| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Faculty Experience and Professional Development as Determinants of Inclusive Teaching Practices: A Correlational Study of Elementary Teachers in Philippine Public Schools

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| **ABSTRACT**

This research assessed faculty experience and professional development as determinants of inclusive teaching practices. The study employed a descriptive correlational design since it aimed to examine the extent of factors influencing the implementation of inclusive education, the level of inclusive teaching practices among respondents, and the significant correlation between faculty experience and professional development with inclusive education practices. Findings revealed that, with regard to the extent of factors influencing inclusive education, most elementary teachers demonstrated a moderate level of experience in adapting instruction and managing classroom challenges. Their engagement in professional development activities related to inclusive education was also moderate, yet they showed strong participation in school-based INSETs and expressed confidence in applying the knowledge and strategies acquired. Furthermore, teachers were consistent in applying inclusive instructional strategies, particularly differentiated instruction and the use of varied teaching methods, which are essential in meeting the diverse needs of learners. Based on the results, several recommendations are proposed. Schools should focus on the practical application of evidence-based strategies such as differentiated instruction, the integration of assistive technologies, and the use of behavior intervention planning to support diverse learners. It is also vital to ensure access to updated teaching and learning resources. Moreover, regular monitoring and evaluation of professional development programs must be carried out to assess their effectiveness.

1. Introduction

Inclusive education in the Philippines is grounded in legal and policy frameworks that promote equal access to quality education for all learners, including those with disabilities. Republic Act No. 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, calls for an inclusive curriculum responsive to diverse learner needs. DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2009, outlines guidelines for implementing the Special Education (SPED) program, emphasizing inclusive education as a core strategy. Republic Act No. 11650 (2022) further institutionalizes support systems for learners with disabilities to ensure inclusive learning environments. However, despite these progressive mandates, implementation remains inconsistent due to challenges such as limited resources, inadequate teacher training, and systemic barriers (UNICEF Philippines, 2020). Learners with disabilities often encounter exclusion or insufficient support in mainstream classrooms, highlighting the essential role of teachers in applying inclusive practices. Their capacity to respond effectively to diverse learning needs is key to the success of inclusive education (Salas, 2021).

Moreover, research shows that teachers' years of experience and exposure to diverse learners significantly influence their capacity to implement inclusive teaching practices effectively (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Faculty development, including ongoing professional training, equips teachers with the necessary skills to differentiate instruction and manage diverse classrooms (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory supports this view by emphasizing the importance of social interaction, scaffolding, and collaborative learning in helping learners progress within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). In inclusive settings, teachers act as facilitators who provide appropriate support until learners achieve independence. Similarly, Bandura's social learning theory underscores the significance of modeling, observation, and imitation in acquiring new skills and behaviors (Bandura, 1977). Teachers who demonstrate inclusive strategies serve as role models, enabling students both with and without disabilities to learn appropriate academic and social behaviors through observation and guided practice. Thus, the combination of practical experience, professional development, and theoretical grounding enhances pedagogical quality, fosters positive learner outcomes, and supports differentiated instruction tailored to individual needs (Florian & Linklater, 2010).

Additionally, current educational expectations demand that teachers be both content experts and context-sensitive practitioners who understand and address the unique challenges of inclusive classrooms (Loreman, 2017). Continuous professional growth enables teachers to adapt to evolving inclusive education paradigms and apply evidence-based strategies in managing behavioral and learning challenges. Despite policy support, studies reveal persistent gaps in the implementation of inclusive practices by SPED teachers in the Philippines. DepEd's monitoring reports indicate inconsistent application of inclusive strategies and limited integration of behavior management techniques in classrooms (DepEd, 2023). Classroom observations further highlight disparities between teachers' professional development experiences and their actual instructional practices, with many educators reporting inadequate preparation for inclusive settings (Roces & Reyes, 2022). These gaps underline the urgent need for sustainable, evidence-based improvements in instructional delivery and behavioral interventions to better serve learners with disabilities. Without addressing these deficiencies, schools risk perpetuating inequities in educational access and quality for vulnerable student populations (Conde, 2019).

Understanding the connection between faculty experience, professional development, and inclusive teaching practices is essential for generating practical insights that strengthen teacher capacity. A correlational research design is appropriate for identifying patterns and relationships among these variables without implying causation, providing valuable data for school leaders and policymakers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study addresses a research gap by measuring how teacher-specific factors influence the implementation of inclusive education at Bunga Elementary School. The results will support evidence-based planning to design professional development programs that meet the actual needs of teachers, thereby promoting a more inclusive school environment. Additionally, this research has practical value in shaping a targeted Action Plan aligned with DepEd's priorities to enhance teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. The plan will address gaps in teacher training and experience, with a focus on inclusive instruction and behavior management for SPED educators. Ultimately, the study contributes to advancing inclusive education in public elementary schools by supporting a culture of equity, quality, and acceptance.

Despite the presence of a strong legal and policy framework promoting inclusive education in the Philippines, such as Republic Acts 10533 and 11650, significant challenges persist in the practical implementation of inclusive teaching practices, especially in public schools. Existing studies have highlighted issues such as inadequate teacher preparation, limited professional development, and inconsistent application of inclusive strategies in classrooms. However, there is a lack of localized, empirical research that specifically examines how teacher-related factors particularly years of experience and exposure to professional development affect the quality and consistency of inclusive instructional practices in individual school settings. Most national-level studies provide general insights but do not capture the unique challenges faced by schools in rural or under-resourced areas. Furthermore, while the role of teachers in fostering inclusive education is well-documented theoretically, there is limited quantitative data connecting these theories to actual teaching practices in the Philippine context. In particular, there is a need to explore how SPED teachers apply inclusive strategies and manage diverse classroom needs, and whether their training and experience adequately support these efforts. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the correlation between faculty experience, professional development, and the implementation of inclusive education.

2. Literature Review

Effective implementation of inclusive education depends largely on teacher-related factors such as professional experience and access to continuous development opportunities. Studies have shown that teachers with more years of teaching experience often exhibit stronger classroom management skills, greater instructional flexibility, and deeper understanding of learner diversity (Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2015). However, experience alone is not enough. Ongoing professional development plays a critical role in preparing teachers for inclusive settings, especially when it includes targeted training on disability awareness, differentiated instruction, and inclusive assessment practices (Lindsay et al., 2019). Without access to relevant seminars or workshops, many teachers feel unprepared to meet the complex needs of students with disabilities, particularly in resource-

constrained public-school contexts such as those in the Philippines. Therefore, investing in both initial and in-service teacher education is essential for improving inclusive teaching practices. Inclusive teaching is a multifaceted approach that goes beyond academic instruction to support the holistic development of all learners. Research emphasizes that inclusive educators must be equipped not only to adapt content and pedagogy but also to foster socio-emotional development, assess diverse learning outcomes effectively, and manage classroom behaviors constructively (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2017). A study by Sharma et al. (2018) further highlights that teachers who undergo quality professional development are more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes and effective practices in inclusive classrooms. These practices include modifying lesson plans, using assistive technologies, and implementing behavior management strategies tailored to students' individual needs. However, disparities in training quality and availability often result in inconsistent application of inclusive practices, particularly in rural or underserved schools (de Boer et al., 2018). Thus, aligning teacher development programs with inclusive education goals remains a critical step toward achieving equitable learning environments.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to investigate the relationship between faculty experience, professional development, and the extent of inclusive teaching practices among elementary teachers at Bunga Elementary School. The descriptive component aimed to collect detailed data on teachers' backgrounds, including years of teaching experience, participation in relevant training programs, and the inclusive strategies they apply in the classroom. Inclusive teaching practices were examined in terms of four key dimensions: promoting learners' holistic development, delivering differentiated instruction, assessing learning outcomes, and managing classroom behavior in inclusive settings. The study was guided by the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model. The Input phase involved identifying key variables, such as faculty experience and professional development activities. The Process phase analyzed how these variables influenced inclusive teaching practices. The Output focused on identifying significant relationships and generating an action plan to enhance inclusive education practices within the school. Data were collected using a researcher-made survey questionnaire, which consisted of five main domains: faculty experience, faculty development, holistic learner development, instructional delivery, and behavior and assessment management. Items were rated using a Likert scale, and the instrument was validated by a panel of experts in inclusive education to ensure reliability, clarity, and content validity. To determine the relationship between the independent variables (faculty experience and professional development) and the dependent variable (inclusive teaching practices), the study employed Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. All statistical procedures were reviewed and validated by a licensed statistician to ensure appropriate data analysis.

3. Results

Table 1. Faculty Experiences

No	Survey Indicators	MN	SD	VD
1	I have prior teaching experience in classrooms that include learners with disabilities.	2.3	1.0	ME
2	I have encountered various disability categories in my teaching practice.	2.2	0.9	ME
3	I have handled Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for learners with special needs.	1.6	0.7	LE
4	I have collaborated with multidisciplinary teams (e.g., therapists, SPED coordinators).	1.5	0.7	LE
5	I have experience adapting instruction to accommodate diverse learner needs.	2.6	1.0	GE
6	I have facilitated inclusive classroom activities involving both SpEd and regular learners.	2.0	1.0	ME
7	I have participated in school-level inclusive programs or projects.	2.2	1.0	ME
8	I have received mentoring or peer support in teaching learners with exceptionalities.	2.1	0.9	ME
9	I have experienced challenges in classroom management in inclusive settings.	2.5	0.9	GE
10	I have attended parent-teacher conferences involving guardians of learners with disabilities.	2.0	1.0	ME
	Average	2.1	0.9	ME

Table 1 shows that faculty experiences in inclusive education are generally at a Moderate Extent (ME), with an overall mean of 2.1 and a standard deviation of 0.9. Teachers reported Low Extent (LE) of experience in handling Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and collaborating with multidisciplinary teams, reflecting limited involvement in specialized inclusive practices. On the other hand, they demonstrated Greater Extent (GE) in adapting instruction and managing classroom challenges, indicating some familiarity with inclusive strategies. These findings suggest that while teachers have moderate exposure to inclusive education, there are critical gaps particularly in specialized planning and collaboration that require targeted professional development and support.

Table 2. Faculty Development

No	Survey Indicators	MN	SD	VD
1	I have attended formal training on inclusive education organized by DepEd or partner institutions.	2.3	1.1	ME
2	I have participated in seminars/webinars that focus on special education strategies.	2.1	0.9	ME
3	I regularly engage in professional learning communities (PLCs) discussing inclusion.	2.0	0.9	ME
4	I have access to up-to-date teaching materials for inclusive education.	1.9	0.7	ME
5	I have completed specialized coursework related to special education or inclusion.	1.8	0.9	ME
6	I am encouraged by school leadership to pursue professional development in inclusive education.	2.3	0.9	ME
7	I have received coaching or technical assistance in inclusive teaching methods.	2.2	0.8	ME
8	I have undergone training on the use of assistive technologies in inclusive classrooms.	1.9	0.8	ME
9	I have participated in school-based in-service training (INSET) with inclusive education content.	2.8	1.0	GE
10	I am confident in applying what I've learned from professional development activities in my classroom.	2.9	0.9	GE
	Average	2.2	0.9	ME

Table 2 illustrates the extent of faculty development in relation to inclusive education. With an overall mean of 2.2 and a standard deviation of 0.9, results indicate a Moderate Extent (ME) of professional growth among teachers. Most respondents reported moderate engagement in formal training, seminars, and access to inclusive teaching resources. Notably, a Greater Extent (GE) was seen in participation in school-based INSET and in teachers' confidence to apply inclusive strategies in the classroom. These findings suggest that while foundational professional development opportunities are available, there is a need for more specialized, in-depth training particularly in areas such as assistive technologies and special education strategies to further strengthen teachers' competence in delivering inclusive education.

Table 3. Promoting learners' Holistic Development

No	Survey Indicators	MN	SD	VD
1	I provide opportunities for learners to explore their strengths and interests.	3.5	0.6	AP
2	I foster inclusive classroom cultures that value diversity and respect.	3.4	0.5	AP
3	I address the emotional and social needs of learners with disabilities.	3.1	0.8	OP
4	I promote collaboration between learners with and without disabilities.	3.2	0.8	OP
5	I encourage independence and self-advocacy among learners with special needs.	2.9	0.9	OP
6	I consider cultural and socio-economic backgrounds when planning activities.	3.3	0.6	AP
7	I incorporate life skills and values education in my instruction.	3.5	0.6	AP
8	I monitor both academic and behavioral progress holistically.	3.5	0.6	AP
9	I ensure all learners participate in extracurricular activities.	3.4	0.6	AP
10	I create a learning environment that promotes safety, empathy, and belonging.	3.6	0.5	AP
	Average	3.3	0.7	AP

Table 3 presents data on how teachers promote learners' holistic development in inclusive classrooms. The overall mean of 3.3 with a standard deviation of 0.7 falls under Always Practiced (AP). Teachers consistently create inclusive classroom environments, incorporate life skills, monitor academic and behavioral progress, and ensure participation in extracurricular activities. These findings reflect a strong commitment to supporting students' overall growth. However, certain areas such as encouraging independence and addressing the emotional and social needs of learners with disabilities were rated slightly lower at the Often Practiced (OP) level. This indicates that while holistic development is generally prioritized, specific practices related to fostering autonomy and emotional well-being require further reinforcement.

Table 4. Delivering Instruction

No	Survey Indicators	MN	SD	VD
1	I use differentiated instruction tailored to diverse learning needs.	3.5	0.5	AP
2	I integrate visual, auditory, and kinesthetic strategies in my lessons.	3.4	0.6	AP
3	I modify learning objectives based on students' functional levels.	3.4	0.6	AP
4	I use assistive technologies and learning aids in instruction.	3.0	0.8	OP
5	I provide clear and simplified instructions for students with learning difficulties.	3.4	0.6	AP
6	I incorporate inclusive language and examples in teaching content.	3.3	0.6	AP
7	I adjust pacing and timing of lessons to suit learners' capacities.	3.4	0.6	AP
8	I provide individualized support or scaffolding during instruction.	3.4	0.6	AP
9	I adapt instructional materials for accessibility (e.g., large print, pictographs).	3.4	0.5	AP
10	I involve learners in interactive and multi-sensory learning experiences.	3.3	0.7	AP
	Average	3.3	0.6	AP

Table 4 presents the extent to which teachers deliver instruction tailored to diverse learners in inclusive settings. With an overall mean of 3.3 and a standard deviation of 0.6, results fall under Always Practiced (AP). Most teachers consistently apply differentiated instruction, integrate multi-sensory strategies, adjust pacing, and adapt instructional materials to meet varied learning needs. Practices such as individualized support, inclusive language, and simplified instructions are also regularly implemented. However, the use of assistive technologies was rated slightly lower, at a level of Often Practiced (OP). This suggests that while inclusive instructional strategies are generally well-integrated into teaching practices, there is still room to improve the consistent use of specialized tools and technologies to better support learners with disabilities.

Table 5. Assessing Learning Outcomes

No	Survey Indicators	MN	SD	VD
1	I use alternative assessment tools to measure learning among diverse learners.	2.8	0.5	OP
2	I modify tests or tasks to suit the individual needs of learners.	3.4	0.6	AP
3	I consider both academic and functional achievements when assessing.	3.4	0.5	AP
4	I assess learners' progress through performance-based assessments.	3.4	0.6	AP
5	I involve learners in setting their own learning goals and tracking progress.	3.5	0.6	AP
6	I use formative assessment techniques to adjust teaching strategies.	3.5	0.6	AP
7	I provide feedback that is specific, constructive, and encouraging.	3.5	0.6	AP
8	I design rubrics that reflect diverse learning outcomes.	3.4	0.7	AP
9	I collaborate with SpEd specialists in evaluating students' performance.	2.1	0.9	SP
10	I maintain records that accurately reflect learners' individualized progress.	3.3	0.8	AP
	Average	3.2	0.6	OP

Table 5 presents the extent to which teachers implement inclusive assessment practices in evaluating learning outcomes. With an overall mean of 3.2 and a standard deviation of 0.6, results fall under the category of Often Practiced (OP). Most indicators, such as modifying assessments, using performance-based and formative assessments, and providing constructive feedback, were rated as Always Practiced (AP), showing strong assessment practices aligned with inclusive education. However, the use of alternative tools and collaboration with SPED specialists received lower ratings, the latter falling under Sometimes Practiced (SP). This suggests that while teachers regularly apply inclusive assessment strategies, collaboration with specialists and the use of varied tools remain areas for improvement. Strengthening these aspects would further enhance the accuracy and responsiveness of assessment for diverse learners.

No	Survey Indicators	MN	SD	VD
1	I implement behavior management strategies suitable for inclusive classrooms.	3.4	0.6	AP
2	I consistently apply positive reinforcement to encourage desirable behaviors.	3.3	0.5	AP
3	I understand and address the specific behavioral needs of learners with disabilities.	3.1	0.9	OP
4	I develop and implement Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs) when necessary.	2.6	0.9	OP
5	I model respectful and inclusive behavior for all learners.	3.4	0.7	AP
6	I communicate behavioral expectations clearly to learners.	3.5	0.6	AP
7	I collaborate with parents in addressing behavioral challenges.	3.5	0.6	AP

8	I involve learners in co-creating class rules and routines.	3.4	0.7	AP
9	I use de-escalation strategies to manage classroom conflicts.	3.0	0.7	OP
10	I reflect on and adjust my classroom management approaches regularly.	3.4	0.7	AP
	Average	3.3	0.7	AP

Table 6. Managing Students' Behavior

Table 6 presents the extent to which teachers implement behavior management strategies in inclusive classrooms. The overall mean of 3.3 and standard deviation of 0.7 indicate that such practices are Always Practiced (AP). Teachers frequently apply positive reinforcement, model inclusive behavior, set clear expectations, and engage parents in addressing behavioral challenges. They also involve students in co-creating classroom rules and consistently reflect on their management strategies. However, areas such as developing Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs), addressing specific behavioral needs, and using de-escalation strategies were rated slightly lower at the Often Practiced (OP) level. These findings suggest that while general behavior management is well established, more focused support and training are needed in handling complex behavioral needs, particularly for learners with disabilities.

Table 7. Correlation between the Extent of F Faculty Experiences and Extent of Inclusive Education Practices among Elementary Teachers

Variables under inference	Computed rho	Strength of correlation	p-value	Decision	Result
Faculty experiences and promoting learners' holistic development	0.310	Weak	0.054	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant
Faculty experiences and delivering instruction	0.266	Weak	0.102	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant
Faculty experiences and assessing learning outcomes	0.293	weak	0.071	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant
Faculty experiences and managing students' behavior	0.288	Weak	0.075	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant

Table 7 shows the correlation between the extent of faculty experiences and inclusive education practices among elementary teachers. All computed correlation coefficients (rho) range from 0.266 to 0.310, indicating weak positive correlations between faculty experience and the four dimensions of inclusive practices: promoting holistic development, delivering instruction, assessing learning outcomes, and managing student behavior. However, all p-values exceed the 0.05 significance level, leading to the decision to fail to reject the null hypothesis in each case. This means that the relationships observed are not statistically significant. These results suggest that while there is a slight positive trend, faculty experience alone does not have a meaningful or reliable influence on the implementation of inclusive teaching practices in this context.

Table 8. Correlation between the Extent of Faculty Development and Extent of Inclusive Education Practices among Elementary Teachers

Variables under inference	Computed rho	Strength of correlation	p-value	Decision	Result
Faculty development and promoting learners' holistic development	0.237	Weak	0.147	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant
Faculty development and delivering instruction	0.253	Weak	0.121	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant
Faculty development and assessing learning outcomes	0.088	Very weak	0.593	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant
Faculty development and managing students' behavior	0.147	Weak	0.371	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant

Table 8 presents the correlation between the extent of faculty development and the implementation of inclusive education practices among elementary teachers. The computed correlation coefficients range from 0.088 to 0.253, indicating very weak to weak positive correlations across all dimensions: promoting holistic development, delivering instruction, assessing learning outcomes, and managing student behavior. However, all p-values are greater than 0.05, leading to the decision to fail to reject the null hypothesis in each case. This indicates that the relationships between faculty development and inclusive teaching practices are not statistically significant. These findings suggest that, in this context, faculty development activities have not had

a measurable impact on the extent to which inclusive education practices are implemented. This may point to gaps in the relevance, depth, or application of professional development programs related to inclusive education.

4. Discussion

The findings revealed that teachers had a moderate level of experience in inclusive education, particularly in adapting instruction and managing classroom diversity. However, they showed limited exposure to essential components such as handling Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and collaborating with multidisciplinary teams. This supports the observation by Rodríguez-Dorta and Borges (2017) that general education teachers often lack practical experience with individualized supports, which can hinder effective inclusion. Professional development was also found to be moderate in extent. While teachers expressed confidence in applying learned strategies and actively participated in school-based training, they reported less involvement in specialized coursework, assistive technology training, and technical coaching. As emphasized by Kurniawati et al. (2017), general training programs often fall short in equipping teachers with the specific competencies needed to manage diverse learners effectively. In terms of instructional practice, most inclusive strategies such as differentiated instruction, inclusive classroom culture, formative assessment, and behavior management were consistently applied. However, some areas, including collaboration with special education specialists, use of assistive tools, and behavior intervention planning, were less consistently practiced. These gaps reflect the findings of Florian and Spratt (2016), who argue that inclusive pedagogy requires more than routine teaching strategies it demands intentional, reflective, and collaborative approaches. Despite these generally positive trends in practice, the statistical analysis found no significant correlation between teachers' experience or professional development and their implementation of inclusive education. This aligns with Sharma and Sokal (2016), who contend that experience and training alone are insufficient without context-specific, sustained, and practical support systems in place.

5. Conclusion

The study underscores that while elementary teachers in Philippine public schools demonstrate moderate experience and engagement in inclusive education, particularly in adapting instruction and participating in professional development activities such as school-based INSETs, these efforts alone are insufficient to produce consistently effective inclusive practices. Teachers show strength in implementing general strategies for instruction, classroom management, and promoting holistic development; however, specialized areas such as handling Individualized Education Plans, collaborating with multidisciplinary teams, and integrating assistive technologies—remain inconsistently applied. The weak and statistically non-significant correlations between faculty experience or development and key teaching domains suggest that current initiatives may not fully equip teachers to meet the diverse and complex needs of learners in inclusive classrooms. These findings highlight the critical need for more targeted, sustained, and context-specific professional development programs that bridge theory and practice. By addressing gaps in specialized skills, resource accessibility, and collaborative frameworks, schools can better support teachers in delivering equitable, responsive, and high-quality instruction, ultimately advancing the goals of inclusive education across both general and special education contexts.

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