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Readiness and Classroom Practices in Inclusive Education among General Education Teachers

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Abstract:

Successful implementation of inclusive education depends largely on teachers' readiness to address diverse learning needs. This study examined the readiness and classroom practices of general education teachers at Mandaue City Central School, Mandaue City, Philippines, during the pre-implementation phase of the Inclusive Learning Resource Center (ILRC) mainstreaming initiative. Specifically, it examined teachers' readiness, classroom practices, anticipated challenges, and the relationship between readiness and classroom practices. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was used with 79 general education teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered using structured questionnaires based on the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale and an Inclusive Teaching Practices Scale. Descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlation were used. Findings revealed a high level of readiness ($M = 3.77$) and frequently practiced inclusive classroom strategies ($M = 3.83$). However, 49.37% of respondents had not attended Special Education-related training, indicating a need for enhanced professional development. Results showed a statistically significant, moderately strong positive relationship between readiness and classroom practices ($r = 0.675$, $p < .001$), leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. Teachers anticipated challenges related to classroom management, increased workload and stress, disruptive behaviour, and limited knowledge and skills. The findings served as the basis for a proposed capacity-building programme, PROJECT INCLUDE, to strengthen teacher competencies and institutional support for inclusive education. Implications for school leadership, mentoring, and sustained professional learning are discussed.

Keywords: Keywords: inclusive education, teacher readiness, classroom practices, teacher self-efficacy, capacity building, Mandaue City

Introduction:

Inclusive education has become a central priority of education systems worldwide as schools strive to ensure that every learner has access to quality and equitable education. Rather than treating disability, diversity, and individual difference as barriers, inclusive education recognises them as realities to be accommodated within the regular classroom. The goal is not merely to place learners with disabilities in general education settings, but to give them meaningful opportunities to participate, learn, and succeed alongside their peers. This shift requires schools to create environments that respond to diverse needs while maintaining high standards of teaching and learning. It also requires teachers who can translate policy into daily practice, because policy alone does not change what happens inside a classroom.

The global commitment to inclusion is reflected in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, which advocates inclusive and equitable quality education for all, and in the UNESCO Salamanca Statement, which emphasises educating learners with diverse needs in regular schools. These frameworks link inclusion to improved educational outcomes, social participation, equity, and human rights. Their success, however, depends on effective implementation at school and classroom levels. In many systems, inclusive policy has advanced faster than teacher preparation, classroom resources, and support structures. The result is a persistent implementation gap: teachers may support inclusion in principle while feeling uncertain about how to enact it when class sizes are large, materials are limited, and specialist support is scarce.

Among the factors that influence inclusive education, teacher readiness is one of the most critical. General education teachers are expected to accommodate diverse learning needs, implement appropriate instructional strategies, modify

activities when necessary, and create environments that foster participation for all learners. These responsibilities require knowledge, skills, confidence, and support. Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory provides a useful explanation: teachers' beliefs in their capabilities influence how they approach challenges, how much effort they invest, and how long they persist when difficulties arise. Teachers with stronger self-efficacy are more likely to embrace diverse learner needs, use innovative strategies, and persist despite instructional challenges. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) likewise emphasised that teacher attitudes and perceptions significantly influence the success of inclusion. Research consistently shows that adequate preparation, training, and professional support increase confidence and effectiveness, whereas inadequate preparation and insufficient institutional support hinder classroom implementation.

In the Philippines, the movement toward inclusive education has gained momentum through laws and Department of Education (DepEd) policies recognising the rights of learners with disabilities. Republic Act No. 11650 (2022) institutionalised a policy of inclusion and services for learners with disabilities and provided for Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs). DepEd Order No. 044, s. 2021 set policy guidelines for educational programmes and services for learners with disabilities, while DepEd Order No. 045, s. 2021 provided guidelines for converting certain schools with SPED centres into Prototype ILRCs. The ILRC framework represents a significant shift: specialised support is not confined to separate settings, but supports the gradual mainstreaming of learners into general education classrooms while maintaining access to specialised services, interventions, and professional support. Inclusion therefore becomes a shared responsibility among schools, teachers, families, and communities.

Within the Schools Division of Mandaue City, the Mandaue City CS SPED Center, established in 1986, met the requirements to become a Prototype ILRC under DepEd Order No. 045, s. 2021. As the regular elementary school nearest the ILRC, Mandaue City Central School is the primary recipient of learners mainstreamed into general education classrooms. This position places the school at the forefront of inclusion in the division. As more learners are integrated into regular classrooms, teachers will be expected to manage increasingly diverse learning needs, apply inclusive instructional approaches, provide differentiated activities, and collaborate with SPED teachers, parents, and support personnel. Understanding teachers' readiness before full mainstreaming is therefore both timely and consequential: it identifies strengths to build on, gaps to address, and supports to put in place before challenges become entrenched.

This study therefore examined the readiness and classroom practices of general education teachers at Mandaue City Central School during the pre-implementation phase of ILRC mainstreaming. It addressed four questions: (1) What is the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, highest educational attainment, field of specialisation, length of service, and SPED-related training? (2) What is the level of readiness of general education teachers in inclusive education in terms of using inclusive instructional strategies, managing disruptive behaviour, and collaborating with parents and SPED staff? (3) What is the level of classroom practices in inclusive education in terms of differentiated instruction, classroom management, assessment adaptations, and learner engagement? (4) Is there a significant relationship between readiness and classroom practices, and what challenges do teachers anticipate? The corresponding null hypothesis stated that there is no significant relationship between teachers' readiness and their classroom practices. The findings inform a proposed capacity-building programme, PROJECT INCLUDE, designed to strengthen teacher competencies and institutional support. The study contributes evidence for school leaders and division officials who must decide where to invest training time, coaching, materials, and specialist support as mainstreaming expands.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework. Teacher self-efficacy underpins readiness; readiness is expressed through classroom practices; and practices shape learners' participation and learning. Contextual conditions, including training, ILRC support, leadership, workload, and classroom conditions, shape both readiness and practice, while anticipated challenges can weaken the translation of readiness into practice.

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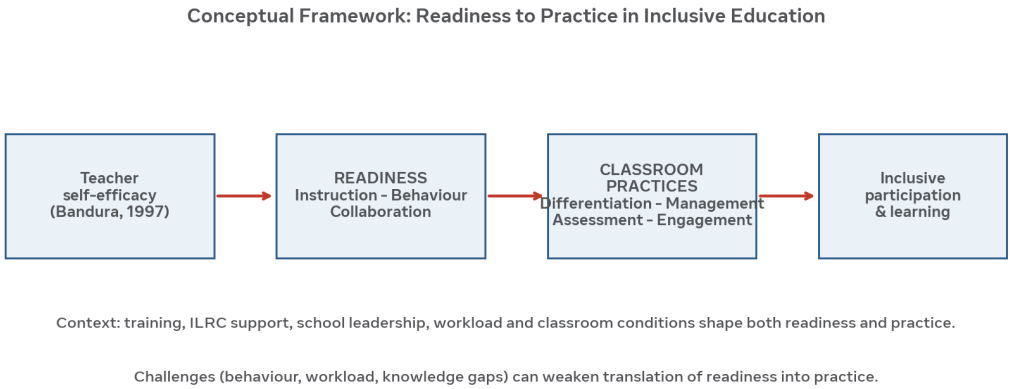

Figure 1. Conceptual framework: readiness, classroom practices, and inclusive participation.

Literature Review:

This review synthesises literature on four interrelated areas: the meaning and policy context of inclusive education, teacher readiness and self-efficacy, inclusive classroom practices, and the challenges that mediate implementation. Together, these areas explain why readiness matters, how it becomes visible in classroom practice, and why high readiness can coexist with persistent concerns about training, behaviour, and workload.

Inclusive education: meaning and policy context. Inclusive education is commonly understood as educating learners with diverse needs, including learners with disabilities, in regular classrooms with appropriate support, rather than segregating them by ability or diagnosis. UNESCO (1994) argued that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, building welcoming communities, and achieving education for all. UNESCO (2021) later warned that ambitious inclusion mandates have not always been matched by teacher preparation and classroom support, producing a training gap at the front line. In the Philippines, Muega (2016) found that teachers, administrators, and parents viewed inclusion positively in principle, but that implementation was constrained by limited training, resources, and specialist support. These findings remain relevant: inclusion is not a placement decision alone, but a pedagogical and organisational commitment that must be resourced, planned, and supported.

Philippine policy has moved decisively in this direction. Republic Act No. 11650 (2022) institutionalised inclusion and services for learners with disabilities and mandated ILRCs in municipalities and cities. DepEd Order No. 044, s. 2021 provided the policy framework for programmes and services for learners with disabilities in the K to 12 programme, while DepEd Order No. 045, s. 2021 set criteria for Prototype ILRCs. The ILRC is expected to function as a hub for assessment, intervention, materials, training, and mentoring, not merely as a separate centre. This design is important for general education teachers, because it reframes specialist support as a resource for regular classrooms. When ILRCs work as intended, general education teachers gain access to co-planning, coaching, adapted materials, and referral pathways. When they do not, teachers may experience mainstreaming as an added responsibility without added support. The present study is situated precisely in that transition, at the point where policy intent meets classroom reality.

Teacher readiness and self-efficacy. Readiness is often operationalised through teacher self-efficacy: a teacher's belief that they can carry out the tasks required for inclusive teaching. Bandura (1997) argued that self-efficacy is shaped by mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states. In teaching, this means that successful experiences with diverse learners, observation of skilled colleagues, encouragement from leaders and specialists, and manageable stress all build confidence. Sharma et al. (2012) developed the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale to measure efficacy in inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behaviour management, the same three dimensions examined in this study. Loreman et al. (2013) found, across four countries, that pre-service teachers felt only moderately prepared for inclusion, and that preparation and practicum experiences

mattered. Forlin et al. (2009, 2011) showed that attitudes, sentiments, and concerns about inclusion change with training and experience, and that demographic and contextual factors can shape those perceptions. Taken together, these studies suggest that readiness is malleable rather than fixed: it can be strengthened through well-designed professional learning, mentoring, and supported classroom experience.

Empirical work also links readiness to demographic and professional factors, though findings are mixed. Some studies report that teachers with SPED training, prior contact with learners with disabilities, and longer experience report higher efficacy and more positive attitudes. Others find that experience alone does not guarantee readiness if it was not accompanied by relevant training or support. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) reviewed evidence that teacher attitudes are among the strongest predictors of successful inclusion, and that attitudes are influenced by training, resources, and perceived support. De Boer et al. (2011) reviewed teacher attitudes toward inclusion and found generally neutral to positive attitudes, with concerns about workload, behaviour, and adequacy of support. These patterns are consistent with the present study's expectation: teachers may report high readiness overall, while still identifying specific areas, such as differentiated instruction or behaviour management, where confidence is fragile. The profile data in this study therefore matter, because they show who is being asked to implement inclusion and what preparation they bring to the task.

Inclusive classroom practices. Readiness becomes consequential only when it is enacted. The literature identifies four practice domains that recur across inclusive classrooms. First, differentiated instruction involves modifying content, process, product, and learning environment so that learners with different readiness levels, interests, and profiles can access the same curriculum. Tomlinson's differentiated instruction framework and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) both emphasise proactive planning for variability rather than retrofitting lessons after learners struggle. Second, classroom management in inclusive settings involves establishing clear routines, arranging the physical environment for safety and access, teaching social skills, using positive behaviour supports, and preventing disruption before it occurs. Third, assessment adaptations involve adjusting time, format, pacing, and benchmarks, and using diagnostic feedback so that assessment measures learning rather than barriers to demonstrating learning. Fourth, learner engagement involves multi-sensory and interactive activities, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, relevance to learners' interests and cultures, and fostering self-advocacy. These domains are not separate techniques; they form an integrated practice in which management creates the conditions for differentiation, assessment informs differentiation, and engagement sustains participation.

Evidence suggests that these practices are unevenly implemented. Jardinez and Natividad (2024) and related Philippine work indicate that environmental and management adjustments are often easier to sustain than individualised lesson adaptations, because the latter require more preparation time, materials, and specialist knowledge. Vantieghem et al. (2023) and Erni and Dewi (2024) argue that flexible pacing and individualised benchmarks can support diverse learners without lowering standards, but only when teachers have planning time and usable materials. Sudarso et al. (2024) highlight cooperative and peer-mediated learning as a feasible route to academic and social inclusion, because peer structures can be embedded in regular lessons without requiring one-to-one adult support for every learner. Havik (2025) notes that limited access to instructional resources constrains multi-sensory and highly differentiated activities. These findings predict the pattern observed in this study: classroom management may score highest, while differentiated instruction may score lowest, not because teachers reject differentiation, but because it is the most resource- and time-intensive practice.

Relationship between readiness and practice. Theory and evidence converge on a positive relationship between self-efficacy and inclusive practice. Teachers who feel confident in instruction, behaviour management, and collaboration are more likely to attempt inclusive strategies, persist when they are difficult, and adapt them based on learner response. Conversely, teachers who doubt their capability may avoid differentiation, rely on whole-class instruction, or refer learners elsewhere. Recent studies in Frontiers in Psychology (2026) and related work confirm that confident teachers implement inclusive strategies more consistently. The relationship is unlikely to be perfect, however, because contextual factors, such as class size, availability of aides, materials, planning time, and leadership support, can enable or constrain even highly ready teachers. This study therefore tests the readiness-practice relationship directly, using Pearson correlation, while also examining anticipated challenges that may explain why readiness does not always translate into practice. The null hypothesis of no relationship is tested against the alternative that readiness and practice are positively associated.

Challenges and concerns. The literature identifies four recurring challenge clusters. The first is managing diverse behaviours and maintaining order. Bosaert et al. (2013) and Muega (2016) document that unpredictable behaviour, task refusal, vocal outbursts, and aggression can disrupt instructional continuity and increase teacher stress, especially without aide support. The second is workload and instructional demand. De Boer et al. (2011) and Dela Fuente (2021) show that differentiated planning, adapted materials, individual progress monitoring, and administrative duties can overload teachers with full schedules. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) job demands-resources model provides a useful lens: when job demands exceed resources, strain and burnout increase; when resources, such as planning time, coaching, and materials, are adequate, teachers can meet demands more sustainably. The third is limited knowledge and specialised support. Teachers often report minimal pre-service exposure to SPED coursework and a need for intensive, practical training in UDL, individualised planning, and behaviour support. The fourth is social inclusion and well-being. Iotti et al. (2020) and Schwab (2021) show that physical placement does not guarantee social integration; without active facilitation, learners with disabilities face risks of peer isolation or subtle rejection. Teachers therefore need strategies for peer acceptance, social-emotional learning, and disability awareness, not only academic adaptations. These four clusters structure the challenge analysis in this study and the design of PROJECT INCLUDE.

Synthesis and research gap. The literature establishes that inclusion depends on teacher readiness, that readiness is shaped by training and support, that inclusive practices span differentiation, management, assessment, and engagement, and that challenges cluster around behaviour, workload, knowledge, and social inclusion. Most Philippine studies, however, examine these elements separately or focus on attitudes rather than the readiness-practice link at the point of ILRC mainstreaming. There is limited school-level evidence from a Prototype ILRC catchment school during pre-implementation, when baseline readiness and practice can still inform programme design. This study addresses that gap by providing baseline evidence for Mandaue City Central School, testing the readiness-practice relationship, documenting anticipated challenges, and translating findings into an evidence-based capacity-building programme. Its contribution is therefore both empirical and practical: it tests a theoretically expected relationship in a specific policy transition and uses the results to guide intervention.

Methodology:

This section describes the research design, respondents, instrument, data-gathering procedure, ethical considerations, and statistical treatment. It is written so that the study can be understood, appraised, and replicated in a comparable school context.

Research design. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was used. The descriptive component described the profile of respondents and the levels of readiness and classroom practices. The correlational component tested the relationship between teachers' readiness and their classroom practices. This design was appropriate because the study sought to measure existing conditions during the pre-implementation phase and to test an association, not to manipulate an intervention or establish causation. Open-ended responses on anticipated challenges were summarised thematically to enrich the quantitative results, but the primary analysis remained quantitative.

Respondents and sampling. The respondents were 79 general education teachers at Mandaue City Central School, Mandaue City, Schools Division of Mandaue City. Purposive sampling was used because the study targeted the teachers who would receive mainstreamed learners from the Prototype ILRC. All 79 teachers across Grades 1 to 6 participated, with 13 teachers in each of Grades 1 to 5 and 14 teachers in Grade 6. Inclusion criteria were: (a) currently teaching as a general education teacher at the school, and (b) willingness to participate. Teachers on leave during data gathering and SPED-centre teachers were not included as respondents, because the focus was on general education teachers who would implement mainstreaming. The sample size is adequate for descriptive and correlational analysis at school level, but findings should not be generalised beyond comparable elementary schools without replication.

Instrument. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire with four parts. Part I gathered the profile: age, gender, highest educational attainment, field of specialisation, length of service, and SPED-related training. Part II measured readiness using items adapted from the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale (Sharma et al., 2012), covering three subscales: efficacy in using inclusive instructional strategies (6 items), efficacy in managing

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disruptive behaviour (6 items), and efficacy in collaboration with parents and SPED staff (6 items). Part III measured classroom practices in four subscales: differentiated instruction (4 items), classroom management (5 items), assessment adaptations (3 items), and learner engagement (4 items, plus one culture item in the original instrument set). Part IV measured anticipated challenges and concerns (8 items) adapted from the Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised (SACIE-R) tradition (Forlin et al., 2011). Readiness items used a 5-point agreement scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Classroom practice items used a 5-point frequency scale (1 = Never to 5 = Always). Challenge items used a 5-point agreement scale. The questionnaire was reviewed by the thesis advisory committee and experts for content validity, and pilot or adviser review was used to refine wording. A sample scoring guide is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Scoring and interpretation guide.

Scale	Score interval	Verbal interpretation
5	4.21–5.00	Strongly Agree / Highly Ready / Always
4	3.41–4.20	Agree / High Readiness / Frequently Practiced
3	2.61–3.40	Moderately Agree / Moderately Ready / Sometimes Practiced
2	1.81–2.60	Disagree / Low Readiness / Rarely Practiced
1	1.00–1.80	Strongly Disagree / Not Ready / Never Practiced

Data-gathering procedure. Permission was secured from the Schools Division Office and the school head through a transmittal letter. The researcher explained the purpose, voluntary nature, and confidentiality of the study, obtained informed consent, and distributed the questionnaire via Google Forms to facilitate efficient collection and encoding. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the instrument, which took approximately 10–15 minutes. Responses were checked for completeness, encoded, and stored securely. No identifying information was required, and names, where provided, were not used in analysis or reporting.

Ethical considerations. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any time without penalty. Informed consent was obtained before administration. Confidentiality was maintained by reporting only aggregate results and by storing data securely with access limited to the researcher and adviser. The study complied with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) in handling personal information. No known risks were associated with participation, and the study aimed to benefit the school by informing capacity-building support.

Statistical treatment. Data were analysed using frequency counts and percentages for profile variables, weighted means and standard deviations for readiness, practices, and challenges, and ranking for challenge items. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) tested the relationship between overall readiness and overall classroom practices at the .05 level of significance (two-tailed). The null hypothesis was rejected if $p < .05$. Interpretation of r followed conventional guidance: .00–.19 negligible, .20–.39 weak, .40–.59 moderate, .60–.79 moderately strong, and .80–1.00 strong. The analysis assumed that the composite scores approximated interval-level measurement, that the relationship was linear, and that the sample was adequate for the test. All analyses were conducted on the 79 complete responses.

Results and Discussion:

This section presents the results in the order of the research questions: profile, readiness, classroom practices, relationship between readiness and practices, and anticipated challenges. Each finding is interpreted in light of theory and prior literature, and implications for PROJECT INCLUDE are drawn throughout. All means are reported on the 5-point scales described in the Methodology. Verbal interpretations follow the scoring guide in Table 1.

Profile of the respondents. The respondents were predominantly mid-career female teachers with graduate-level preparation and considerable teaching experience, but with limited SPED specialisation and training. This profile is important because it describes the workforce that will carry mainstreaming: experienced, academically prepared, and

generally committed, yet not specifically prepared in SPED. The distribution by grade level was even, which reduces the risk that findings reflect only one grade level's experience. The profile results are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Profile of respondents (N = 79).

Variable	Category	f	%
Age	21–30 years	5	6.33
	31–40 years	33	41.77
	41–50 years	27	34.18
	51–60 years	12	15.19
	61 years and above	2	2.53
Gender	Female	74	93.67
	Male	5	6.33
Highest attainment	With master's units	49	62.03
	Master's graduate	13	16.46
	Bachelor's degree	10	12.66
	With doctorate units	5	6.33
	Doctorate graduate	2	2.53
Field of specialisation	General Education	33	41.77
	Mathematics	13	16.46
	Other fields (Filipino, English, HELE, ECE, PE, Social Science, Guidance, Educational Management)	31	39.24
	Special Education (SPED)	2	2.53
Length of service	Less than 1 year	1	1.27
	1–5 years	15	18.99
	6–10 years	17	21.52
	11–15 years	24	30.38
	16 years and above	22	27.85
SPED training	No training attended	39	49.37
	School-based / INSET	35	44.30
	Division seminars	3	3.80
	SPED units / specialisation	2	2.53
	National workshops	0	0.00

Age and gender. More than three quarters of respondents (75.95%) were aged 31–50 years, with the largest group aged 31–40 years (41.77%), followed by 41–50 years (34.18%). Only 6.33% were aged 21–30 years, and 17.72% were aged 51 years and above. The sample was overwhelmingly female (93.67%), consistent with the feminisation of elementary teaching in the Philippines. The age distribution suggests a mid-career workforce: old enough to have accumulated classroom routines and behaviour-management repertoires, but young enough to have many years of service ahead during which inclusive practices can be strengthened. Mid-career teachers often bring both an asset and a risk: they have practical wisdom and established routines, but they may also have routines that were formed before UDL, differentiated instruction, and ILRC mainstreaming became central. Professional development for this group should therefore build on existing routines rather than dismiss them, showing how differentiation and assessment adaptation can be embedded in lessons teachers already teach, rather than added as a separate programme.

Educational attainment and specialisation. A large majority had graduate-level preparation: 62.03% had master's units, 16.46% were master's graduates, 6.33% had doctorate units, and 2.53% were doctorate graduates. Only 12.66% held a bachelor's degree as their highest attainment. This is a highly credentialed workforce, which helps explain the high readiness scores reported below: graduate study often strengthens pedagogical knowledge, reflective practice, and confidence in handling diverse learners. However, credentials were not SPED-specific. The most common field of specialisation was General Education (41.77%), followed by Mathematics (16.46%). Only 2.53% specialised in SPED. This mismatch is the central tension of the study: general academic preparation is strong, but specialised

preparation for learners with disabilities is thin. It means that teachers may be confident in general pedagogy while lacking specific knowledge of disability characteristics, individualised planning, assistive technology, and behaviour intervention. Capacity building should therefore be SPED-specific and practice-based, not generic pedagogy. It should focus on the concrete tasks teachers will face: profiling learners, adapting a lesson for a specific disability, using an assistive aid, and writing a differentiated assessment.

Length of service. Most respondents were experienced: 30.38% had served 11–15 years, 27.85% had served 16 years and above, 21.52% had served 6–10 years, and 18.99% had served 1–5 years. Only one teacher (1.27%) had served less than one year. Experience of this kind is valuable for classroom management and learner engagement, because experienced teachers have tested routines for establishing order, building relationships, and pacing lessons. Experience, however, does not automatically produce inclusive differentiation. A teacher can be highly experienced in whole-class instruction while having little experience in adapting materials for a learner with a visual impairment, a hearing impairment, an intellectual disability, or a learning disability. The implication is that mentoring should pair experience with specialisation: experienced general education teachers can mentor newer teachers in classroom management, while SPED teachers mentor all teachers in differentiation and individualised support. This two-way mentoring model respects experience while closing the SPED gap.

SPED-related training. The most striking profile finding is the training gap. Nearly half of respondents (49.37%) had not attended any SPED-related training. Among those who had, the most common form was school-based or in-service training (44.30%), followed by division seminars (3.80%) and SPED undergraduate units or specialisation (2.53%). No respondent had attended a national workshop on SPED. This pattern suggests that SPED training, when it occurred, was brief, school-based, and likely general rather than intensive or disability-specific. It also suggests that access, not willingness, is the constraint: teachers who had not attended training still reported high readiness and frequent inclusive practices, indicating openness to inclusion. The training gap therefore represents an opportunity: a well-designed, sustained programme is likely to find a receptive audience. It also represents a risk: if mainstreaming expands without training, teachers' initial confidence may erode when they encounter learners whose needs they have not been prepared to meet. PROJECT INCLUDE is designed to address this gap through seven modules, coaching, and Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, rather than a single orientation.

Taken together, the profile findings depict a workforce that is experienced, credentialed, and willing, but under-prepared in SPED. This combination explains why readiness can be high while challenges remain high: teachers' general teaching confidence is real, but their specialised repertoire is incomplete. The discussion that follows should be read with this profile in mind. High means do not mean that training is unnecessary; they mean that training can build on a strong foundation. The policy implication is to invest in SPED-specific, classroom-embedded professional learning, not to assume that general experience alone will carry mainstreaming.

Level of readiness. Teachers demonstrated a high level of readiness overall ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.62$). All three dimensions were in the high-readiness range: collaboration with parents and SPED staff ($M = 3.81$), managing disruptive behaviour ($M = 3.76$), and using inclusive instructional strategies ($M = 3.75$). The narrow range across dimensions (0.06) indicates a balanced profile rather than a profile with one strong and one weak domain. Teachers did not report readiness in one area at the expense of another; they reported a generally confident stance across instruction, behaviour, and collaboration. Figure 2 visualises this pattern, and Table 3 summarises the item-level results that underlie it.

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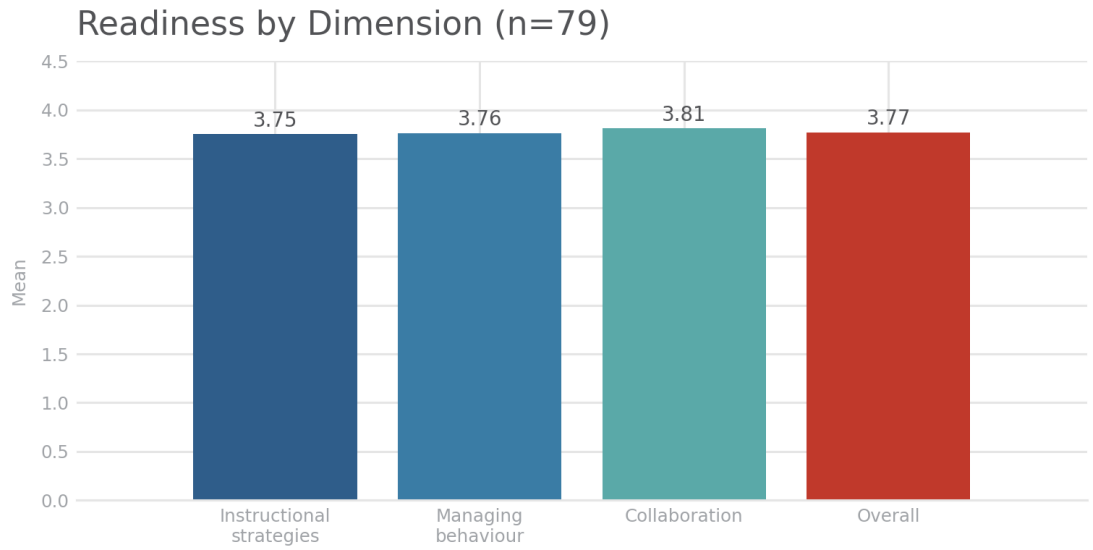

Figure 2. Readiness by dimension. All dimensions fall in the high-readiness range.

Table 3. Summary of readiness by dimension (N = 79).

Readiness dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Using inclusive instructional strategies	3.75	0.68	High readiness
Managing disruptive behaviour	3.76	0.55	High readiness
Collaborating with parents and SPED staff	3.81	0.58	High readiness
Overall readiness	3.77	0.62	High readiness

Using inclusive instructional strategies (M = 3.75). Item-level results show that teachers felt most confident in providing an alternate explanation or example when students are confused (M = 3.80) and in providing appropriate challenges for every learner (M = 3.80), followed by using a variety of assessment strategies (M = 3.77), crafting good questions for learners with difficulties (M = 3.73), gauging comprehension (M = 3.72), and designing tasks that accommodate individual needs of students with disabilities (M = 3.67). The pattern is instructive. Teachers were most confident in responsive, in-the-moment instructional moves, such as re-explaining and challenging learners, and least confident in proactive design, such as designing tasks that accommodate individual needs. This is consistent with the idea that mastery experiences build confidence in familiar tasks, while novel, specialised tasks remain less certain. Re-explaining is a routine teaching move; designing a task for a learner with a specific disability requires knowledge of that disability, the curriculum, and the adaptation. The lowest item, though still high, is therefore the most diagnostic: it points to where training should focus. Training that provides worked examples, lesson exemplars, and co-planning for specific disabilities is more likely to raise this item than training that only discusses inclusion in general terms.

Managing disruptive behaviour (M = 3.76). Teachers felt most confident in getting students to follow classroom rules (M = 3.91), making expectations clear about behaviour (M = 3.86), calming a disruptive or noisy student (M = 3.81), preventing disruptive behaviour before it occurs (M = 3.72), directing activities seamlessly even when dealing with difficult behaviours (M = 3.67), and dealing with students who are physically aggressive (M = 3.57). The gradient is clear: confidence was highest for routine, preventive, and rule-based management, and lowest for physically aggressive behaviour. This gradient makes sense. Rule-setting and expectation-clarity are general classroom-management skills that experienced teachers have practised for years. Physical aggression, by contrast, is infrequent, high-stakes, and requires specific de-escalation, safety, and referral knowledge. The finding aligns with the challenge data reported later, where maintaining an orderly classroom and managing disruptive behaviour were top concerns. It

also aligns with Bosaert et al. (2013) and Muega (2016), who found that behaviour management is a persistent source of stress when specialist support is limited. The implication is not that teachers lack behaviour-management skill, but that they need a specific, rehearsed repertoire for the most challenging behaviours, plus clear procedures and access to support when aggression occurs. A training module on positive behaviour support, de-escalation, and safe intervention, combined with a clear school protocol, would directly address the lowest item.

Collaborating with parents and SPED staff (M = 3.81). This was the strongest readiness dimension. Teachers felt most confident in making parents feel comfortable coming to school (M = 3.99) and assisting families in helping their children do well (M = 3.95), followed by working jointly with professionals and support staff (M = 3.81), clearly articulating expectations for paraprofessionals or teaching assistants (M = 3.72), collaborating with other professionals in designing educational plans (M = 3.71), and accurately identifying when a student needs specialist intervention (M = 3.70). The strength in parent-facing collaboration is a significant asset. Filipino school culture, with its emphasis on kalinga and communal collaboration, may support teachers' willingness to engage families. It also reflects the school's position near the ILRC, where collaboration with SPED staff is already part of the school's ecology. The relatively lower items, identifying when specialist intervention is needed and collaborating on educational plans, again point to specialised knowledge: knowing when to refer and how to co-plan an individualised plan requires diagnostic and procedural knowledge that general education teachers may not have. The implication is to build on the relational strength by adding procedural clarity: referral criteria, case-conference protocols, and co-planning templates that make collaboration concrete. When collaboration is structured, teachers' willingness can be converted into consistent practice.

Interpretation of readiness. The high overall readiness should be interpreted carefully. First, it is self-reported efficacy, not observed competence. Teachers' beliefs about what they can do are important, because they influence effort and persistence, but they are not a direct measure of classroom skill. Second, the high scores may reflect a pre-implementation optimism: teachers were reporting readiness before full mainstreaming, when the most challenging cases had not yet arrived. Third, the scores are consistent with the profile: experienced, graduate-prepared teachers are likely to report confidence in general teaching. The fact that readiness remained high despite limited SPED training suggests that teachers generalised from general teaching confidence to inclusive teaching. This generalisation is both a resource and a risk. It is a resource because it gives teachers the confidence to attempt inclusive strategies. It is a risk if it leads to underestimation of the specialised knowledge required. The appropriate response is not to dampen confidence, but to channel it: provide mastery experiences with real learners, coaching, and feedback, so that confidence becomes grounded in specialised competence. Bandura's (1997) theory predicts that such mastery experiences will be the most powerful source of efficacy.

Level of classroom practices. Teachers reported frequently practicing inclusive classroom strategies overall (M = 3.83, SD = 0.63). All four practice dimensions were in the frequently practiced range: classroom management (M = 3.98), assessment adaptations (M = 3.91), learner engagement (M = 3.77), and differentiated instruction (M = 3.64). The ordering is theoretically and practically meaningful: management and assessment were strongest, while differentiation was weakest. Figure 3 and Table 4 summarise this pattern.

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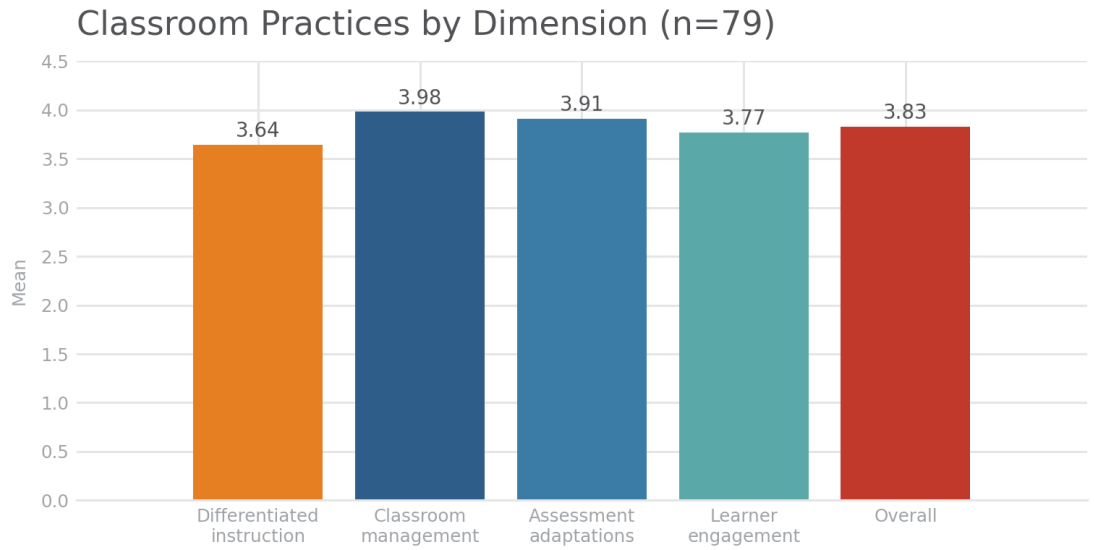

Figure 3. Classroom practices by dimension. Classroom management is strongest; differentiated instruction is the priority for development.

Table 4. Summary of classroom practices by dimension (N = 79).

Classroom practice dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Differentiated instruction	3.64	0.61	Frequently practiced
Classroom management	3.98	0.59	Frequently practiced
Assessment adaptations	3.91	0.65	Frequently practiced
Learner engagement	3.77	0.66	Frequently practiced
Overall classroom practices	3.83	0.63	Frequently practiced

Differentiated instruction (M = 3.64). Item-level results show that teachers most frequently integrated student interests, cultural backgrounds, and personal strengths into daily activities (M = 3.73) and modified lesson materials such as simplified text, larger fonts, or audio versions (M = 3.70), followed by leveraging assistive technologies or specialised learning aids (M = 3.59) and presenting core concepts using multiple modalities in every lesson (M = 3.54). The pattern reveals a distinction between low-cost, relational differentiation and resource-intensive differentiation. Integrating interests and cultures is a pedagogical stance that can be enacted without special materials. Modifying text is also relatively feasible. Using assistive technology and consistently presenting concepts through multiple modalities, by contrast, require materials, devices, planning time, and knowledge of which modality fits which learner. The lowest item, multiple modalities in every lesson, is particularly demanding: it requires teachers to design visual, auditory, and hands-on versions of the same concept for every lesson, which is unrealistic without pre-adapted materials and planning time. The implication is to make differentiation feasible: provide a bank of pre-adapted materials, model how to differentiate one lesson per week well rather than every lesson superficially, and train teachers in assistive technology that is actually available in the school. Jardinez and Natividad (2024) and Havik (2025) similarly argue that differentiation is constrained by resources, not only by will.

Classroom management (M = 3.98). This was the strongest practice dimension, and its item pattern is consistent with the readiness findings. Teachers most frequently employed positive behavioural intervention strategies rather than strictly punitive discipline (M = 4.04), fostered a classroom culture where diversity is celebrated and every student feels valued (M = 4.01), organised furniture for safe mobility and clear sightlines (M = 3.96), explicitly taught social skills and established routines that prevent bullying and peer isolation (M = 3.95), and arranged flexible seating for shifts between whole-class, small-group, and independent work (M = 3.95). The high scores suggest that teachers have already internalised a positive, preventive approach to management. The emphasis on positive behaviour support

over punishment is especially important for inclusion, because punitive approaches can disproportionately harm learners with disabilities and erode peer relationships. The environmental adjustments, furniture arrangement and flexible seating, are also feasible and visible, which may explain why they are frequently practiced. They do not require specialist knowledge, but they make a tangible difference for learners with physical limitations and for learners who need varied grouping. The management strength provides a foundation for differentiation: when order and routines are secure, teachers have more cognitive and emotional capacity to differentiate. School leaders should protect this strength by maintaining reasonable class sizes, clear behaviour protocols, and access to guidance support, rather than assuming that management will remain strong if demands increase without support.

Assessment adaptations (M = 3.91). Teachers frequently adjusted time limits, assignment lengths, or assessment pacing for learners who need additional processing time (M = 3.94), evaluated growth using individualised progress benchmarks alongside standardised grading scales (M = 3.91), and provided regular diagnostic feedback that guides struggling learners step by step (M = 3.89). The narrow range across items indicates a consistent assessment practice. This is encouraging, because assessment is often where inclusion fails: if assessment is not adapted, learners with disabilities are judged by measures that reflect barriers rather than learning. The finding that teachers use individualised benchmarks alongside standardised scales suggests an understanding that equity does not mean identical assessment for all, but appropriate assessment that measures the same learning goals through different means. Erni and Dewi (2024) and Vantieghem et al. (2023) support this approach, showing that flexible pacing and individualised benchmarks can support diverse learners without lowering standards. The implication is to formalise these practices: develop school-level guidance on assessment adaptation, exemplars of adapted tests, and procedures for documenting individualised benchmarks, so that adaptation is consistent and defensible, not idiosyncratic.

Learner engagement (M = 3.77). Teachers most frequently incorporated cooperative learning and peer-tutoring structures (M = 3.84), tapped into learners' interests, cultures, and strengths (M = 3.78), fostered self-advocacy by teaching learners to monitor goals and ask for assistance (M = 3.78), and integrated multi-sensory and interactive activities (M = 3.68). The pattern mirrors differentiation: peer-mediated and relational engagement were strongest, while multi-sensory activities, which require materials and technology, were weakest. The strength in peer tutoring is significant. Sudarso et al. (2024) show that cooperative and peer-mediated learning promotes both academic and social inclusion, because it embeds support in regular classroom interaction. Peer tutoring also addresses the challenge of providing adequate attention to all learners: when peers support each other, the teacher is not the sole source of help. The lower multi-sensory score suggests a resource gap rather than a pedagogical rejection. Schools can address it by creating a shared bank of manipulatives, educational technology, and hands-on materials, and by training teachers in low-cost multi-sensory strategies that do not require expensive equipment.

Interpretation of practices. The practice results show a functioning pedagogical foundation. Teachers are not starting from zero; they are already managing classrooms positively, adapting assessments, engaging learners through peers, and differentiating to some extent. The gap between management (3.98) and differentiation (3.64) is 0.34, a meaningful difference that identifies the priority for development. It is not a deficit narrative: differentiation is the hardest practice, requiring the most preparation, materials, and specialised knowledge. It is therefore expected to lag behind management, which is more routine and environmental. The appropriate response is targeted: focus the next phase of professional development on differentiation, with concrete materials, co-planning, and coaching, while maintaining the strengths in management and assessment. This targeted approach is more efficient than generic training that treats all practices as equally weak.

Relationship between readiness and classroom practices. The Pearson correlation between overall readiness and overall classroom practices was $r = 0.675$, $p < .001$, a moderately strong positive relationship. The null hypothesis of no significant relationship is therefore rejected. Figure 4 illustrates the association, and Table 5 summarises the test. The coefficient of determination, $r^2 = 0.456$, indicates that approximately 45.6% of the variance in classroom practices is shared with readiness. This is a substantial proportion for educational research, where practices are influenced by many factors. It means that teachers who reported higher readiness tended to report more frequent inclusive practices, and vice versa. The finding is consistent with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory and with Sharma et al. (2012), who argued that efficacy in inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behaviour management predicts implementation. It is also consistent with recent work confirming that confident teachers implement inclusive strategies more consistently.

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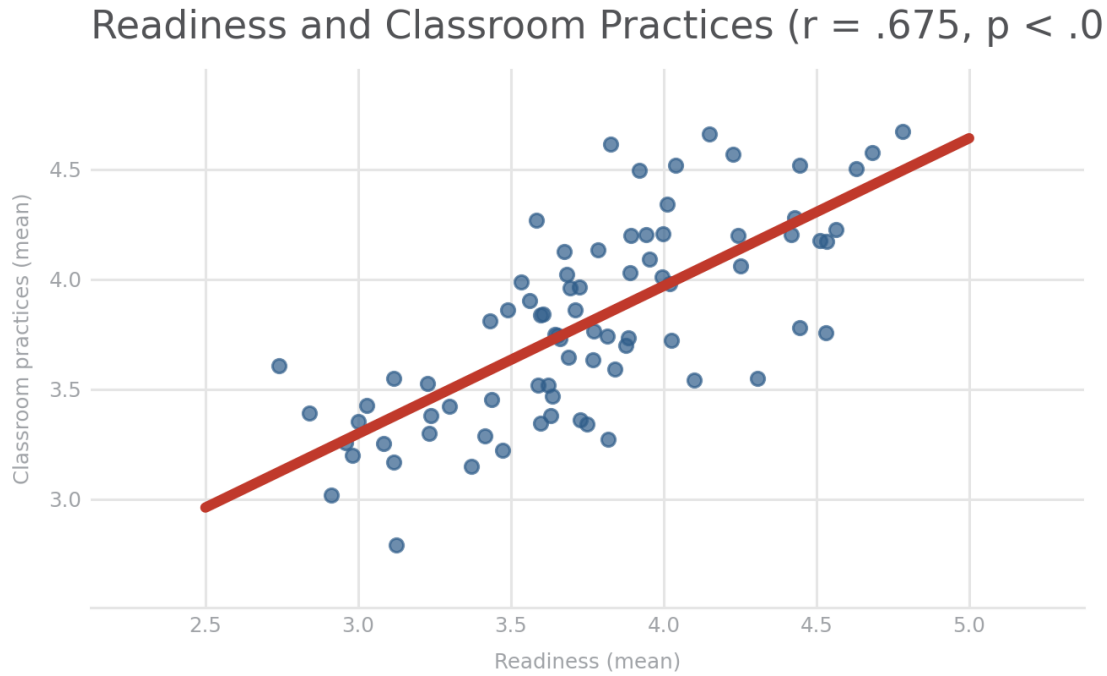

Figure 4. Scatterplot illustrating the positive association between readiness and classroom practices. Points are illustrative of the reported correlation; the line shows the trend.

Table 5. Test of relationship between readiness and classroom practices (N = 79).

Variables	Pearson r	Strength	p-value	Decision
Teachers' readiness and classroom practices	0.675	Moderately strong positive	< .001	Reject H_0; significant

The correlation should be interpreted with appropriate caution. First, correlation does not establish causation. It is plausible that readiness influences practice, that practice influences readiness through mastery experiences, or that both are influenced by a third factor, such as training, mentoring, or school support. The most plausible account is reciprocal: readiness encourages teachers to attempt inclusive strategies, successful attempts build mastery and further readiness, and supportive conditions sustain both. Second, both variables were measured by self-report on the same questionnaire, which can inflate the correlation through common-method variance. Teachers who view themselves positively may rate both readiness and practice highly. Future research should complement self-report with classroom observation, learner outcomes, and document review. Third, the correlation is an average across teachers; individual teachers may deviate. Some highly ready teachers may face contextual barriers that limit practice, while some less ready teachers may practice inclusively because of strong coaching or peer support. These exceptions are not noise; they are clues about contextual factors that should be investigated. Despite these cautions, the finding has practical value: it suggests that investing in readiness is likely to pay off in practice, and that monitoring readiness can serve as an early indicator of implementation. Schools that track readiness through brief surveys, coaching conversations, and LAC reflections can identify teachers who need support before practice gaps become entrenched.

The relationship also helps explain the profile findings. Teachers with limited SPED training reported high readiness and frequent practice, yet the correlation suggests that readiness still matters: among these teachers, those with higher readiness practiced more frequently. This implies that even within a generally confident group, differences in readiness are consequential. It also implies that raising readiness among the least confident teachers could yield the largest gains in practice, because they have the most room to grow. Professional development should therefore be differentiated: intensive coaching for teachers with lower readiness, and advanced, peer-leader roles for teachers with higher

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readiness who can mentor others. This differentiated approach to teacher learning mirrors the differentiated approach teachers are asked to use with learners.

Anticipated challenges. Teachers anticipated substantial challenges, even while reporting high readiness and frequent practice. This coexistence is not contradictory; it reflects the difference between general confidence and specific anticipation of difficulty when mainstreaming expands. The highest-rated challenge was maintaining an effective and orderly classroom when learners with disabilities are included (M = 4.01), followed by increased workload and stress (M = 3.97), disruptive behaviour (M = 3.90), insufficient knowledge and skills (M = 3.90), difficulty providing adequate attention to all students (M = 3.78), belief that learners may progress better in special classrooms (M = 3.78), concern that learners may not be fully accepted by classmates (M = 3.51), and concern that inclusion may negatively affect emotional development (M = 3.47). Figure 5 and Table 6 summarise these results. The thematic analysis of open-ended responses organised these challenges into four themes: managing diverse behaviours and maintaining order, increased workload and instructional demands, need for greater professional knowledge and specialised support, and concerns about social inclusion and well-being.

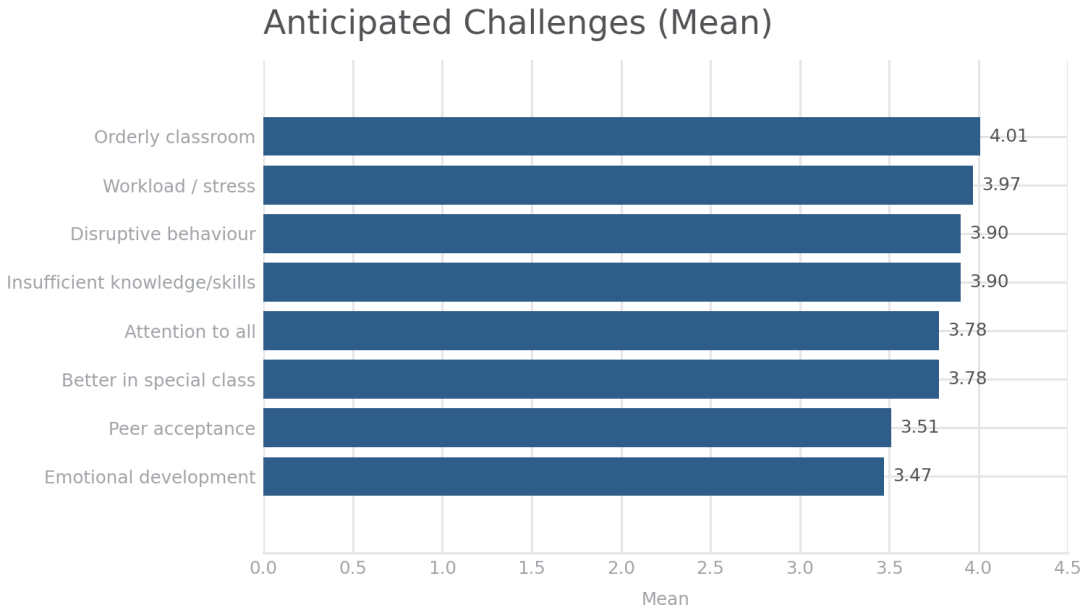

Figure 5. Anticipated challenges by mean rating. Higher means indicate stronger agreement that the item is a challenge.

Table 6. Anticipated challenges (N = 79).

Rank	Challenge	Mean
1	Maintaining an effective and orderly classroom	4.01
2	Inclusion may increase workload and stress	3.97
3.5	Disruptive behaviour	3.90
3.5	Insufficient knowledge and skills	3.90
5.5	Difficulty providing adequate attention to all	3.78
5.5	Learners may progress better in special classrooms	3.78
7	Learners may not be fully accepted by classmates	3.51

8	Inclusion may negatively affect emotional development	3.47

Theme 1: Managing diverse behaviours and maintaining order. Teachers' top concern was order, not attitude. They worried that including learners with disabilities would make it harder to maintain an effective and orderly classroom, and that disruptive behaviour would interrupt learning. One teacher's comment captured the dilemma: keeping the rest of the class on task while de-escalating one child becomes overwhelming without an aide. This is a concrete, operational concern, not an abstract resistance to inclusion. It reflects the reality of large classes, limited paraprofessional support, and the need to attend to a learner's immediate needs while sustaining the learning of others. The finding aligns with Bosaert et al. (2013) and Muega (2016), who found that unpredictable behaviour remains a primary driver of instructional delay and teacher stress. It also aligns with the readiness finding that dealing with physically aggressive behaviour was the lowest readiness item. The implication is that behaviour support must be practical and available: training in positive behaviour support and de-escalation, clear intervention procedures, safe spaces for regulation, and access to SPED and guidance support when needed. Schools should also consider how to provide aide or peer support during the most challenging moments, rather than expecting the general education teacher to manage alone.

Theme 2: Increased workload and instructional demands. Teachers strongly agreed that inclusion increases workload and stress, and that it can be difficult to provide adequate attention to all learners. These findings reflect the time required to differentiate lessons, adapt materials, track individual progress, and complete administrative duties. De Boer et al. (2011) and Dela Fuente (2021) similarly found that supporting diverse profiles demands ongoing curricular accommodations and varied assessment tools that overload teachers with full schedules. Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) job demands-resources model helps explain why workload matters: when demands exceed resources, strain increases; when resources are adequate, teachers can meet demands sustainably. The implication is that workload cannot be addressed by exhortation alone. Schools need to provide dedicated planning time, pre-adapted materials, and reduced non-instructional paperwork. The ILRC, under DepEd Order No. 045, s. 2021, should function as a distribution hub for adapted sheets, digital media, and modified assessment templates, so that individual teachers do not have to create every adaptation from scratch. LAC sessions should be used for collaborative planning, where teachers share differentiated materials rather than each creating them alone. These structural supports are as important as training, because they determine whether training can be enacted.

Theme 3: Need for greater professional knowledge and specialised support. Teachers expressed strong concern that they lacked sufficient knowledge and skills to teach learners with disabilities effectively, and a moderate belief that learners might progress better in special classrooms. This belief is not necessarily a rejection of inclusion; it may reflect teachers' honest assessment that they have not been prepared for certain disabilities, and their concern that learners will not receive adequate support in a regular classroom without specialist help. UNESCO (2021) and Kamanzi et al. (2026) note a global training gap in child-centred pedagogies, and Dela Fuente (2021) and Muega (2016) document minimal pre-service SPED exposure in the Philippines. The implication is that professional development must move beyond brief orientations to intensive, practical capacity building in UDL, individualised planning, diagnostic profiling, and disability-specific strategies. It must also be sustained through mentoring: SPED teachers should provide direct co-planning and coaching, not only workshops. The belief that special classrooms are better should be addressed with evidence and experience: when teachers see mainstreamed learners succeed with appropriate support, their beliefs shift. This requires that the first mainstreaming experiences be well-supported, so that they become mastery experiences rather than confirmation of doubt.

Theme 4: Concerns about social inclusion and learner well-being. Teachers expressed moderate concern that learners with disabilities may not be fully accepted by classmates and that inclusion may negatively affect their emotional development. Although these were the lowest-rated challenges, they are important because they highlight the social dimension of inclusion. Iotti et al. (2020) and Schwab (2021) show that physical placement does not guarantee social integration; without active facilitation, learners with disabilities face risks of peer isolation or subtle rejection. Teachers in this study recognised that safeguarding socio-emotional health is as important as supporting academic progress. The implication is to implement structured social-emotional learning, disability-awareness campaigns, cooperative learning, and peer-buddy networks that encourage authentic social participation. Guidance personnel and ILRC staff should support teachers in designing these activities and in monitoring peer relationships. The school

should also celebrate diversity explicitly, as teachers already reported doing, so that inclusion is experienced as a valued part of school culture, not only as a placement policy.

Synthesis of results and implications for PROJECT INCLUDE. The results form a coherent story. Teachers are experienced, credentialed, and willing, but under-prepared in SPED. They report high readiness and frequent practice, with strengths in collaboration, management, and assessment, and a priority need in differentiation. Readiness and practice are positively and substantially related, suggesting that raising readiness should improve practice. At the same time, teachers anticipate real challenges in behaviour, workload, knowledge, and social inclusion. These challenges do not negate readiness; they specify where support must be directed. PROJECT INCLUDE translates this story into action. Its seven modules address the specific gaps identified: inclusive education foundations and policy, UDL and differentiated instruction, assessment adaptations, behaviour management and positive behaviour support, assistive technology and adapted materials, collaboration and individualised planning, and social inclusion and peer support. Its delivery model, workshops plus coaching, mentoring, LAC sessions, and classroom application, reflects the finding that brief orientation is insufficient. Its monitoring, through pre- and post-tests, classroom observations, and mentoring logs, allows the school to track whether readiness gains translate into practice gains. Its sustainability mechanisms, integration into the school Learning and Development Plan, institutionalised LACs, and model inclusive classrooms, ensure that capacity building is not a one-time event. The programme should be implemented with attention to workload: training should be scheduled within INSET and LAC time, materials should be pre-adapted, and coaching should be embedded in regular teaching, not added as a separate burden.

Limitations. Several limitations should be noted. First, the study used a single school and purposive sampling, which limits generalisability. Second, data were self-reported, which may be subject to social desirability and common-method bias. Third, the study was cross-sectional and conducted during pre-implementation, so it captures anticipated rather than experienced challenges during full mainstreaming. Fourth, the study did not measure learner outcomes, classroom observations, or the effects of specific training, so it cannot establish which professional development activities are most effective. Future research should use longitudinal designs, classroom observation, learner outcome data, and evaluation of PROJECT INCLUDE to test whether readiness gains translate into sustained practice and learner success. Qualitative studies should explore teachers' lived experiences during mainstreaming, and quantitative studies should examine school climate, leadership, and resource availability as moderators of the readiness-practice relationship.

A further implication concerns how schools should monitor progress after this baseline. Because readiness and practice were measured before full mainstreaming, the same instruments should be re-administered after one semester of PROJECT INCLUDE and again at the end of the school year, so that change can be tracked rather than assumed. A brief readiness check, combined with a short classroom-observation checklist focused on differentiation, assessment adaptation, and behaviour support, would give school leaders a practical dashboard without overburdening teachers. If differentiation remains the lowest dimension after the first cycle, the school should intensify co-planning and the sharing of adapted materials rather than repeating general orientation. If behaviour-related challenges remain highest, the school should review aide deployment, referral procedures, and the availability of safe regulation spaces. In this way, the baseline reported here becomes a living reference point: it allows the school to test whether its investment in training, coaching, and ILRC support is actually moving readiness, practice, and teachers' experience of challenges in the intended direction, and to adjust the programme while mainstreaming is still taking shape.

Conclusion:

General education teachers at Mandaue City Central School demonstrated a high level of readiness for inclusive education (M = 3.77) and frequently practiced inclusive classroom strategies (M = 3.83), despite the fact that nearly half had not attended SPED-related training. Collaboration with parents and SPED staff was the strongest readiness dimension, while classroom management was the strongest practice dimension. Differentiated instruction was the weakest practice dimension and the clearest priority for development. The profile revealed a mid-career, predominantly female, graduate-prepared, and experienced workforce, but one with limited SPED specialisation and training. This combination of general strength and specialised gap explains why high readiness coexisted with high anticipated challenges.

A statistically significant, moderately strong positive relationship was found between readiness and classroom practices ($r = 0.675$, $p < .001$), leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. Approximately 45.6% of the variance in practices was shared with readiness, indicating that readiness is a substantial, though not sole, predictor of practice. Teachers who felt more confident in instruction, behaviour management, and collaboration were more likely to implement inclusive strategies frequently. This finding supports the theoretical expectation from self-efficacy theory that beliefs about capability shape behaviour, and it provides a practical lever: strengthening readiness through mastery experiences, coaching, and support is likely to improve classroom practice. At the same time, the correlation does not establish causation, and contextual factors, including workload, materials, and specialist support, will determine whether readiness can be enacted.

Teachers anticipated challenges in maintaining an orderly classroom, managing increased workload and stress, addressing disruptive behaviour, and responding to limited knowledge and skills. Concerns about peer acceptance and emotional well-being, though lower, highlighted the social dimension of inclusion. These challenges should not be viewed as separate from readiness and practice, but as interrelated factors that collectively influence teachers' capacity to support inclusive education. As Mandaue City Central School prepares for ILRC mainstreaming, strengthening these interconnected areas through continuous professional development, collaborative support systems, and adequate institutional resources will be essential. PROJECT INCLUDE, with its focus on differentiated instruction, behaviour support, assessment adaptation, assistive technology, collaboration, and social inclusion, provides an evidence-based starting point. Its success will depend on sustained leadership, protected planning time, pre-adapted materials, coaching, and monitoring. When teachers are supported in this way, readiness can become grounded competence, and inclusive education can move from policy intent to everyday classroom reality where every learner is valued, understood, and given the opportunity to succeed.

Recommendations in brief. The Division and school should institutionalise sustained, needs-based SPED professional development, prioritising teachers without prior training. School leaders should build on the collaboration strength by formalising co-planning, mentoring, case conferences, and LACs. Teachers should actively participate in capacity building and focus on differentiated instruction and behaviour support. The school should implement workload and wellness supports, including peer coaching and access to specialist personnel. PROJECT INCLUDE should be implemented, monitored, and evaluated, with results used for continuous improvement. Future research should evaluate the programme's effectiveness, examine school climate and resource factors, and explore teachers' lived experiences during mainstreaming.

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