource Guide for Inclusive and Responsive Classroom Practices. Participants identified the need for a practical and sustainable resource that would assist teachers in implementing inclusive education effectively. As a result, a Teacher Resource Guide on Sustainable Inclusive Practices was developed. The proposed guide includes sections on understanding inclusive education, learner assessment and profiling, differentiated and responsive instruction, strength-based learning, peer support and collaborative learning, parent and stakeholder partnerships, behavior support and classroom management, professional development, safe and inclusive learning environments, monitoring and evaluation tools, and continuous improvement strategies. The guide aims to strengthen teachers' competencies, promote sustainable inclusive practices, support long-term implementation efforts, and ensure equitable educational opportunities for all learners.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that inclusive education is characterized by responsive instructional practices, collaborative relationships, holistic learner development, and sustainable support systems. The emergence of the four major themes highlights the importance of adapting instruction to learner diversity, fostering collaborative and transformative educational experiences, promoting learner empowerment and growth, and developing sustainable resources that support teachers in creating equitable and inclusive learning environments for all students.

Conclusions on the Essence of the Phenomenon

This section presents the conclusions drawn from the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants regarding the implementation of inclusive practices for students with special needs. The conclusions are derived from the major themes that emerged from the study and reflect the essence of the phenomenon as experienced by the participants.

1. Differentiated and Flexible Instruction for Diverse Learners

The findings indicate that inclusive education is primarily realized through differentiated and flexible instructional practices that respond to the diverse needs, abilities, and learning preferences of students. The participants demonstrated that meaningful inclusion occurs when teachers adapt instruction, assessment, learning activities, and support mechanisms to ensure equitable participation for all learners. The essence of this theme suggests that inclusion is not dependent on uniform teaching approaches but on teachers' capacity to provide responsive and accessible learning opportunities that allow students with special needs to engage actively in the learning process.

2. Transformative and Collaborative Inclusive Education Experiences

The findings reveal that inclusive education is a transformative and collaborative process that requires the active involvement of teachers, students, parents, school leaders, and other stakeholders. Participants described inclusion as a shared responsibility characterized by cooperation, empathy, commitment, and continuous adaptation. Their experiences suggest that meaningful inclusion is achieved when positive relationships, collaborative partnerships, and collective efforts are established to support learners with special needs. The essence of this theme highlights that inclusive education extends beyond classroom instruction and becomes a community-wide endeavor that benefits all members of the educational environment.

3. Holistic Growth and Empowerment Through Inclusive Education

The findings demonstrate that inclusive practices contribute to the holistic growth and empowerment of learners. Participants observed improvements in students' academic participation, communication skills, confidence, independence, leadership, social interaction, and overall well-being. Inclusive education also promoted empathy, acceptance, respect for diversity, and positive peer relationships among regular learners. The essence of this theme indicates that inclusion empowers learners by recognizing their strengths, fostering belongingness, and providing opportunities for meaningful participation. As a result, learners develop not only academically but also socially, emotionally, and personally.

4. Developing a Sustainable Teacher Resource Guide for Inclusive and Responsive Classroom Practices

The findings show that teachers require practical, accessible, and sustainable resources to effectively implement inclusive education. Participants identified the need for guidance on differentiated instruction, learner assessment, classroom management, collaborative partnerships, learner support strategies, and professional development. Consequently, the proposed Teacher Resource Guide emerged as a practical response to these identified needs. The essence of this theme highlights that sustaining inclusive education requires structured resources that strengthen teachers' competencies, support consistent implementation of inclusive practices, and promote continuous improvement in addressing learner diversity.

Overall, the essence of the phenomenon reveals that inclusive education is a responsive, collaborative, and empowering educational process that promotes equitable participation and meaningful learning opportunities for students with special needs. The findings suggest that successful inclusion is fostered through differentiated and flexible instruction, collaborative engagement among stakeholders, holistic learner development, and access to sustainable resources that support inclusive classroom practices. These elements collectively contribute to creating educational environments where all learners are valued,

supported, and provided opportunities to succeed.

Practical Output

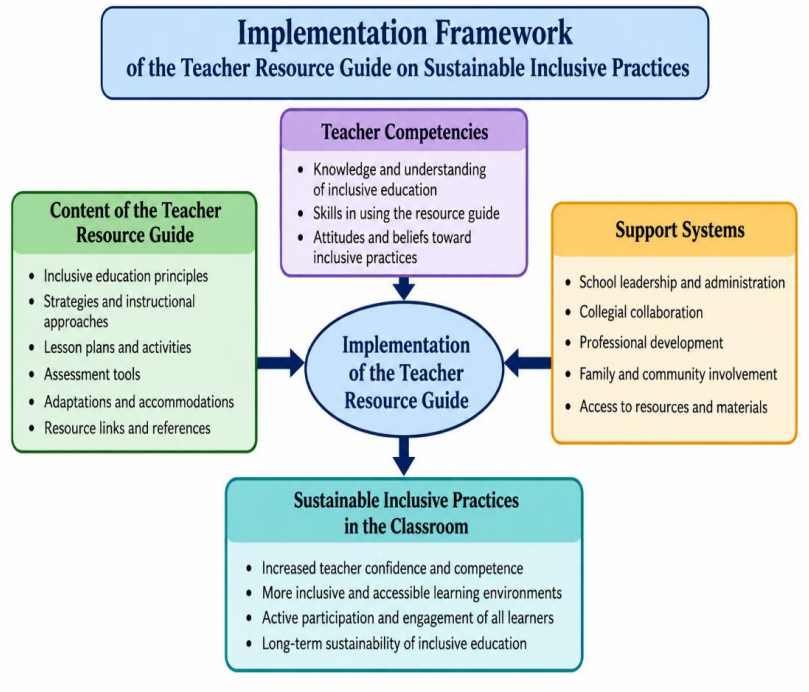
Teacher Resource Guide on Sustainable Inclusive Practices

The Teacher Resource Guide on Sustainable Inclusive Practices is anchored on the principle that inclusive education is achieved when teachers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, strategies, and resources necessary to address the diverse needs of learners in a sustainable manner. The framework of the guide was developed based on the findings of the study and is organized into interconnected components that collectively support the implementation of inclusive education and the achievement of equitable learning outcomes for students with special needs.

The Implementation Framework of the Teacher Resource Guide on Sustainable Inclusive Practices illustrates the systematic integration of essential components necessary to promote and sustain inclusive education in the classroom.

Figure 2

Implementation Framework of the Teacher Resource Guide on Sustainable Inclusive Practices



The framework highlights the interconnected roles of the content of the teacher resource guide, teacher competencies, and support systems in facilitating the effective implementation of inclusive teaching practices. These three components serve as the foundational elements that guide teachers in addressing the diverse learning needs of students and creating an accessible, equitable, and supportive learning environment. Through their integration, the framework provides a structured approach to translating inclusive education principles into practical classroom strategies that support meaningful participation and learning among all students.

The first component, Content of the Teacher Resource Guide, represents the instructional foundation of the proposed practical output. It encompasses essential topics and resources designed to assist teachers in implementing inclusive education within their respective classrooms. These include inclusive education principles, strategies and instructional approaches, lesson plans and learning activities, assessment tools, adaptations and accommodations, and resource links and references. The inclusion of these elements is intended to provide teachers with practical guidance in designing and delivering instruction that responds to learners' varying abilities, backgrounds, and educational needs. Furthermore, the resource guide serves as a reference material that teachers can regularly consult when planning lessons, assessing student performance, and modifying instructional strategies to promote equitable learning opportunities.

The second component, Teacher Competencies, emphasizes the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs necessary for teachers to implement the resource guide effectively. Knowledge and understanding of inclusive education enable teachers to recognize learner diversity and identify appropriate instructional responses. Meanwhile, the ability to utilize the resource guide allows teachers to apply the recommended strategies, instructional materials, and assessment procedures in actual classroom situations. Positive attitudes and beliefs toward inclusive practices are equally important, as these influence teachers' willingness to accommodate individual learning differences and promote meaningful participation among

students. This component recognizes that the availability of instructional resources alone may not be sufficient to establish inclusive classrooms unless teachers possess the necessary competencies and commitment to apply them appropriately.

The third component, Support Systems, highlights the importance of institutional and collaborative assistance in sustaining inclusive education practices. This component includes school leadership and administration, collegial collaboration, professional development, family and community involvement, and access to resources and instructional materials. School administrators play an essential role in providing organizational support, establishing inclusive policies, and ensuring that teachers have access to necessary resources. Collaboration among teachers encourages the exchange of instructional strategies, experiences, and practical solutions to classroom challenges. Professional development opportunities further strengthen teachers' knowledge and competencies, while the involvement of families and community stakeholders promotes shared responsibility in supporting learners' educational needs. Collectively, these support mechanisms help establish favorable conditions for the consistent and sustainable application of inclusive practices.

At the center of the framework is the Implementation of the Teacher Resource Guide, which represents the integration and practical application of the three foundational components. The directional arrows illustrate how the guide's content, teacher competencies, and available support systems contribute to its implementation. During this process, teachers are expected to utilize the instructional strategies, learning activities, assessment tools, and accommodations presented in the resource guide while considering the diverse characteristics and needs of their students. Effective implementation also involves continuous reflection, instructional adjustments, and collaboration with relevant stakeholders to address challenges encountered in inclusive classroom settings. This central component emphasizes that sustainable inclusive education requires not only access to appropriate teaching resources but also the active engagement of competent teachers and supportive educational institutions.

The final component, Sustainable Inclusive Practices in the Classroom, represents the intended outcomes of implementing the teacher resource guide. These outcomes include increased teacher confidence and competence, more inclusive and accessible learning environments, active participation and engagement of all learners, and the long-term sustainability of inclusive education. Through the application of appropriate instructional approaches and responsive classroom practices, teachers may become better equipped to address learner diversity and provide equitable opportunities for academic participation. Moreover, the establishment of supportive and accessible learning environments is expected to encourage students to participate meaningfully in classroom activities regardless of their individual abilities and learning needs. The framework further emphasizes sustainability by promoting inclusive practices that can be continuously implemented, improved, and integrated into regular classroom instruction rather than applied only as temporary interventions.

Overall, the Implementation Framework demonstrates that sustainable inclusive education is supported by the coordinated interaction of instructional resources, teacher competencies, and institutional support systems. The framework positions the Teacher Resource Guide as a practical tool that can assist educators in translating inclusive education principles into classroom practices. It also recognizes that effective implementation depends on teachers' capacity to utilize the guide and the availability of collaborative and organizational support. By integrating these essential components, the proposed resource guide aims to strengthen teachers' instructional practices, enhance the accessibility and inclusivity of learning environments, and promote the continued participation and development of diverse learners. Ultimately, the framework serves as a guide for the intended implementation of the proposed practical output, providing a foundation for its future application, monitoring, and evaluation in educational settings.

Recommendations for Practice, Policy, and Future Research

This section presents recommendations based on the findings and conclusions of the study entitled *"Inclusive Practices for Sustainable Development: Understanding the Experiences and Outcomes of Inclusive Strategies for Students with Special Needs."* The recommendations are intended to support the continuous improvement of inclusive education practices, strengthen policy implementation, and guide future research initiatives related to sustainable inclusive education.

Practice

Teachers should continue to strengthen the implementation of inclusive strategies by utilizing differentiated instruction, flexible assessment approaches, classroom accommodations, and learner-centered teaching practices that address the diverse needs of students with special needs. Schools should encourage the use of strength-based approaches that recognize learners' abilities, interests, and potential to enhance participation, confidence, and academic success.

School leaders should provide continuous support to teachers through capacity-building programs, mentoring activities, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, and collaborative professional learning opportunities focused on inclusive education. The proposed Teacher Resource Guide on Sustainable Inclusive Practices may be adopted and utilized as a practical reference to assist teachers in effectively implementing inclusive classroom strategies and sustaining inclusive practices within their schools.

Teachers should also strengthen collaboration with parents, caregivers, specialists, and community stakeholders to ensure comprehensive support for students with special needs. Likewise, schools should promote safe, welcoming, and inclusive learning environments that foster respect for diversity, social inclusion, and a sense of belonging among all learners.

Policy

Educational policymakers and administrators should continue strengthening the implementation of inclusive education policies through the provision of adequate resources, instructional materials, assistive technologies, and specialized support services for students with special needs. Greater investments should be allocated to support schools in addressing barriers to learning and participation.

Policies should promote sustained professional development programs that enhance teachers' competencies in inclusive education, differentiated instruction, behavior management, and learner support. Educational authorities may also consider institutionalizing the use of teacher resource materials and practical guides that support inclusive teaching practices across schools.

Furthermore, schools and educational institutions should establish comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems that regularly assess the effectiveness of inclusive education initiatives. Collaborative partnerships among government agencies, local communities, non-government organizations, and educational institutions should likewise be strengthened to ensure a coordinated approach to inclusive and sustainable educational development.

Future Research

Future researchers may conduct similar studies involving larger populations and diverse educational contexts to further explore the implementation and effectiveness of inclusive practices for students with special needs. Comparative studies across different schools, regions, and educational levels may provide broader insights into factors that influence successful inclusion.

Researchers may also investigate the long-term educational, social, emotional, and

developmental outcomes of inclusive education programs for students with special needs. Further studies may focus on the effectiveness of specific inclusive interventions, including differentiated instruction, peer mentoring, cooperative learning, assistive technologies, and family engagement initiatives.

In addition, future research may evaluate the effectiveness and usability of the proposed Teacher Resource Guide on Sustainable Inclusive Practices in improving teachers' competencies, instructional practices, and learner outcomes. Such studies may provide empirical evidence regarding the guide's contribution to strengthening sustainable inclusive education and may inform future revisions and enhancements of the resource.

Finally, future investigations may explore the perspectives of parents, school leaders, specialists, and community stakeholders to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that support or hinder the successful implementation of inclusive education. These studies can contribute to the continued development of evidence-based policies, programs, and practices that promote equitable and quality education for all learners.

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