



Teachers' insights about conducive learning environment for inclusive classroom and strategies shaping inclusive classroom: A phenomenological approach

Janine Keith M. Pablo: Graduate School of Education, Divine Word College of Laoag, Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, Philippines.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: December 01, 2025

Received in rev. form. January 10, 2026

Accepted: February 14, 2026

Published: March 17, 2026

Keywords: *inclusive education, phenomenology, teacher resilience, conducive learning environment, differentiated instruction, collaborative practices.*

ABSTRACT

Fostering inclusive classrooms requires intentional strategies that go beyond addressing individual learners, shaping teaching practices, and the broader learning environment to support all students. This study explored how teachers conceptualize and cultivate conducive learning environments within inclusive classrooms. Using a phenomenological approach, eight purposively selected teachers from Tonoton Elementary School, Ilocos Norte, participated in semi-structured interviews, and the data were analyzed thematically to capture their lived experiences and perspectives. Findings reveal that teachers view conducive classrooms as multidimensional spaces that are physically and emotionally safe, value diversity and foster belonging, are well-structured and resource-rich, employ adaptive and learner-centered instruction, cultivate trust and community support, promote academic and socio-emotional growth, and demonstrate resilience through creative problem-solving. To achieve this, teachers employ interrelated practices such as tailoring instruction to diverse learner needs, fostering collaboration and trust, ensuring a safe and supportive environment, promoting inclusivity and respect, and leveraging institutional and community resources. The study underscores that effective inclusive classrooms emerge from context-sensitive, relational, and systemic practices, highlighting teachers' pivotal role in translating inclusive policies into meaningful, equitable, and sustainable learning experiences.

JEL Classification: I21

© 2026 by the authors. Published by Divine Word International Journal of Management and Humanities under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Introduction

Inclusive education is a central pillar of contemporary educational reform, reinforced by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which advocates equitable and quality education for all learners regardless of ability, background, or circumstance. Beyond ensuring access, inclusive

education promotes social cohesion, active participation, and sustainable development by fostering learning environments that recognize diversity as a strength rather than a barrier. Consequently, the creation of inclusive classrooms that support meaningful engagement for all learners has become a critical priority in both policy and practice.

In the Philippine context, Republic Act No. 11650, or the Inclusive Education Act of 2022, institutionalizes the integration of learners with disabilities and diverse needs into mainstream classrooms. Despite this legislative commitment and the growing enrollment of learners with special educational needs, the implementation of inclusive education remains uneven, particularly in public schools facing systemic resource limitations. Reports from the Department of Education (2023) continue to document challenges related to inadequate specialized support services, insufficient adaptive materials, and limited access to assistive technologies, all of which constrain teachers' capacity to sustain conducive learning environments.

Research suggests that effective inclusive classrooms are shaped by interrelated factors, including classroom safety and emotional climate, teachers' pedagogical knowledge and self-efficacy, instructional adaptability, availability of learning resources, and collaboration with parents and the wider community (Ainscow, 2020). Teacher preparedness and confidence in differentiated instruction and learner-centered approaches are especially influential in supporting learner engagement and participation (Tomlinson, 2017; UNESCO, 2017). However, many educators continue to report difficulties in translating inclusive policies into everyday classroom practice due to high student-teacher ratios, infrastructural constraints, and uneven support from stakeholders (UNESCO, 2020).

While existing studies have explored inclusive strategies and policy frameworks, empirical research that foregrounds teachers' lived experiences in constructing conducive learning environments within real classroom contexts remains limited, particularly in the Philippine setting (Singal, 2019). Much of the current scholarship relies on surveys or policy-oriented studies, offering a limited understanding of how teachers interpret and enact inclusion in everyday classroom practices (Sumagang & Balano, 2025; Gelizon, 2025). This gap is particularly evident in developing educational contexts, where resource limitations and contextual complexities significantly shape inclusive practice. In the Philippine setting, research has largely focused on policy implementation and teacher attitudes, with limited attention to teachers' experiential knowledge and adaptive strategies within actual classroom environments (Aguillon & Eludo, 2025; Oliveros et al., 2025).

Given teachers' central role in implementing inclusive education, examining their perspectives is essential to understanding how inclusive and conducive learning environments are conceptualized and enacted. Anchored in this need, the present study explored elementary teachers' lived experiences in creating supportive learning spaces in inclusive classrooms. By illuminating teachers' insights, this study aims to contribute context-sensitive evidence that can inform policy development, professional learning initiatives, and school-based practices toward more effective, equitable, and sustainable inclusive education.

Literature review

This review situates the present study within the broader discourse on inclusive education and conducive learning environments, with particular emphasis on teachers' roles in shaping inclusive classroom practices. By synthesizing theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, the review establishes a conceptual foundation for understanding how inclusive classrooms are constructed, sustained, and experienced by teachers. It also highlights critical gaps in existing research, underscoring the need to examine teachers' lived experiences in inclusive educational contexts.

Inclusive education and conducive learning environments

Inclusive education is widely recognized as both an educational philosophy and a practice that provides equitable learning opportunities for all learners by addressing diverse needs within regular classroom settings (UNESCO, 2020). Beyond mere access or placement, inclusive education emphasizes meaningful participation, a sense of belonging, and holistic learner development (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018). Central to this approach is the concept of a conducive learning environment—one that promotes academic engagement, emotional well-being, and positive social interaction.

Research consistently characterizes conducive inclusive classrooms as spaces where learners feel physically safe, emotionally supported, and socially accepted (Graziano et al., 2017; Barrett et al., 2015). Such environments foster predictability, mutual respect, and a sense of belonging, which are essential for maintaining learner motivation and active participation. Emotionally supportive classroom climates are particularly important for students with special educational needs, who often experience greater vulnerability to exclusion and disengagement (Wentzel, 2016).

Teachers' pedagogical practices and instructional adaptation

Teachers play a pivotal role in translating inclusive education principles into classroom practice. Pedagogical adaptability is a core dimension of inclusive practice, enabling teachers to respond to learner diversity through differentiated instruction, flexible grouping, and varied assessment strategies (Tomlinson, 2017). Inclusive instruction is most effective when it is learner-centered and informed by students' individual strengths, needs, and learning profiles.

Teacher self-efficacy is a strong predictor of inclusive teaching practices. Educators who feel confident in their ability to teach diverse learners are more likely to implement adaptive strategies, engage in reflective practice, and persevere despite instructional challenges (Sharma & Jacobs, 2016; Savolainen et al., 2022). Conversely, insufficient training, large class sizes, and limited instructional resources can constrain teachers' capacity to sustain differentiated and inclusive practices, particularly in public school settings.

Relational and socio-emotional dimensions of inclusive classrooms

Inclusive classrooms are also sustained through relational practices that foster trust, empathy, and mutual respect. Positive teacher–learner relationships are consistently associated with improved academic engagement, emotional regulation, and behavioral outcomes (Roorda et al., 2017). Teachers who

demonstrate care, fairness, and responsiveness contribute to classroom climates in which learners feel valued and supported.

Peer relationships play a central role in inclusive classroom experiences. Positive peer interactions promote social integration and acceptance for students with special educational needs. Structured cooperative activities and collaborative engagement enhance interpersonal dynamics and reduce social isolation (Marlina & Kusumastuti, 2019; Wang et al., 2023). By intentionally creating opportunities for collaboration, teachers reinforce inclusive values such as acceptance, respect, and shared responsibility.

Collaboration, support systems, and teacher resilience

Inclusive education is embedded within broader institutional and community contexts. Collaboration with parents, school leaders, and professional colleagues enhances teachers' capacity to respond effectively to learner diversity (Epstein, 2018). Professional learning communities and collegial support systems strengthen inclusive practices by fostering shared problem-solving, reflective dialogue, and professional growth (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

Despite these supports, teachers often face systemic constraints, including limited access to assistive technologies, inadequate specialized services, and insufficient administrative backing (Srivastava et al., 2015). In response, many teachers demonstrate resilience by adapting instructional strategies, improvising learning materials, and leveraging peer and community resources. These adaptive practices highlight teachers' agency in sustaining conducive learning environments despite structural limitations.

Statement of the problem

This study will explore teachers' insights on what makes a classroom conducive to inclusive education, considering their crucial role in shaping learning environments that support diverse learners. It sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do teachers describe a conducive learning environment for inclusive classrooms?
2. What strategies do teachers employ in creating a conducive and inclusive learning environment?

Methodology

This chapter presents the research design, sources of data, including the study locale, population, and sampling; data-gathering instruments and procedures; data analysis; and the ethical standards observed throughout the research process.

Research design

This study employed a phenomenological research design to explore and describe the lived experiences of elementary teachers in creating a conducive learning environment within inclusive classrooms. This design was chosen to capture the depth and essence of teachers' perceptions, strategies, and reflections as they navigate the complexities of inclusive education in their daily practice. Phenomenology allowed

the researcher to focus on participants' subjective experiences and meanings rather than imposing preconceived theoretical assumptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Locale of the study

The study was conducted at Tonoton Elementary School, located in Barangay 6, Tonoton, Piddig, Ilocos Norte, Philippines. The school operates under the Department of Education – Division of Ilocos Norte and serves a diverse student population, including learners with special educational needs. This setting was selected for its representativeness of a typical public elementary school navigating inclusive education amid limited resources. It provided relevant context for understanding how teachers foster both inclusivity and conducive learning in real-world classroom challenges.

Population and sampling

The elementary teachers from Tonoton Elementary School, Piddig, Ilocos Norte, Philippines, were purposively selected. Inclusion criteria required participants to be currently teaching in an inclusive classroom, have at least one year of teaching experience in the school, and be willing to share their experiences openly. Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate for phenomenological research because it yields rich, in-depth accounts while achieving thematic saturation (Palinkas et al., 2015). All participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

Data gathering instrument

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide, developed in response to the research questions and validated by two experts in qualitative research and inclusive education. The guide consisted of two main questions and a set of follow-up prompts that explored participants' experiences, challenges, and perceived outcomes of inclusive practices. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility to pursue emerging insights while ensuring alignment with the study's objectives (Kallio et al., 2016).

Data gathering procedure

Data collection was conducted over two weeks through individual face-to-face interviews. Each session lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, depending on participant availability. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and supplemented by field notes to capture non-verbal cues and classroom context (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). To ensure data accuracy and credibility, transcripts were returned to participants for member checking, allowing them to verify and clarify their responses.

Data analysis tool

Interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework: Familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Coding and theme development were conducted manually to ensure findings remained grounded in participants' authentic experiences.

Ethical considerations

This study adhered to ethical standards to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality, following approval obtained from the Divine Word College of Laoag–Graduate School of Education. Participants

Abun et al., *Divine Word International Journal of Management and Humanities* 5(1)(2026) 2923-2940
provided written informed consent before data collection, ensuring voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using pseudonyms and omitting identifying information. The study adhered to the ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and integrity in educational research (BERA, 2018).

Presentation and analysis of results

Problem 1: How do teachers describe a conducive learning environment for inclusive classrooms?

The narratives of the participating teachers were analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework. Through this process, seven overarching features were identified, reflecting teachers’ conceptualizations and lived experiences of creating a conducive learning environment within inclusive classrooms. These features are as follows: **(1) Physically and Emotionally Safe; (2) Diversity-Valuing and Acceptance-Fostering; (3) Well-Structured and Resource-Rich; (4) Instructionally Adaptive and Learner-Centered; (5) Trust-Building and Community-Supportive; (6) Academically and Socio-Emotionally Enriching; and (7) Creatively Problem-Solving and Resilient.** The following table summarizes the identified features, corresponding specifications, and representative participant statements.

Table 1. Teachers’ insights about conducive learning environment for inclusive classrooms

FEATURES	SPECIFICATIONS	STATEMENT
Physically and emotionally safe	Ensuring physical comfort and safety	<i>“Conducive environment in an inclusive classroom for me is described as a safe place where pupils and all forms of life can enter and be at ease to learn.” – Teacher 1</i> <i>“A conducive classroom is organized, clean, and free from clutter.” – Teacher 8</i>
	Providing emotional and psychological security	<i>“It is a safe classroom where learners feel respected, valued, and free to share, cooperate, and make mistakes without fear.” – Teacher 2</i> <i>“I often equate conducive environment into the word comfort... whether physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually.” – Teacher 1</i>
	Maintaining an organized and predictable classroom	<i>“When the classroom is not in good condition—such as not being well-ventilated or well-lighted—learning is affected since the child’s focus becomes divided between their comfort and their lessons.” – Teacher 1</i>

Diversity-valuing and acceptance-fostering	Recognizing and valuing learner diversity	<i>A conducive learning environment... welcomes and supports all learners, recognizing and valuing human diversity.” – Teacher 2</i>
	Promoting respect and empathy	<i>“There is a strong sense of mutual respect and positive relationship between me and my learners.” – Teacher 7</i> <i>“A conducive learning environment is one where there is respect, empathy, love, and safety among teachers, pupils, parents, and peers.” – Teacher 8</i> <i>“It fosters trust and motivation, allowing them to engage meaningfully and perform at their best.” – Teacher 6</i>
	Fostering belonging and acceptance	<i>“Learners feel that they belong, they feel at home, and learning will always come automatically.” – Teacher 1</i>
Well-structured and resource-rich	Organizing the physical classroom environment	<i>“A well-organized classroom that promotes order and focus.” – Teacher 5</i> <i>“I make sure that the room is clean and organized because I believe that a tidy space helps learners focus better.” – Teacher 3</i> <i>“It should be spacious enough to accommodate group activities and allow learners to move comfortably.” – Teacher 5</i> <i>“I make sure that the classroom is well-ventilated and well-lighted.” – Teacher 1</i>
	Providing adequate learning materials and resources	<i>“It should be equipped with ICT-based instructional materials, as integrating technology makes learning more effective.” – Teacher 5</i>
Instructionally adaptive and learner-centered	Tailoring instruction to learner needs	<i>“Teaching strategies are flexible and differentiated to address the diverse learning needs of the students.” – Teacher 3</i> <i>“As a teacher, I make sure to use differentiated instruction so that each learner can reach their full potential.” – Teacher 6</i>

	Using flexible and engaging teaching strategies	<i>“A conducive learning environment is a friendly and engaging space where both learners and teachers actively interact.” – Teacher 5</i> <i>“Learners may find joy in learning activities, actively participate during discussions.” – Teacher 2</i>
	Encouraging active learner participation	<i>“Learners may find joy in learning activities, and actively participate during discussions.” – Teacher 2</i> <i>“There is a strong relationship built on trust and respect, which allows learners to freely express themselves.” – Teacher 7</i>
Trust-Building and school–community partnership	Building trust and positive teacher–learner relationships	<i>“Everyone is treated with kindness, fairness, and understanding. This creates a warm and supportive atmosphere.” – Teacher 7</i>
	Encouraging collaboration and shared responsibility	<i>“It’s not just about maintaining an organized and positive classroom, but also about recognizing the importance of the community environment.” – Teacher 5</i>
	Engaging parents and the wider community	<i>“Parents and the community must work hand in hand to support learners.” – Teacher 5</i> <i>“Even parents become more involved in helping maintain a clean and beautiful school environment.” – Teacher 8</i>
Academically and socio-emotionally enriching	Supporting academic growth and motivation	<i>“Learning will be more, and absenteeism will be less because pupils tend to attend regularly.” – Teacher 1</i> <i>“It improves academic achievement by providing clear structures, differentiated instruction, and support.” – Teacher 2</i> <i>“They can perform better academically and become more motivated to learn.” – Teacher 7</i>
	Promoting socio-emotional development	<i>“For learners with special needs, it helps boost their confidence and independence.” – Teacher 3</i>

	Cultivating positive values and learning attitudes	<i>"They develop good behavior and a love for learning." – Teacher 7</i>
Creative problem-solving and resilience	Addressing classroom and systemic challenges	<i>"Bullying is one of the biggest challenges in creating a conducive classroom." – Teacher 1</i> <i>"Diverse learning styles and abilities, lack of resources, and behavioral issues." – Teacher 2</i> <i>"I have also experienced teaching in an overcrowded class of about 40 learners." – Teacher 4</i>
	Adapting strategies despite limited resources	<i>"Limited resources... I make use of available materials and improvise." – Teacher 2</i> <i>"To address these challenges, I use differentiated instruction and promote peer support." – Teacher 6</i>
	Leveraging peer, administrative, and community support	<i>"I encourage parents and the community to participate in making the learning environment more pleasant." – Teacher 8</i>

Source: Pablo (2025)

The data reveal that teachers perceive a conducive learning environment for inclusive classrooms as multidimensional, encompassing physical, emotional, instructional, social, and community factors.

The most prominent theme, Physically and Emotionally Safe, underscores that learners engage effectively only when they feel secure, comfortable, and free to express themselves, with classroom cleanliness, ventilation, and lighting directly supporting focus (Barrett et al., 2015). Diversity-Valuing and Acceptance-Fostering highlights recognition of individual differences and the promotion of respect, empathy, and belonging, fostering learner confidence, participation, and social integration (UNESCO, 2017; Allen et al., 2018).

Well-Structured and Resource-Rich classrooms are organized, spacious, and equipped with instructional materials, including technology, enhancing engagement and learning effectiveness (Barrett et al., 2015). Instructionally Adaptive and Learner-Centered reflects teachers' use of differentiated strategies and flexible methods tailored to learners' needs, promoting autonomy and meaningful participation (Tomlinson, 2017; CAST, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Trust-Building and School–Community Partnership emphasizes collaboration with peers, parents, and the broader community to sustain supportive learning environments (Epstein & Sheldon, 2016). Academically and Socio-Emotionally Enriching classrooms nurture cognitive growth, socio-emotional development, motivation, and prosocial behavior (Jones & Kahn, 2017). Finally, Creatively Problem-

Solving and Resilience captures teachers' adaptive strategies for challenges such as large class sizes, behavioral issues, and limited resources, drawing on innovation, peer support, and community involvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Collectively, these features provide a holistic, context-sensitive understanding of a conducive, inclusive classroom, where safety, inclusivity, structured organization, pedagogical responsiveness, and relational engagement converge to create an equitable and effective learning environment (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Problem 2: What strategies do teachers employ in creating a conducive and inclusive learning environment?

This section presents the practices teachers employ to foster a conducive and inclusive learning environment. The participants' narratives reveal diverse pedagogical and relational strategies aimed at addressing learner diversity, promoting engagement, and sustaining a positive classroom climate. Through thematic analysis, **five interrelated themes emerged: (1) Tailoring Teaching to Diverse Learner Needs; (2) Fostering Collaboration and Trust; (3) Ensuring a Safe and Supportive Environment; (4) Promoting Inclusivity and Respect; and (5) Leveraging Institutional and Community Support for Inclusion.** The following table summarizes the themes, categories, and representative statements.

Table 2. Teachers' strategies in creating a conducive and inclusive learning environment

FEATURES	SPECIFICATIONS	STATEMENT
Tailoring teaching to diverse learner needs	Tailoring lessons to diverse needs	<i>"I apply differentiated learning to cater to everyone because learners have different needs."</i> – Teacher 1 <i>"I adjust lessons so every learner can participate and learn at their own pace."</i> – Teacher 6
	Using multiple teaching methods	<i>"I use visual aids, hands-on activities, and individualized tasks to address diverse learning styles."</i> – Teacher 4
	Scaffolding and enrichment for all learners	<i>"Differentiated instruction helps me meet varied needs by giving simplified materials for slow learners and enrichment tasks for advanced learners."</i> – Teacher 6
Fostering collaboration and trust	Group activities and peer tutoring	<i>"I arrange the classroom to encourage collaboration and peer group activities."</i> – Teacher 3

		<i>"I apply the 'each one, teach one' strategy, where advanced learners help those struggling." – Teacher 8</i>
	Cooperative learning	<i>"Empathy and understanding among students help maintain peace in class." – Teacher 6</i>
	Teacher–student rapport and community engagement	<i>"Good relationships make learners comfortable to express themselves." – Teacher 4</i>
Ensuring a safe and supportive environment.	Physical safety and comfort	<i>"I make sure that my classroom is a safe and welcoming space for everyone." – Teacher 7</i>
	Emotional and psychological support	<i>"I create safe spaces—both physical and emotional—where learners feel free to express themselves." – Teacher 2</i> <i>"Setting clear rules and encouraging kindness help maintain a positive and respectful environment." – Teacher 6</i>
	Engagement through encouragement and recognition	<i>"I give words of appreciation and recognition to boost learners' confidence." – Teacher 5</i>
Promoting inclusivity and respect	Acceptance of diversity	<i>"I treat all learners equally and celebrate their unique abilities." – Teacher 2</i>
	Respect for differences	<i>"We promote inclusion by valuing each child's strengths." – Teacher 4</i>
	Fostering inclusion and equality	<i>"I always remind them that everyone belongs." – Teacher 3</i>
Leveraging institutional and community support for inclusion	Administrative and peer support	<i>"Strong administrative support and professional development help sustain inclusive practices." – Teacher 2</i>
	Professional development	<i>"Providing ready-made materials and training would lessen teacher burnout." – Teacher 1</i>
	Parental and community collaboration	<i>"Collaboration with colleagues and parental involvement support implementation." – Teacher 8</i> <i>"Large class sizes hinder individualized attention, but support from the community helps manage challenges." – Teacher 6</i>

Source: Pablo (2025)

The findings indicate that teachers employ a multidimensional approach—pedagogical, relational, and

Tailoring Teaching to Diverse Learner Needs emerged as the most prominent practice. Teachers adapt content, strategies, and assessments to accommodate varied learning styles and abilities, reflecting Tomlinson's (2017) principle that differentiated instruction ensures equitable access and promotes learner-centered engagement. Strategies such as visual aids, hands-on activities, individualized tasks, scaffolding, and enrichment exemplify responsiveness to learner diversity.

Fostering Collaboration and Trust highlights the social dimension of learning. Peer tutoring, group activities, and cooperative strategies like “each one, teach one” enhance learners' communication, collaboration, and interpersonal skills. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, emphasizing that meaningful learning occurs through social interaction and cooperative engagement.

Ensuring a Safe and Supportive Environment underpins all teaching efforts. Teachers maintain structured routines, positive discipline, and emotionally supportive spaces where learners feel respected and secure. Engagement is further enhanced through encouragement and recognition, consistent with Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the role of motivation and autonomy in learning.

Promoting Inclusivity and Respect demonstrates teachers' commitment to valuing diversity and fostering a sense of belonging. Practices such as equitable treatment, celebrating individual strengths, and reinforcing inclusion echo Booth and Ainscow's (2011) Index for Inclusion, highlighting the importance of creating environments where all learners feel acknowledged and empowered.

Leveraging Institutional and Community Support for Inclusion emphasizes the critical role of external support. Administrative backing, professional development, parental involvement, and community collaboration provide the structural and relational resources needed to sustain inclusive practices. Teachers' adaptive responses to systemic constraints—such as limited materials, heavy workloads, and large class sizes—illustrate resilience and align with Hargreaves and Fullan's (2020) concept of professional capital.

Overall, these findings portray inclusive classrooms as dynamic ecosystems where instructional adaptability, relational engagement, and structural support converge. Teachers' practices exemplify a holistic commitment to equity, inclusion, and learner well-being, underscoring that effective inclusive education requires continuous professional growth, adequate resources, and strong collaborative networks.

Discussion

The study reveals that elementary teachers in inclusive classrooms face multifaceted challenges in fostering conducive learning environments, including large class sizes, limited instructional resources, time pressures, and diverse learner needs requiring differentiated instruction. Balancing curriculum alignment with engaging, learner-centered lessons proves difficult, reflecting systemic constraints in

inclusive education (Tomlinson, 2017; UNESCO, 2020). Limited access to assistive technologies, adaptive materials, and specialized support further constrains individualized attention, consistent with research on resource inequities in inclusive settings (Savolainen et al., 2022). These challenges are further compounded by the need to support socio-emotional development, manage classroom behaviors, and accommodate varied learning styles, emphasizing the complex, context-sensitive, and dynamic nature of inclusive teaching.

To navigate these demands, teachers employ strategies emphasizing instructional flexibility, relational engagement, and community collaboration. Differentiated instruction, flexible assessments, and visual or hands-on activities facilitate equitable participation, while collaborative approaches—including peer tutoring, group work, and parental involvement—enhance learners' cognitive, social, and emotional development, aligning with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist framework. Through reflection on classroom feedback and student needs, teachers demonstrate agency in adapting inclusive instructional strategies (Farrell, 2015). Notably, this study extends prior research by demonstrating how teachers in resource-constrained Philippine classrooms creatively integrate instructional, relational, and community-based strategies to simultaneously address academic and socio-emotional needs, highlighting context-specific innovations often absent in existing literature.

Facilitating factors such as purposeful planning, resourcefulness, and teacher resilience further reinforce inclusive classrooms (Aguillon & Eludo, 2025; Vergara et al., 2025). Clear lesson objectives guide instruction, while the innovative use of available materials and community support mitigate structural limitations (Hernández Saca et al., 2023). Teachers' adaptability enables effective responses to evolving classroom challenges, ensuring engagement, safety, and equity. These findings portray inclusive classrooms as dynamic ecosystems in which pedagogy, relational engagement, and structural support converge to foster holistic learner development (Aguillon & Eludo, 2025; Hernández Saca et al., 2023). However, the study also acknowledges that despite these adaptive strategies, persistent systemic constraints—such as limited resources and high student–teacher ratios—may continue to hinder optimal learning experiences, suggesting areas for institutional intervention (Sepadi, 2025).

The study carries significant implications for policy and practice. Targeted professional development, access to adaptive instructional resources, and institutional support are critical to empowering teachers to implement differentiated and equitable strategies (Aguillon & Eludo, 2025; Vergara et al., 2025). Strengthening partnerships with parents, peers, and the broader community reinforces supportive learning environments, enhancing learner participation and socio-emotional well-being. Importantly, the findings illustrate how teachers convert systemic and contextual limitations into opportunities for pedagogical innovation, relational engagement, and professional growth, providing evidence of effective inclusive practices within challenging educational contexts (Sepadi, 2025).

In conclusion, this study offers a nuanced understanding of how elementary teachers operationalize conducive learning environments in inclusive classrooms. By bridging theoretical frameworks with context-specific practices, it underscores that effective inclusion relies on both structural support and teacher agency. The findings advocate for comprehensive support systems that enable teachers to deliver learner-centered, equitable, and sustainable education addressing both cognitive and socio-emotional

learner needs. Furthermore, the study contributes novel insights into contextually grounded, adaptive strategies that enhance the quality and inclusivity of classroom instruction, providing a valuable reference for policy-makers, educators, and researchers in similar resource-limited settings.

Conclusion

The study revealed that elementary teachers perceive and cultivate conducive learning environments in inclusive classrooms as multidimensional, encompassing physical and emotional safety, respect for diversity, well-structured and resource-rich spaces, learner-centered instruction, and strong relational and community support. Teachers employ adaptive strategies such as differentiated instruction, flexible teaching methods, peer collaboration, and creative problem-solving to address diverse learner needs, limited resources, and classroom challenges, demonstrating both resilience and professional agency. These practices align with social constructivist theory, which highlights the importance of social interaction in learning, and with self-determination theory, which emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering motivation and engagement. By centering teachers' lived experiences, the study contributes to the body of knowledge on context-sensitive inclusive pedagogy, offering empirical evidence of how instructional, relational, and structural dimensions converge in practice. The findings imply that sustainable inclusive classrooms require targeted professional development, access to adequate resources, and strengthened school–community partnerships to support equitable, engaging, and holistic learning experiences. Therefore, it is recommended that schools prioritize teacher empowerment, continuous professional growth, and collaborative initiatives to translate inclusive policies into meaningful and effective classroom practice.

Author's contribution: The paper was written by the author

Ethical statement: The study was conducted after securing permission from the authority.

Conflict of interest: no conflict of interest

Funding: The study was funded by the author

References

- Aguillon, C. B. M., & Eludo, L. E. (2025). Exploring general education teachers' strategic classroom management in inclusive education. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, 8(10), 7817–7823. <https://ijsshr.in/v8i10/32.php>
- Ainscow, M. (2020). Promoting inclusion and equity in education: Lessons from international experiences. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 6(1), 7–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2020.1729587>
- Ainscow, M., & Messiou, K. (2018). Engaging with the views of students to promote inclusion in education. *Journal of Educational Change*, 19(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-017-9312-1>

- Allen, K. A., Kern, M. L., Vella-Brodrick, D., Hattie, J., & Waters, L. (2018). What schools need to know about fostering school belonging: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 30(1), 1–34. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-016-9389-8>
- Barrett, P., Davies, F., Zhang, Y., & Barrett, L. (2015). The impact of classroom design on pupils' learning: Final results of a holistic, multi-level analysis. *Building and Environment*, 89, 118–133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.buildenv.2015.02.013>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- British Educational Research Association (BERA). (2018). *Ethical guidelines for educational research* (4th ed.). BERA.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- CAST. (2018). *Universal Design for Learning guidelines version 2.2*. <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(2), 97–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
- Department of Education. (2023). *DepEd underscores inclusive, equitable, quality education in IDE 2023*. <https://www.deped.gov.ph/>
- DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, 40(4), 314–321. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2929.2006.02418.x>
- Epstein, J. L. (2018). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429494673>
- Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2016). Necessary but not sufficient: The role of policy for advancing programs of school, family, and community partnerships. *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 2(5), 202–219. <https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2016.2.5.10>
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2015). *Promoting teacher reflection in second language education: A framework for TESOL professionals*. Routledge.

- Florian, L. (2019). On the necessary co-existence of special and inclusive education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(7–8), 691–704. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1622801>
- Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2017). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *British Educational Research Journal*, 43(5), 741–753. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3298>
- Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2019). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *British Educational Research Journal*, 45(5), 1095–1114. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3561>
- Graziano, P. A., Reavis, R. D., Keane, S. P., & Calkins, S. D. (2017). Emotion regulation and academic functioning. *Journal of School Psychology*, 61, 15–30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2016.12.002>
- Gelizon, M. J. B. (2025). Qualitative exploration in mainstreaming classroom inclusivity through the lenses of anti-bias education (ABE). *ESP International Journal of Education, Society, and Psychology*, 9(11). <https://doi.org/10.59429/esp.v9i11.3233>
- Hargreaves, A., & O'Connor, M. T. (2018). *Collaborative professionalism: When teaching together means learning for all*. Corwin.
- Hernández-Saca, D. I., Voulgarides, C. K., & Etscheidt, S. L. (2023). A critical systematic literature review of global inclusive education using an affective, intersectional, discursive, emotive, and material lens. *Education Sciences*, 13(12), 1212. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13121212>
- Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2019). The prosocial classroom: Teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(1), 491–525. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308325693>
- Jones, S. M., & Kahn, J. (2017). *The evidence base for how we learn: Supporting students' social, emotional, and academic development*. National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED577039>
- Kallio, H., Pietilä, A.-M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: Developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 72(12), 2954–2965. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13031>
- Marlina, M., & Kusumastuti, G. (2019). Social participation of students with special educational needs in inclusive elementary schools. *Special Education*, 1(39), 109–132. <https://doi.org/10.21277/se.v1i39.412>
- Oliveros, R. A., Ordinario, G. P., & Ricaforte, R. (2025). Lived experiences of general education teachers supporting learners with application difficulties in inclusive classrooms. *Asian Journal of Advanced Research and Reports*, 19(6), 392–403. 10.9734/ajarr/2025/v19i61068

- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed-method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Roorda, D. L., Jak, S., Zee, M., Oort, F. J., & Koomen, H. M. Y. (2017). Affective teacher–student relationships and student engagement and achievement: A meta-analytic update. *School Psychology Review*, 46(3), 239–261. <https://doi.org/10.17105/SPR-2017-0035.V46-3>
- Savolainen, H., Engelbrecht, P., Nel, M., & Malinen, O. P. (2022). Teachers’ beliefs about inclusive education: A meta-analytical study. *Educational Psychology Review*, 34, 2609-2660 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-022-09695-0>
- Sepadi, M. D. (2025). Teachers’ understanding of implementing inclusion in mainstream classrooms in rural areas. *Education Sciences*, 15(7), 889. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15070889>
- Sharma, U., & Jacobs, K. (2016). Predicting in-service teachers’ intentions to teach inclusively. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 55, 227–238. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.01.016>
- Singal, N. (2019). Challenges and opportunities in efforts towards inclusive education: Reflections from India. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23(7–8), 827–840: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1624845>
- Sumagang, S. J., & Balano, N. L. (2025). Embracing diversity: General education teachers’ lived experiences in teaching learners with special needs in an inclusive setting. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation*, 12(6), 729–739. <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.12060059>
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2017). *How to differentiate instruction in academically diverse classrooms* (3rd ed.). ASCD.
- UNESCO. (2017). *A guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education*. UNESCO Publishing.
- UNESCO. (2020). Global education monitoring report 2020: Inclusion and education – All means all. UNESCO Publishing. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373718>
- Vergara, M., Pinili, L., Reyes, N. R. D., Sitoy, R., Espina, R., & Saladaga, L. (2025). Teachers’ Preparedness for Inclusive Education: Analyzing Knowledge, Confidence, and Classroom Management. *International Journal of Educational Studies*, 8(2), 54–64. <https://doi.org/10.53935/2641533x.v8i2.323>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard

- Wang, Z., Huang, J., Wang, L., & Liu, C. (2023). *Social participation for students with special needs in inclusive schools: A scoping review*. *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities*, 71(5), 643–662. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20473869.2023.2277602>
- Wentzel, K. R. (2016). Teacher–student relationships and student engagement. In S. L. Christenson et al. (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 181–199). Springer.
- World Bank. (n.d.). *Inclusive education*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/inclusive-education>

Publisher's Note: DWIJMH stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International

© 2026 by the authors. Published by Divine Word International Journal of Management and Humanities under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>