INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF RESEARCH FOR INNOVATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND EXCELLENCE
Published by: RISEJOURNALS.ORG | Online ISSN: 3028-032X | Print ISSN: 3028-0370
VOLUME 5, ISSUE NO. 9

Readiness for Inclusive Education among General Education Teachers: Antecedents to Mainstreaming in an Inclusive Learning Resource Center

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.24555567

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Abstract:

This study assessed the readiness and classroom practices of general education teachers in implementing inclusive education at Cesar M. Cabahug Elementary School in Mandaue City, Cebu, during the pre-implementation phase of the Inclusive Learning Resource Center (ILRC) for School Year 2026–2027, as a basis for an evidence-based capacity-building intervention plan. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, 41 general education teachers were selected through purposive sampling and answered a structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The instrument covered demographic and professional profile, readiness measured by the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale of Sharma, Loreman, and Forlin (2012), classroom practices aligned with inclusive teaching practices, and challenges in inclusive education. Data were analysed with frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson product-moment correlation at the 0.05 level of significance. Respondents were predominantly female (87.80%), aged 31–40 years (51.22%), holders of master's degree units (80.49%), and experienced teachers, with 68.30% having served for at least 11 years; however, only 4.88% had specialised Special Education training. Teachers reported a high overall level of readiness ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.73$–0.87 across domains) and frequently practiced inclusive classroom strategies (overall $M = 3.84$). Differentiated instruction and curricular accommodations were the lowest practice domain ($M = 3.67$), while classroom management was the highest ($M = 3.95$). A strong, positive, and significant relationship was found between readiness and classroom practices ($r = 0.744$, $p < .001$), so the null hypothesis was rejected. The most prominent challenges were increased workload and stress ($M = 4.15$), difficulty giving adequate attention to all learners ($M = 4.00$), belief that learners with disabilities may progress better in special classrooms ($M = 3.98$), and insufficient specialised knowledge and skills ($M = 3.93$). The study concluded that readiness is a meaningful antecedent of practice, but that confidence alone is not sufficient without specialised training, manageable workload, assistive resources, and sustained collaborative support. It proposed INCLUDE: Strengthening Teacher Readiness and Inclusive Classroom Practices, a school-based, four-phase capacity-building programme focused on differentiated instruction, instructional accommodations, positive behaviour support, adapted assessment, assistive technology, collaboration, and teacher well-being.

Keywords: inclusive education; teacher readiness; inclusive classroom practices; mainstreaming; Inclusive Learning Resource Center; capacity-building intervention

Introduction:

Inclusive education is no longer understood as merely placing learners with disabilities in general classrooms. It is a rights-based commitment to restructure curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, environment, and support so that every learner can participate, learn, and belong. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) positioned inclusive neighbourhood schools as the most effective means of combating discrimination, while Sustainable Development Goal 4 (United Nations, 2015) obliges nations to ensure equitable, quality, and lifelong learning for all. In the Philippines, this commitment is constitutional and statutory. The 1987 Constitution guarantees quality and accessible education at all levels; Batas Pambansa Blg. 232, Republic Act (RA) No. 7277 as amended, Batas Pambansa Blg. 344, RA No. 9155, RA No. 10533, and RA No. 11510 progressively strengthened access, governance, and flexibility. Most directly, RA No. 11650 (2022) instituted a policy of inclusion and services for learners with disabilities and mandated Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs) in all cities and municipalities. Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 044, s. 2021 provided policy guidelines for learners with disabilities in the K to 12 programme, and DepEd Order No. 045, s. 2021 set guidelines for converting selected schools with Special Education (SPED) centres into prototype ILRCs.

Policy, however, does not teach. Teachers do. The success of mainstreaming therefore depends on whether general education teachers feel ready, know what to do, and actually do it when learners with diverse needs enter their rooms. Bandura's (1977, 1997) self-efficacy theory explains this link: teachers who believe they can organise and execute the actions required for inclusion are more likely to persist, adapt, and use demanding strategies when difficulties arise. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) and later reviews by de Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2011) and Forlin, Earle, Loreman, and Sharma (2011) likewise showed that attitudes and perceived competence mediate whether top-down mandates stall at the classroom door. When teachers lack specialised training, collaborative support, materials, and time, even well-intentioned inclusion can become placement without participation.

The local context makes this question urgent. Cesar M. Cabahug Elementary School in Barangay Looc, Mandaue City, is a public elementary school offering Kindergarten to Grade 6 and is expected to serve as a receiving school for learners mainstreamed from the Mandaue City ILRC, formerly the Mandaue City Central SPED Center. Many prospective mainstreamed learners reside in Looc, so the transition is not hypothetical or distant. It is imminent, local, and personal for the teachers who will receive these learners. The pre-implementation phase is therefore the most strategic moment to measure readiness, document current practice, surface anticipated challenges, and design support before learners arrive, rather than reacting after difficulties accumulate.

This study focused on three linked constructs. Readiness was operationalised as teacher efficacy for inclusive practices: efficacy to use inclusive instruction (EII), efficacy in collaboration (EC), and efficacy in managing behaviour (EMB), following Sharma, Loreman, and Forlin (2012). Classroom practices were operationalised as differentiated instruction and curricular accommodations, classroom management, assessment adaptations, and learner engagement, conceptually aligned with Schwab, Sharma, and Loreman (2020). Challenges were the perceived demands, constraints, and concerns that make inclusion difficult, interpreted through the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) of Hall, George, and Rutherford (1977) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model of Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli (2001). Together, these frameworks predict that readiness grows when demands are matched with resources, coaching, and collaborative structures, and that unresolved concerns reappear as workload, stress, and resistance.

The study addressed six research questions: (1) What is the profile of respondents in terms of age and gender, highest educational attainment, field of specialisation, length of service, and relevant trainings and seminars attended? (2) What is the level of readiness of general education teachers in using inclusive instructional strategies, managing disruptive classroom behaviour, and collaborating with parents and SPED staff? (3) What is the level of classroom practices in differentiated instruction, classroom management, assessment adaptations, and learner engagement? (4) Is there a significant relationship between readiness and classroom practices? (5) What challenges do general education teachers encounter? (6) What evidence-based capacity-building intervention plan can be proposed? The null hypothesis, tested at the 0.05 level, stated that there is no significant relationship between readiness and classroom practices.

The significance of this work is practical. For DepEd policymakers and Schools Division Office (SDO) Mandaue City administrators and ILRC planners, it provides ground-level evidence for refining guidelines and designing targeted professional development during the remaining planning period. For the school head, it clarifies how to allocate human capital, time, and local resources and how to prepare the socio-emotional climate of the school. For teachers, it validates their lived realities, including workload and well-being, and gives them a voice in macro-level implementation. For learners with disabilities, it indirectly safeguards quality and emotional security by ensuring that receiving teachers are heard, understood, and supported. For future researchers, it offers a baseline for comparative, longitudinal, and intervention studies on the effectiveness of capacity-building programmes.

This IMRAD conversion preserves the original study's data, instruments, and conclusions while reorganising the thesis into the conventional Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion structure of a journal article. All weighted means, standard deviations, frequencies, percentages, and the Pearson correlation reported here are taken from the original manuscript. The intervention plan, INCLUDE, is retained as the study's evidence-based output and is summarised in the Results and Discussion and Conclusion.

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Literature Review:

The literature on inclusive education converges on a deceptively simple insight: inclusion succeeds when teachers are prepared, supported, and able to translate belief into routine classroom action. This review organises that literature into five strands: (1) the global and Philippine policy foundations of inclusion; (2) teacher readiness and self-efficacy; (3) inclusive classroom practices; (4) challenges and the demands–resources balance; and (5) capacity-building and the role of ILRCs. Each strand clarifies why readiness was treated in this study as an antecedent, not merely a correlate, of mainstreaming.

Globally, inclusion is framed as both a moral and an educational project. UNESCO (1994) argued that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of fighting discriminatory attitudes, building welcoming communities, and achieving education for all. The United Nations (2015) Sustainable Development Goal 4 extended that vision by requiring inclusive, equitable, and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Schwab, Sharma, and Loreman (2020) added an empirical caution: inclusion climate as perceived by secondary students matters, and a school can be structurally inclusive while learners still feel excluded. Inclusion therefore must be judged by participation and belonging, not by enrolment alone.

In the Philippines, the legal architecture is extensive. The 1987 Constitution, Batas Pambansa Blg. 232 (Education Act of 1982), RA No. 7277 (Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities) as amended by RA No. 10070 and RA No. 10754, Batas Pambansa Blg. 344 (Accessibility Law), RA No. 9155 (Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001), RA No. 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013), RA No. 11510 (Alternative Learning System Act), and RA No. 11650 (2022) together move disability from charity to right, from welfare to state obligation, and from segregated provision to inclusive service delivery (UNICEF Philippines, 2024; Maligalig, Reyes, & Tabuga, 2020). DepEd Order No. 044, s. 2021 and DepEd Order No. 045, s. 2021 operationalise RA No. 11650 by defining services for learners with disabilities and the conversion of SPED centres into prototype ILRCs. Factor and Saenz (2025) found, however, that Philippine primary schools still face barriers and enablers that vary by context, including peer acceptance, resources, and teacher preparation. Law creates the mandate; local capacity determines the experience.

Teacher readiness is most productively understood through self-efficacy. Bandura (1977, 1997) defined self-efficacy as belief in one's capability to organise and execute courses of action required to attain designated performances. In inclusive teaching, Sharma, Loreman, and Forlin (2012) operationalised this belief as the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale, with three domains: inclusive instruction, collaboration, and behaviour management. Herzig (2023) found that self-efficacy matters for implementing inclusive and differentiated practices and that experience, administrative support, and stress influence how well inclusion works. Bal, Yilmaz, and Atas (2022) broke differentiated-instruction self-efficacy into teaching process, content, learning profile, readiness, assessment, and learning environment, showing that addressing each learner's needs requires skill across all of them. Zhang, Alias, and Nordin (2026), reviewing 28 peer-reviewed studies, found that strong teacher self-efficacy leads to better teaching practices and that confident teachers foster greater student motivation and perceived teaching quality.

Recent Philippine studies echo this pattern. Quiaot and Suplaag (2026) found that teachers felt confident in teaching methods, collaboration, and behaviour management and that readiness was linked to self-efficacy. Muñoz (2026) found that teachers saw themselves as capable in instruction, teamwork, and behaviour management. Arpon (2026) reported a positive relationship between readiness and self-efficacy among secondary teachers. Lumangkibe, Montejo, and Eyo (2026) found that teacher readiness and classroom environment together shaped self-efficacy, and that the determinants examined accounted for 74.7% of the criterion in their study. Krainer, Pinili, Espina, and Opingo (2024) likewise reported self-efficacy in classroom management, parent involvement, instruction, and specialist collaboration, but lower confidence in behaviour management. Vergara, Pinili, Delos Reyes, Sitoy, Espina, and Saladaga (2025) found that while teachers could handle classrooms, they still needed training in strategies and classroom management. Manalo (2024) highlighted continuous professional development as necessary to improve readiness and effectiveness. Together, these studies justify measuring readiness as a multidimensional, malleable construct rather than a fixed trait.

Inclusive classroom practices are the behavioural counterpart of readiness. Differentiated instruction, as described by Yadav (2024), involves changes in content, process, product, ongoing assessment, and flexible grouping to meet differences in readiness, interest, and learning profile. Assistive technology can strengthen differentiation, but Toto et al. (2026), synthesising 33 studies, found that 29 (87%) showed educational benefits while lack of training, insufficient equipment, and negative teacher attitudes still limited use. Classroom management in inclusive settings, according to Brussino (2021), depends on teacher knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional training; Bluteau, Aubenas, and Dufour (2022) showed that flexible seating and workspace arrangements affect well-being and learning, and that arrangement should vary with task and learner need. Inclusive assessment, as argued by Arnold, Hayes, and Zagata (2025) and Nieminen (2024), must combine high standards, suitable methods, useful data, flexibility, and diagnostic feedback so that accommodations make participation fairer rather than lowering expectations. Learner engagement depends on structured peer interaction: Manubey, Batlolona, and Leasa (2021) found peer tutoring can promote participation and inclusion; Thurston, Cockerill, and Chiang (2021), with 295 students, reported greater gains in reading comprehension for cooperative peer learning; Toulia, Strogilos, and Avramidis (2023) found peer tutoring effective but requiring thoughtful implementation; and Pajaron and Labitad (2025) reported a significant relationship between cooperative learning and behavioural, emotional, and motivational engagement.

Challenges in inclusion are predictable when demands rise faster than resources. The JD-R model (Demerouti et al., 2001) predicts strain when job demands such as differentiated planning, behaviour support, documentation, and collaboration increase without matching resources such as time, materials, specialist support, and administrative backing. Ilagan (2024), studying 30 SPED teachers in Quezon Province, emphasised reasonable workload distribution, administrative support, and sufficient resources for workplace resilience. Lancian and Cancio (2025), studying five general education teachers in Davao Oriental, found difficulty catering to individual needs and emotional strain from limited materials and insufficient preparation. Zamora, Suan, Aranges, Ramirez, Rica, and Naparan (2026), studying 60 elementary teachers in Lanao del Norte, found equitable attention ($M = 4.48$), lack of materials ($M = 4.93$), and insufficient administrative support ($M = 4.00$) as substantial barriers. Bugani et al. (2025) and Pangan et al. (2025) found that limited foundational SPED training, often theoretical and lacking classroom practice, left teachers feeling inadequately prepared. Rafailes and Marikit (2024) found that receiving teachers struggled to balance academic demands with individualised behaviour plans and collaborative problem-solving. CBAM (Hall et al., 1977) adds that during adoption, teachers move through stages of concern, from self-concern to task concern to impact concern; without support, they can stall at self-concern, where worry about workload and competence dominates.

Social acceptance is a distinct challenge. De la Rea (2024) found in inclusive private schools in Metro Manila that children's acceptance varied by visible and invisible disability and that limited understanding shaped willingness to interact. Factor and Saenz (2025) found limited peer acceptance as a significant barrier (weighted mean = 4.45) among SPED and receiving teachers in Camarines Norte. These findings suggest that inclusion requires deliberate disability-awareness activities, peer-buddy structures, cooperative learning, and social-emotional learning, not merely co-location. Collaboration is equally central. Turzák et al. (2026), in a scoping review, found that teacher self-efficacy, professional preparation, and social-emotional factors underpin effective family–school cooperation. Ajayi (2025) stressed that collaborative self-efficacy is increasingly important because teachers, paraprofessionals, and other staff must work together to deliver quality education. Ahmed (2026) found that teacher self-efficacy is important for classroom management and that training is needed to improve it. Rapisa, Hermanto, and Suparno (2026), reviewing 21 studies, identified professional knowledge, classroom management, differentiated teaching, positive attitudes, and self-efficacy as important competencies, while insufficient training and specialised support hinder implementation.

Capacity-building is the bridge from readiness to sustained practice. The U.S. Department of Education (2025) emphasised well-planned inclusive teaching, teamwork between general and special education teachers, and strong support systems. In the Philippine context, Vergara et al. (2025) and Manalo (2024) argued for sustained, practice-based professional development rather than one-off orientation. The ILRC, under RA No. 11650 and DepEd Order No. 045, s. 2021, is designed to be that bridge: a hub for assessment, intervention, materials, coaching, and referral that supports receiving schools. The present study tests a simple but consequential proposition within this literature: if readiness and practice are strongly linked, then investing in readiness through the ILRC and school-based capacity-building should improve practice, reduce concern, and make mainstreaming more than a transfer of learners from one room to another.

The synthesis points to three gaps this study addresses. First, most Philippine evidence is either national in scope or qualitative and small-scale; there is less school-level, pre-implementation evidence from a designated receiving school. Second, readiness and practice are often studied separately; fewer studies test their relationship with a common sample and a clear intervention implication. Third, challenges are often listed without being ranked against readiness and practice data that show where to intervene first. This study addresses all three by linking profile, readiness, practice, relationship, and ranked challenges in one receiving school, and by converting the pattern into a targeted plan.

Methodology:

This study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The descriptive component described the profile, readiness, classroom practices, and challenges of general education teachers. The correlational component tested the relationship between readiness and classroom practices. The design was appropriate because the aim was to measure levels, describe patterns, and test association in a defined population before an imminent policy transition, not to establish causation or to evaluate an intervention already implemented.
The study was conducted at Cesar M. Cabahug Elementary School, a public elementary school in Barangay Looc, Mandaue City, Cebu, under the Schools Division Office of Mandaue City. The school was purposively selected because it is expected to serve as a receiving school for learners mainstreamed from the Mandaue City ILRC and because many prospective mainstreamed learners reside in Barangay Looc. As the only public institution in the community offering complete basic education from Kindergarten to Grade 6, it plays a central role in local inclusive education implementation.

Respondents were 41 general education classroom teachers selected through purposive sampling. Inclusion criteria were: (a) full-time public-school teacher handling a regular class at the school; (b) no formal degree, minor, or extensive specialisation in Special Education, to isolate baseline self-efficacy and concerns; and (c) designated to receive mainstreamed learners from the ILRC based on division projections. By grade level, respondents were distributed as follows: Grade 5 and Grade 4, 9 each (21.95% each); Grade 6, 7 (17.07%); Grade 3, 6 (14.63%); and Grade 2 and Grade 1, 5 each (12.20% each).

The instrument was a structured questionnaire in four parts. Part I gathered demographic and professional profile: age, gender, highest educational attainment, field of specialisation, length of service, and relevant trainings and seminars. Part II measured readiness using the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012), with 18 items across three domains: Efficacy to Use Inclusive Instruction (EII), Efficacy in Collaboration (EC), and Efficacy in Managing Behaviour (EMB). Part III measured classroom practices using indicators conceptually aligned with the Inclusive Teaching Practices Scale (Schwab et al., 2020), covering differentiated instruction and curricular accommodations, classroom management, assessment adaptations, and learner engagement. Part IV measured challenges in inclusive education with eight items. All substantive items used a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree / Never) to 5 (Strongly Agree / Always). Readiness was interpreted as: 4.21–5.00 Very High Readiness; 3.41–4.20 High Readiness; 2.61–3.40 Moderate Readiness; 1.81–2.60 Low Readiness; 1.00–1.80 Very Low Readiness. Practices were interpreted as: 4.21–5.00 Always Practiced; 3.41–4.20 Frequently Practiced; 2.61–3.40 Sometimes Practiced; 1.81–2.60 Rarely Practiced; 1.00–1.80 Never Practiced. Challenges were ranked by weighted mean, with higher means indicating more prominent challenges.

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VOLUME 5, ISSUE NO. 9

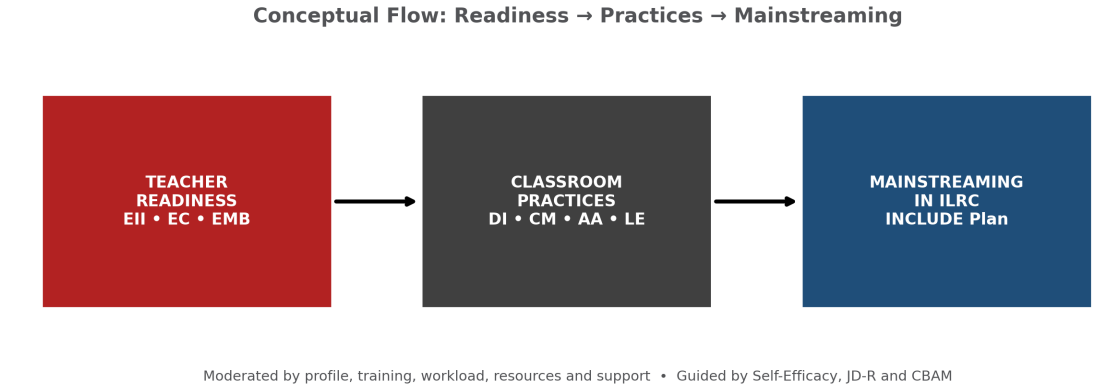

Figure 1. Conceptual flow of the study: readiness as antecedent of classroom practices and mainstreaming in the ILRC.

Data gathering followed three stages. In the preliminary stage, a transmittal letter was sent to the Schools Division Superintendent of Mandaue City; upon approval, it was endorsed to the school principal. Teachers were informed of the objectives, significance, and procedures, and assured of confidentiality. In the data-gathering stage, the questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms, with adequate time for honest and complete responses. In the post-data-gathering stage, responses were checked for completeness and consistency, encoded, categorised, and tabulated in a summary matrix aligned with the statement of the problem, and analysed with descriptive and inferential statistics.

Ethical considerations followed the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA No. 10173) and standard research ethics. An electronic informed consent form served as the gateway header of the Google Form; participants could not proceed without reviewing it and checking a mandatory "I Consent" field. Participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any point before submission without penalty. No names were requested in the questionnaire; submissions were organised with randomised alphanumeric codes (e.g., T-01, T-02) to prevent back-tracing. Email addresses collected by the form settings were not divulged. The response database was stored in a secure, multi-factor-authentication-protected cloud drive accessible only to the researcher, and digital forms and spreadsheets were permanently purged from active and trash storage after analysis, consistent with institutional retention limits.
Data were analysed with frequency and percentage for profile; weighted mean and standard deviation for readiness, practices, and challenges; and Pearson product-moment correlation (r) for the relationship between readiness and classroom practices, tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A positive r indicates that higher readiness accompanies more frequent practice; r = 0.744 was interpreted as a strong positive relationship. Correlation does not establish causation. Limitations include the single-school, purposive sample (N = 41), self-reported data subject to social desirability and reference bias, a cross-sectional design that cannot track change over time, and the absence of learner outcome data. Generalisation beyond similar receiving schools should be cautious.

Results and Discussion:

This section presents results in the order of the research questions: profile, readiness, classroom practices, relationship, challenges, and the evidence-based intervention plan. Each finding is followed by discussion that connects the number to theory, to prior Philippine and international evidence, and to what it means for mainstreaming in the ILRC. Two patterns organise the whole section. First, the sample is experienced and academically ambitious but thinly trained in SPED. Second, confidence and practice are both high on average, but the lowest scores in each domain point to the same bottleneck: individualisation, that is, designing tasks, accommodations, assistive supports, and progress monitoring for specific learners. The strong correlation between readiness and practice suggests that closing that bottleneck through targeted capacity-building should move both variables together.

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Profile of the Respondents

Age. Most respondents were in their prime working years. Twenty-one teachers (51.22%) were aged 31–40 years, followed by 13 (31.71%) aged 41–50 years, 4 (9.76%) aged 51–60 years, 2 (4.88%) aged 21–30 years, and 1 (2.44%) aged 61 years and above. Together, 82.93% were aged 31–50 years. This distribution mirrors Remo and Marcia (2026), who found a concentration of teachers aged 31–40 years among 125 teachers, and Pablo et al. (2025), who noted that many public-school teachers are in their working years, where professional roles, work demands, health, and work–life balance intersect. The implication is that capacity-building should be designed for mid-career professionals: it should respect accumulated experience, use peer mentoring, avoid redundant orientation, and offer flexible, classroom-embedded learning rather than lecture-only sessions. At the same time, the small share of teachers aged 61 and above cautions against generalising to older cohorts, whose experiences, health considerations, and retirement horizons may differ.

Gender. Thirty-six respondents (87.80%) were female and 5 (12.20%) were male, a gap of 75.60 percentage points. This reflects the feminisation of elementary teaching in the Philippines documented by Sebastian, Banate, and Saquin (2022) and national staffing patterns reported by the World Bank and UNESCO Institute for Statistics, which recorded 354,444 education teachers in the Philippines in 2024. The practical implication is not that gender determines readiness, but that programme design should be gender-responsive and inclusive: schedules, caregiving considerations, and well-being support should not assume a homogeneous workforce, and the voices of male teachers, though few, should not be overlooked in focus groups or mentoring assignments. Any claim that the findings represent 'teachers' in this school must be read with this composition in mind.

Age bracket	**f**	**%**
21–30	2	4.88
31–40	21	51.22
41–50	13	31.71
51–60	4	9.76
61 and above	1	2.44
Total	41	100.00

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by age (N = 41).

Highest educational attainment. Thirty-three respondents (80.49%) had earned master's degree units, 4 (9.76%) held a bachelor's degree, 3 (7.32%) had completed a master's degree, and 1 (2.44%) had doctorate units. The pattern is striking: graduate study is the norm, but completion is the exception. Olvido et al. (2024), studying 2,680 respondents in Philippine teacher education institutions, linked teacher quality to aligned professional skills, effective preparation, and qualified faculty, and the Philippine Statistics Authority (2026) reported about 858,000 public-school teachers, underscoring the scale of continuing professional development needed. The gap between master's units (80.49%) and completed master's degrees (7.32%) is therefore not a deficit of ambition but a system signal. Schools and divisions need completion supports: flexible arrangements, scholarships or fee support, research mentoring, thesis-writing circles, and recognition of graduate work in promotion. Graduate exposure may also explain part of the high readiness scores: teachers who have encountered inclusive education in graduate coursework may feel more confident, even when they have not yet had supervised SPED practice.

Highest educational attainment	**f**	**%**
With master's units	33	80.49
Bachelor's degree	4	9.76
Master's graduate	3	7.32
With doctorate units	1	2.44
Total	41	100.00

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by highest educational attainment (N = 41).

Field of specialisation. General Education was the largest group (11; 26.82%), followed by Early Childhood Education and Educational Management / Administration and Supervision (6 each; 14.63%), Mathematics (4; 9.76%), and Social Science, English, HELE/Home Economics, SPED, and General Science (2 each; 4.88%). Guidance and Counseling, Aircraft Maintenance, BEED, and MAED ECE had 1 each (2.44%). The diversity is a resource and a coordination challenge. The Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2, 2024) noted that many Philippine teachers work as generalists and that specialisation deepens subject knowledge and pedagogy. Mejia et al. (2025), in Philippine Institute for Development Studies work, found a positive link between teacher specialisation and student performance and that assignment outside specialisation creates preparation burden and difficulty addressing misconceptions. For inclusion, this means that a generalist workforce needs structured access to SPED expertise: co-planning, demonstration teaching, and case conferences where a SPED teacher's knowledge is made usable for a generalist's lesson, rather than expecting every teacher to become a SPED specialist. The small number of SPED-specialised respondents (2; 4.88%) also means that ILRC specialists will be essential, not optional, during mainstreaming.

Field of specialisation	**f**	**%**
General Education	11	26.82
Early Childhood Education	6	14.63
Educational Management / Admin. & Supervision	6	14.63
Mathematics	4	9.76
Social Science	2	4.88
English	2	4.88
HELE / Home Economics	2	4.88
Special Education (SPED)	2	4.88
General Science	2	4.88
Guidance and Counseling	1	2.44
Aircraft Maintenance	1	2.44
BEED	1	2.44
MAED ECE	1	2.44
Total	41	100.00

Table 3. Distribution of respondents by field of specialisation (N = 41).

Length of service. Fourteen respondents (34.15%) had served 11–15 years and another 14 (34.15%) had served 16 years or more; together, 68.30% had at least 11 years of service. Seven (17.07%) had served 6–10 years and 6 (14.63%) had served 1–5 years. Kini and Podolsky (2016), reviewing 30 studies, found that teaching experience is linked to student outcomes and that teacher effectiveness can keep improving into the third decade, especially when teachers collaborate. Experience is therefore an asset for mainstreaming: experienced teachers bring classroom routines, curriculum familiarity, parent relationships, and institutional memory. It is not, however, a substitute for SPED competence. A teacher with 16 years of experience in a largely non-inclusive system may have had few opportunities to practice differentiated task design, assistive technology, or individualised behaviour support. The design implication is to use experience as a delivery mechanism: pair experienced teachers with SPED coaches, make them mentors and demonstration teachers, and let them adapt new strategies to real lessons rather than treating training as remediation.

Length of service	**f**	**%**
1–5 years	6	14.63
6–10 years	7	17.07
11–15 years	14	34.15
16 years and above	14	34.15
Total	41	100.00

Table 4. Distribution of respondents by length of service (N = 41).

Trainings and seminars. Only 2 respondents (4.88%) had attended specialised SPED-related trainings, while 39 (95.12%) had none. All 41 had participated in a one-day INSET seminar, Strategies to Foster Critical Thinking and Inclusive Learning. One respondent had attended training on preparations for inclusive classrooms and accreditation of PARA GAMES coaches; another had attended Filipino Sign Language (FSL), Braille literacy, and orientation and mobility for blind and deaf learners. This is the study's most consequential profile finding. It explains why high readiness coexists with specific low scores: teachers have had basic exposure, but not the sustained, specialised, practice-based training that builds competence in individualisation. Vergara et al. (2025) emphasised that competence in inclusive education is influenced by training, professional experience, and access to resources, particularly in adaptive technology, classroom management, and individualised planning. Manalo (2024) highlighted continuous professional development for readiness and effectiveness. The implication is direct: the intervention must move beyond orientation to hands-on, classroom-embedded training in FSL, Braille, assistive technology, differentiated task design, and individualised education planning, with follow-up coaching rather than a single seminar.

SPED-related training	**f**	**%**
With specialised training	2	4.88
Without specialised training	39	95.12
Total	41	100.00

Table 5. Distribution of respondents by specialised SPED training (N = 41). All 41 attended the one-day INSET seminar on critical thinking and inclusive learning.

Taken together, the profile describes a workforce that is experienced, graduate-exposed, generalist, and willing, but under-specialised for the specific demands of mainstreaming. That combination predicts exactly what the readiness and practice data show: broad confidence, strong classroom culture, and a narrow but consistent gap in individualisation. It also predicts the challenge ranking: workload and attention strain rise when individualisation must be improvised without tools, time, or specialist support. The profile therefore does not merely describe the sample; it diagnoses where the system must invest.

Level of Readiness for Inclusive Education

Overall readiness was high (M = 3.84). Using inclusive instructional strategies was highest (M = 3.94, SD = 0.73), followed by collaborating with parents and SPED staff (M = 3.81, SD = 0.87), and managing disruptive classroom behaviour (M = 3.78, SD = 0.79). All three domains fell in the High Readiness range (3.41–4.20). The narrow range (0.16 between highest and lowest) suggests a generally confident workforce, but the ordering matters: teachers feel most ready to explain and adapt instruction, somewhat less ready to collaborate around specialist needs, and least ready to manage behaviour proactively. That ordering aligns with Krainer et al. (2024) and Vergara et al. (2025), who found lower confidence in behaviour management despite overall readiness, and with Lumangkibe et al. (2026), who found that readiness and classroom environment together shape self-efficacy. Confidence is real, but it is uneven, and the unevenness is instructionally meaningful.

INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF RESEARCH FOR INNOVATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND EXCELLENCE
Published by: RISEJOURNALS.ORG | Online ISSN: 3028-032X | Print ISSN: 3028-0370
VOLUME 5, ISSUE NO. 9

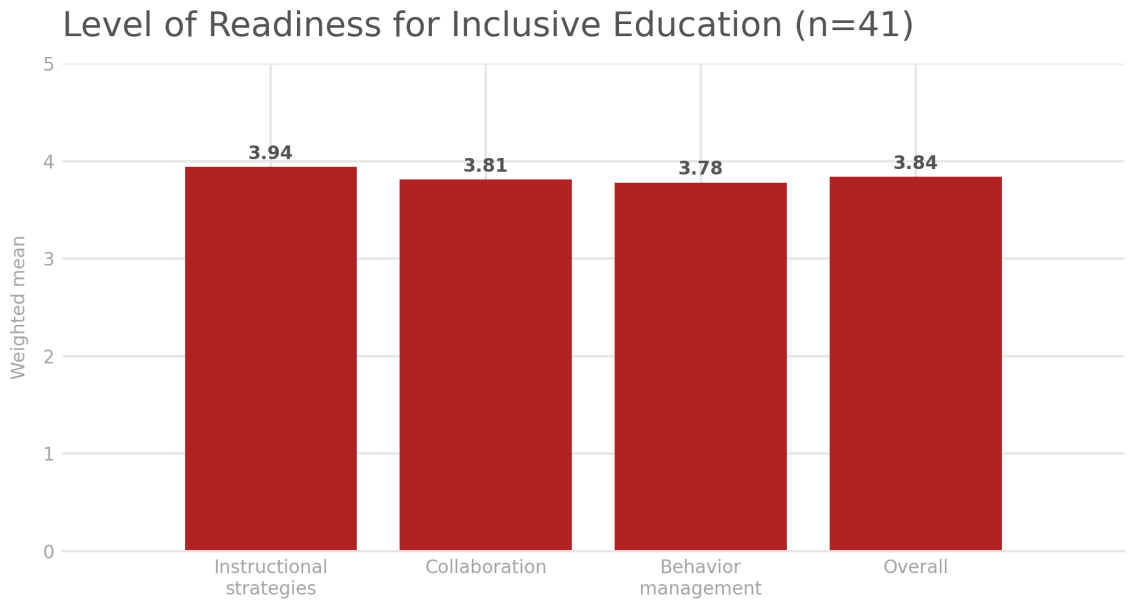

Figure 2. Overall readiness by domain. All domains are in the High Readiness range (3.41–4.20).

Using inclusive instructional strategies (M = 3.94, SD = 0.73). All six indicators were in the High Readiness range. The highest was confidence in providing an alternate explanation or example when students are confused (M = 4.12, SD = 0.81), followed by accurately gauging comprehension (M = 3.98, SD = 0.65), providing appropriate challenges (M = 3.90, SD = 0.66), crafting good questions including for learners with difficulties (M = 3.85, SD = 0.69), using a variety of assessment strategies (M = 4.02, SD = 0.82), and designing learning tasks that accommodate individual needs of learners with disabilities (M = 3.76, SD = 0.70), the lowest in the domain. The pattern is instructive. Teachers are most confident in responsive, in-the-moment moves: re-explaining, questioning, gauging understanding. They are least confident in anticipatory, design-heavy moves: crafting tasks in advance that fit a specific learner's needs. Herzig (2023) and Bal et al. (2022) argue that this distinction matters because inclusive instruction requires both responsiveness and design. Zhang et al. (2026) found that strong self-efficacy leads to better teaching practices and greater student motivation. The practical implication is to train the design side: task analysis, tiered tasks, scaffolded materials, and individualised accommodations, with teachers bringing their own lessons to workshops and leaving with ready-to-use, differentiated materials.

Using inclusive instructional strategies	**Mean**	**SD**	**Interpretation**
Provide alternate explanation/example when confused	4.12	0.81	High Readiness
Use variety of assessment strategies	4.02	0.82	High Readiness
Accurately gauge comprehension	3.98	0.65	High Readiness
Provide appropriate challenges for every learner	3.9	0.66	High Readiness
Craft good questions, incl. for learners with difficulties	3.85	0.69	High Readiness
Design tasks accommodating	3.76	0.7	High Readiness

individual needs of learners with disabilities			
Grand mean	3.94	0.73	High Readiness

Table 6. Readiness: using inclusive instructional strategies.

Managing disruptive classroom behaviour (M = 3.78, SD = 0.79). The highest indicator was confidence in getting students to follow classroom rules (M = 4.17, SD = 0.59), followed by making expectations clear (M = 3.95, SD = 0.63) and calming a disruptive or noisy student (M = 3.93, SD = 0.72). Three indicators shared the lowest mean (M = 3.54): dealing with physically aggressive students (SD = 0.92), preventing disruptive behaviour before it occurs (SD = 0.78), and directing activities seamlessly even during difficult behaviours (SD = 0.84). The split is between establishing order and sustaining instruction under stress. Teachers can set rules and calm a single incident, but they are less confident in prevention, de-escalation of aggression, and instructional continuity. Ahmed (2026) found that teacher self-efficacy is important for classroom management and that training is needed to improve it. Rapisa et al. (2026) likewise framed classroom management as a skill requiring training and support. The larger SD for aggression (0.92) signals wider disagreement: some teachers feel much less ready than others, likely reflecting different exposure to behavioural incidents. Training should therefore be differentiated: universal positive behaviour support for all, plus intensive, scenario-based practice for aggression, prevention, and seamless redirection, with clear referral and support protocols so that teachers do not feel they must manage high-need behaviour alone.

Managing disruptive classroom behaviour	**Mean**	**SD**	**Interpretation**
Get students to follow classroom rules	4.17	0.59	High Readiness
Make expectations clear about behaviour	3.95	0.63	High Readiness
Calm a disruptive/noisy student	3.93	0.72	High Readiness
Deal with physically aggressive students	3.54	0.92	High Readiness
Prevent disruptive behaviour before it occurs	3.54	0.78	High Readiness
Direct activities seamlessly during difficult behaviours	3.54	0.84	High Readiness
Grand mean	3.78	0.79	High Readiness

Table 7. Readiness: managing disruptive classroom behaviour.

Collaborating with parents and SPED staff (M = 3.81, SD = 0.87). The highest indicator was making parents feel comfortable coming to school (M = 4.17, SD = 0.89), followed by assisting families in helping children do well (M = 3.90, SD = 0.77), working jointly with professionals and support staff (M = 3.85, SD = 0.91), collaborating with professionals in designing educational plans (M = 3.80, SD = 0.84), articulating expectations to paraprofessionals or teaching assistants (M = 3.61, SD = 0.80), and accurately identifying when a student needs specialist intervention (M = 3.54, SD = 0.90), the lowest. Teachers are strong on relational welcome and family partnership, but less confident in the technical, judgment-heavy task of identification and referral. Turzák et al. (2026) found that self-efficacy, professional preparation, and social-emotional factors underpin family–school cooperation, and Ajayi (2025) stressed collaborative self-efficacy with paraprofessionals and staff. The implication is to make identification concrete: observation checklists, documentation templates, referral pathways, and case conferences with SPED teachers, guidance counsellors, therapists, and ILRC personnel, so that 'identify and refer' is a supported procedure, not a solitary guess. Strengthening this indicator should also reduce the challenge finding that learners may progress better

in special classrooms: when teachers know how to identify, refer, and co-plan, mainstream placement feels less like abandonment and more like a supported decision.

Collaborating with parents and SPED staff	**Mean**	**SD**	**Interpretation**
Make parents feel comfortable coming to school	4.17	0.89	High Readiness
Assist families in helping children do well	3.9	0.77	High Readiness
Work jointly with professionals/support staff	3.85	0.91	High Readiness
Collaborate in designing educational plans	3.8	0.84	High Readiness
Articulate expectations to paraprofessionals/assistants	3.61	0.8	High Readiness
Accurately identify need for specialist intervention	3.54	0.9	High Readiness
Grand mean	3.81	0.87	High Readiness

Table 8. Readiness: collaborating with parents and SPED staff.

Summary. The readiness profile is not 'high and therefore finished.' It is high and patterned. Teachers bring instructional flexibility, welcoming parent relationships, and rule-setting confidence. They need design-level support in differentiated tasks, preventive behaviour support, and specialist identification. Those three low indicators, all at 3.54–3.76, form a coherent training agenda: design tasks for individual needs, prevent and de-escalate behaviour, and identify and refer for specialist support. The INCLUDE plan is built around exactly those three, plus assistive technology and assessment, because the practice data show the same gap from the other side.

Level of Inclusive Classroom Practices

Overall classroom practices were frequently practiced (M = 3.84). Classroom management was highest (M = 3.95, SD = 0.73), followed by assessment adaptations (M = 3.89, SD = 0.73), learner engagement (M = 3.84, SD = 0.71), and differentiated instruction and curricular accommodations (M = 3.67, SD = 0.76), the lowest. All four domains fell in the Frequently Practiced range (3.41–4.20). The 0.28 gap between highest and lowest is larger than the readiness gap, suggesting that practice is where individualisation costs become visible: it is easier to say one can differentiate than to do it every lesson with limited materials, time, and assistive tools. The U.S. Department of Education (2025) emphasised that inclusive education requires blended strategies: management, assessment, engagement, and differentiation together, not one in isolation. The present data show that blend is present but unbalanced, with culture and management stronger than curricular individualisation.

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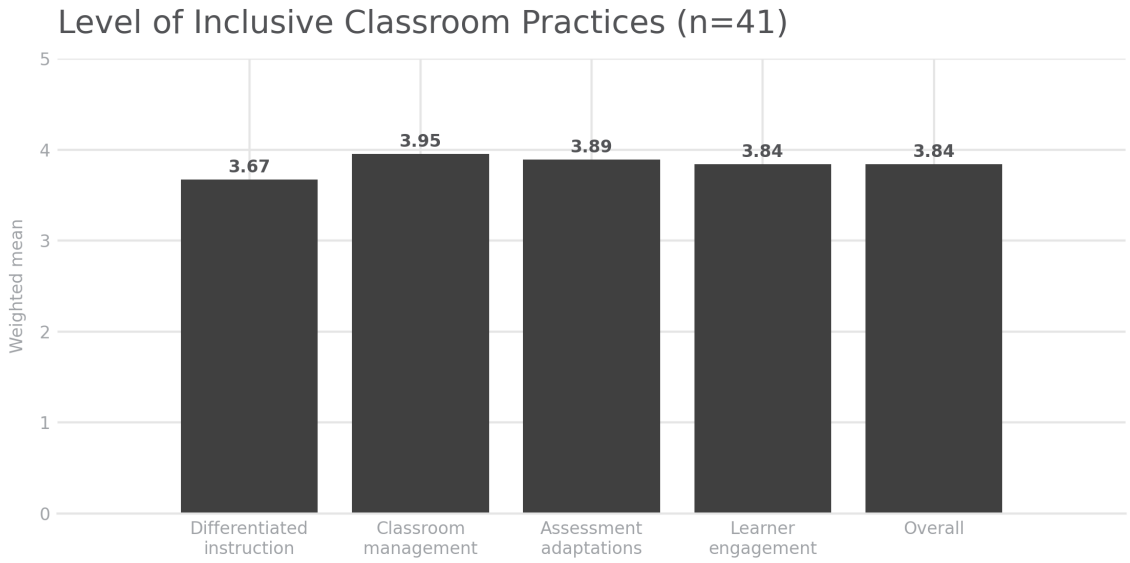

Figure 3. Level of inclusive classroom practices by domain. Differentiated instruction is the priority gap.

Differentiated instruction and curricular accommodations (M = 3.67, SD = 0.76). The highest indicator was integrating student interests, cultural backgrounds, and personal strengths into activities (M = 3.78, SD = 0.68), followed by modifying lesson materials (M = 3.73, SD = 0.79), presenting concepts through multiple modalities (M = 3.71, SD = 0.75), and leveraging assistive technologies or specialised learning aids (M = 3.44, SD = 0.83), the lowest. Teachers personalise by relevance and by simplifying materials, but less often by providing assistive tools that make the curriculum accessible. Yadav (2024) argued that differentiation requires changes in content, process, and product, and that assistive technology can enhance it. Toto et al. (2026) found benefits in 87% of reviewed studies but also persistent barriers: lack of training, insufficient equipment, and negative attitudes. The present finding fits that literature precisely. The intervention must therefore be material and practical: a bank of modified materials, demonstration of low-cost assistive tools, hands-on practice in choosing and using them, and a lending or sharing system so that a tool demonstrated in training is available in the classroom the next week. Without that material follow-through, assistive technology will remain the lowest indicator.

Differentiated instruction & curricular accommodations	**Mean**	**SD**	**Interpretation**
Integrate interests, culture, strengths	3.78	0.68	Frequently Practiced
Modify lesson materials	3.73	0.79	Frequently Practiced
Present concepts via multiple modalities	3.71	0.75	Frequently Practiced
Leverage assistive technologies / specialised aids	3.44	0.83	Frequently Practiced
Grand mean	3.67	0.76	Frequently Practiced

Table 9. Practices: differentiated instruction and curricular accommodations.

Classroom management (M = 3.95, SD = 0.73). The highest indicator was fostering a classroom culture where diversity is celebrated and every student feels valued (M = 4.05, SD = 0.74), followed by explicitly teaching social skills and routines that prevent bullying and isolation (M = 4.02, SD = 0.72), employing positive behavioural intervention strategies rather than punitive discipline (M = 3.98, SD = 0.76), organising furniture for safe mobility and clear sightlines (M = 3.88, SD = 0.68), and arranging flexible seating for shifts among whole-class, small-group, and

independent work (M = 3.83, SD = 0.74), the lowest. Teachers are strong on culture and positive behaviour, less strong on physical arrangement for flexible grouping. Brussino (2021) argued that inclusive management requires both environment and pedagogy, and Bluteau et al. (2022) found that flexible seating affects well-being and learning and should vary with task and learner preference. The implication is to treat the classroom as an instructional tool: model layouts for different lesson phases, teach transitions, and provide lightweight, movable furniture or at least clear routines for rearranging existing furniture. The strength in culture should be protected: it is the foundation on which mainstreamed learners will feel welcome, and it is the domain where teachers already have credibility with learners and parents.

Classroom management	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Foster culture where diversity is celebrated	4.05	0.74	Frequently Practiced
Teach social skills / routines preventing bullying	4.02	0.72	Frequently Practiced
Use positive behavioural interventions	3.98	0.76	Frequently Practiced
Organise furniture for safe mobility / sightlines	3.88	0.68	Frequently Practiced
Arrange flexible seating for grouping shifts	3.83	0.74	Frequently Practiced
Grand mean	3.95	0.73	Frequently Practiced

Table 10. Practices: classroom management.

Assessment adaptations (M = 3.89, SD = 0.73). The highest indicator was adjusting time limits, assignment lengths, or pacing for learners who need processing time (M = 3.98, SD = 0.79), followed by providing regular diagnostic feedback (M = 3.88, SD = 0.68) and evaluating growth on individualised progress benchmarks alongside grading scales (M = 3.83, SD = 0.74), the lowest. Teachers flex conditions and give feedback, but are less systematic in tracking individual progress against individual benchmarks. Arnold et al. (2025) emphasised that assessment systems for learners with disabilities must encourage data use, inclusion, high standards, suitable methods, and ongoing improvement. Nieminen (2024) argued that inclusive assessment must accept difference and change how accommodations are provided, using varied methods, helpful feedback, and flexibility. The training implication is to make progress monitoring manageable: simple templates, a few priority benchmarks per learner, regular short checks, and a routine for using data in the next lesson, rather than a heavy documentation system that collapses under workload. When progress monitoring is light and useful, teachers will use it; when it is heavy and bureaucratic, it will be the first practice abandoned.

Assessment adaptations	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Adjust time / length / pacing	3.98	0.79	Frequently Practiced
Provide regular diagnostic feedback	3.88	0.68	Frequently Practiced
Evaluate growth on individualised benchmarks	3.83	0.74	Frequently Practiced
Grand mean	3.89	0.73	Frequently Practiced

Table 11. Practices: assessment adaptations.

Learner engagement (M = 3.84, SD = 0.71). The highest indicator was incorporating cooperative learning and peer tutoring that encourage participation between general learners and learners with diverse needs (M = 3.93, SD = 0.72), followed by integrating multi-sensory and interactive activities (M = 3.88, SD = 0.74), and two indicators tied at 3.78:

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Published by: RISEJOURNALS.ORG | Online ISSN: 3028-032X | Print ISSN: 3028-0370
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tapping interests, culture, and strengths to make topics relevant, and fostering self-advocacy by teaching learners to monitor goals and ask for help (both SD = 0.68). The strength in cooperative and peer-supported learning is educationally significant. Manubey et al. (2021), Thurston et al. (2021), Toulia et al. (2023), and Pajaron and Labitad (2025) all support structured peer interaction as a lever for participation, reading, and engagement. The tied low indicators point to the next step: personalisation and self-advocacy. Cooperative learning can become routine without becoming personal; self-advocacy is what allows a learner with a disability to say, 'I need more time,' 'I need a larger font,' or 'I did not understand,' and to be heard. Training should therefore pair cooperative structures with explicit teaching of self-advocacy, goal monitoring, and help-seeking, so that engagement is not only participation in a group but also agency for the individual learner.

Learner engagement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Cooperative learning / peer tutoring	3.93	0.72	Frequently Practiced
Multi-sensory / interactive activities	3.88	0.74	Frequently Practiced
Tap interests / culture / strengths for relevance	3.78	0.68	Frequently Practiced
Foster self-advocacy / goal monitoring / help-seeking	3.78	0.68	Frequently Practiced
Grand mean	3.84	0.71	Frequently Practiced

Table 12. Practices: learner engagement.

Summary. The practice profile mirrors the readiness profile. Teachers manage culture, assessment conditions, and peer engagement well. They differentiate less often, use assistive technology least, and monitor individual progress least systematically. The symmetry is not a coincidence: it is the behavioural expression of the readiness gap. A teacher who is least confident in designing individualised tasks will, understandably, differentiate least often. A teacher who has never had hands-on assistive-technology training will, understandably, use it least. The correlation test examines whether this symmetry holds at the level of individual teachers, not just at the level of domain means.

Relationship Between Readiness and Classroom Practices

Pearson correlation showed a strong, positive, and significant relationship between readiness and classroom practices: $r = 0.744$, $p < .001$, $N = 41$. The null hypothesis of no significant relationship was rejected at the 0.05 level. The coefficient of determination, $r^2 = 0.554$, indicates that about 55.4% of the variance in classroom practices is shared with readiness in this sample. In practical terms, teachers who reported higher readiness also tended to report more frequent inclusive practices, and teachers who reported lower readiness tended to report less frequent practice. The relationship is strong by conventional guidelines, where 0.70 and above is considered strong, and it is highly significant, well beyond the 0.05 threshold.

Variables	Pearson r	Strength	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Teachers' readiness and classroom practices	0.744	Strong positive	< .001	Reject H_0	Significant

Table 13. Test of significant relationship between readiness and classroom practices ($N = 41$, $\alpha = 0.05$).

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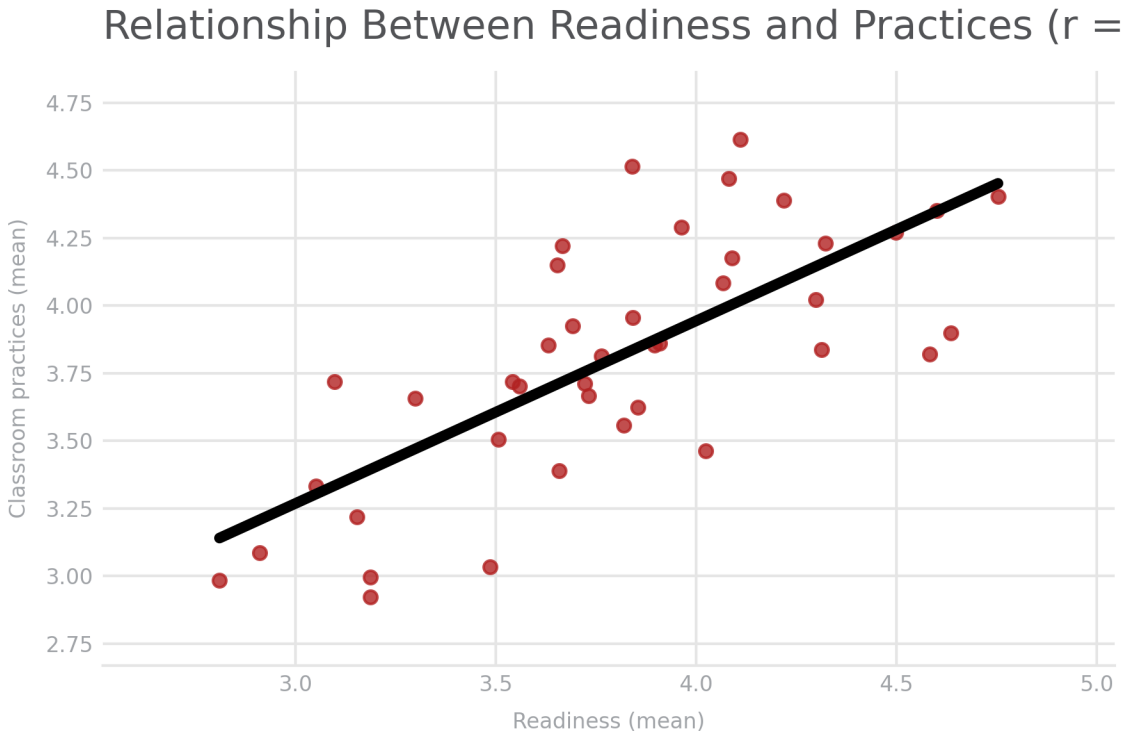

Figure 4. Illustrative scatter with trend line showing the positive association between readiness and practices (r = 0.744, p < .001). Points are illustrative of the reported correlation; the reported r and p are from the original analysis.

This finding is consistent with prior work. Quiaot and Suplaag (2026) reported a positive relationship between readiness and self-efficacy in inclusive education. Arpon (2026) found a positive relationship between readiness and self-efficacy among secondary teachers. Lumangkibe et al. (2026) found that readiness and classroom practices were determinants of self-efficacy, collectively accounting for 74.7% of the criterion. Rapisa et al. (2026) identified professional knowledge, classroom management, differentiated teaching, positive attitudes, and self-efficacy as important competencies. The present study adds a direct readiness–practice link in a pre-implementation receiving school, with a magnitude large enough to matter for planning: readiness is not a soft, attitudinal extra; it is a statistical antecedent of what teachers actually do.

Three cautions are essential. First, correlation does not establish causation. Readiness may drive practice, practice may build readiness through mastery experience (Bandura, 1997), or a third factor, such as training, administrative support, or classroom resources, may drive both. The most plausible account is reciprocal: confidence encourages trying a strategy, successful trying builds confidence, and support sustains the loop. Second, both variables are self-reported on similar Likert scales, so common-method variance may inflate the correlation. Teachers who rate themselves highly in one domain may rate themselves highly in another because of a general positive self-view. Third, the sample is small (N = 41) and single-school, so the estimate is imprecise and may not generalise. Despite these cautions, the finding is useful for decision-making: if an intervention raises readiness through coaching, demonstration, and supported practice, it is reasonable to expect practice to move as well, and the INCLUDE plan is designed to test that expectation with follow-up measurement rather than assuming it.

The implication for DepEd and school leaders is to treat readiness-building as practice-building. A workshop that only increases knowledge without changing classroom routines will not close the gap. A workshop that requires teachers to design a differentiated task, try it, receive feedback, and revise it will. Mentoring, demonstration teaching, classroom observation, and Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions are therefore not add-ons; they are the mechanism by which readiness becomes practice. The correlation also suggests a monitoring strategy: brief, repeated measures of

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readiness and practice after each phase of INCLUDE can show whether the two are moving together, and where they diverge, leaders can diagnose whether the bottleneck is confidence, skill, time, materials, or support.

Challenges Encountered

Challenges were ranked by weighted mean. All eight challenges fell in the Agree range, indicating that teachers experience them as real concerns, not hypothetical worries. The ranking is: (1) inclusion may increase workload and stress (M = 4.15); (2) difficulty providing adequate attention to all students (M = 4.00); (3) learners with disabilities may progress better in special classrooms (M = 3.98); (4) insufficient knowledge and skills to teach learners with disabilities (M = 3.93); (5) maintaining an effective and orderly classroom becomes more challenging (M = 3.88); (6) learners with disabilities may exhibit behaviours that disrupt learning (M = 3.76); (7) inclusion may negatively affect emotional development of learners with disabilities (M = 3.66); and (8) concern that learners with disabilities may not be fully accepted by classmates (M = 3.37). Four clusters organise the discussion: workload and attention, competence and placement beliefs, behaviour and order, and social-emotional acceptance.

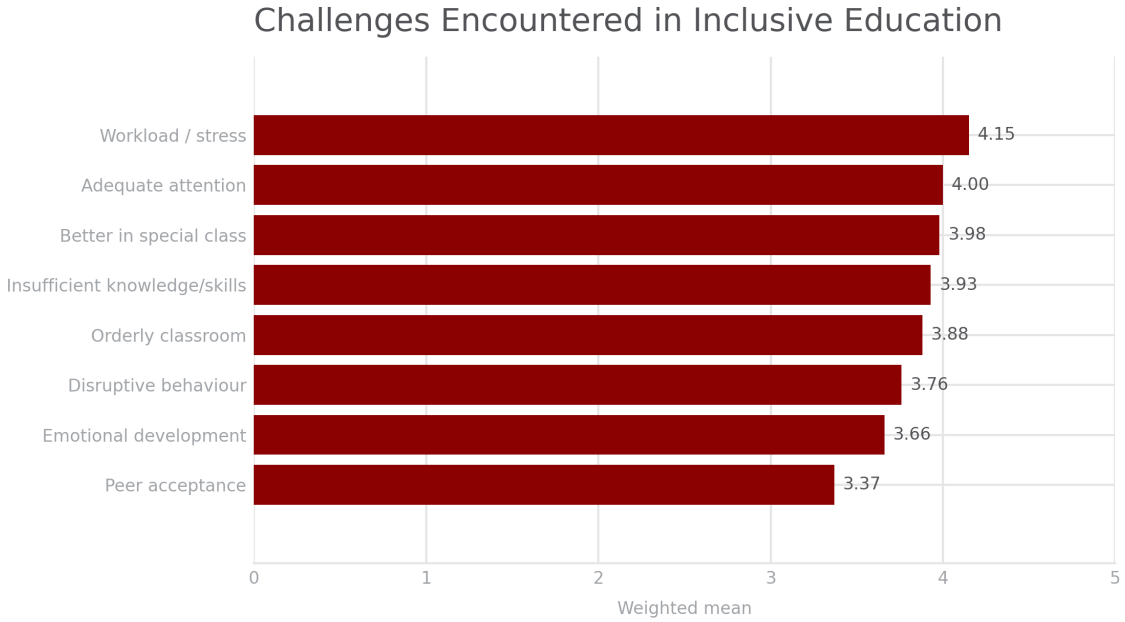

Figure 5. Challenges encountered, ranked by weighted mean. Workload and stress is the most prominent challenge.

Rank	Challenge	Mean
1	Inclusion may increase workload and stress	4.15
2	Difficulty providing adequate attention to all students	4.0
3	Learners may progress better in special classrooms	3.98
4	Insufficient knowledge/skills to teach learners with disabilities	3.93
5	Maintaining effective, orderly classroom becomes more challenging	3.88
6	Learners may exhibit behaviours that disrupt learning	3.76
7	Inclusion may negatively affect emotional development	3.66
8	Learners may not be fully accepted by classmates	3.37

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Table 14. Challenges encountered by general education teachers, ranked by weighted mean.

Workload and attention. The top two challenges are two sides of the same demand: more work and less time per learner. Inclusive teaching requires adapting lessons, monitoring diverse learners, differentiating assessment, documenting progress, and collaborating with specialists, all within the same school day. Ilagan (2024) emphasised reasonable workload distribution, administrative support, and sufficient resources for resilience. Lancian and Cancio (2025) found that general education teachers in Davao Oriental experienced difficulty catering to individual needs and emotional strain from limited materials and insufficient preparation. Zamora et al. (2026) found equitable attention (M = 4.48), lack of materials (M = 4.93), and insufficient administrative support (M = 4.00) as substantial barriers. Through the JD-R lens, workload is not merely a feeling; it is a demand that, if unmatched by resources, produces strain, reduces quality, and eventually undermines inclusion. Leaders must therefore treat workload as a design variable: protected planning time, shared material banks, co-planning, streamlined documentation, and specialist support are not luxuries; they are the resources that make the demand sustainable. Wellness sessions and peer support, included in INCLUDE, address the stress component, but they cannot substitute for time and materials.

Competence and placement beliefs. The third and fourth challenges, that learners may progress better in special classrooms (M = 3.98) and insufficient knowledge and skills (M = 3.93), are linked. When teachers doubt their own competence, they understandably doubt whether mainstream placement serves the learner. Bugani et al. (2025) found that limited foundational SPED training positively influenced awareness but was insufficient for sustained practice, and that differentiated instruction is essential. Pangan et al. (2025) found that teachers felt inadequately prepared because prior training was theoretical and lacked classroom practice. The implication is that placement beliefs will shift when competence shifts. Training must be practical, classroom-based, and sustained: demonstrations, coaching, and case conferences where teachers see a learner succeed in a general classroom with the right accommodations. ILRC specialists should be visible, accessible, and collaborative, so that mainstream placement is experienced as 'general teacher plus specialist support,' not 'general teacher alone.'

Behaviour and order. Challenges five and six, maintaining an orderly classroom (M = 3.88) and disruptive behaviour (M = 3.76), align with the readiness finding that behaviour management is the lowest readiness domain and that prevention and aggression are the lowest indicators. Rafailes and Marikit (2024) found that receiving teachers struggled to balance academic demands with individualised behaviour plans and collaborative problem-solving, and emphasised occupational therapy and other professional collaboration. The present data suggest that teachers do not need a generic behaviour-management lecture; they need positive behaviour support, functional understanding of behaviour, individualised behaviour plans, and consistent, multidisciplinary support. LAC sessions on positive behaviour, case conferences, and behaviour-support plans, as in INCLUDE, address this directly. The goal is to move from reactive discipline to preventive, instructional behaviour support that keeps learning going for all learners.

Social-emotional acceptance. The lowest challenges, emotional development (M = 3.66) and peer acceptance (M = 3.37), are still in the Agree range, so they should not be dismissed. De la Rea (2024) found that acceptance varied by visible and invisible disability and that limited understanding shaped willingness to interact. Factor and Saenz (2025) found limited peer acceptance as a significant barrier (M = 4.45) in Camarines Norte. The lower ranking in the present study may reflect teachers' confidence in classroom culture, which was the highest practice domain (M = 4.05), or it may reflect that teachers have not yet experienced mainstreaming and therefore underestimate social challenges. Either way, the school should act early: disability-awareness activities, peer-buddy programmes, cooperative learning, social-emotional learning, and close work with parents and guidance personnel to address bullying, isolation, and emotional difficulties. A welcoming culture must be taught, not assumed.

Overall, the challenge profile reinforces the readiness–practice pattern. Teachers are not resisting inclusion; they are anticipating its costs and naming what they need: time, training, materials, specialist support, and collaborative structures. The most effective response is not to persuade teachers that inclusion is good, they already believe it, but to reduce its costs and increase its supports. That is the logic of INCLUDE.

Evidence-Based Capacity-Building Intervention Plan: INCLUDE

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The study proposed INCLUDE: Strengthening Teacher Readiness and Inclusive Classroom Practices, a structured, school-based capacity-building programme. Its rationale is that readiness and practice are linked, that the lowest scores point to individualisation, and that the highest challenges point to workload, competence, behaviour, and acceptance. INCLUDE is therefore not a generic seminar; it is a targeted, four-phase programme. Phase 1, Capacity-Building, deepens understanding through training workshops and seminars on inclusive education, differentiated instruction, assessment adaptations, positive behaviour support, and assistive technology. Phase 2, Coaching and Demonstration, strengthens practical application through mentoring, demonstration teaching, and classroom observation. Phase 3, Collaboration, builds home–school–specialist partnerships through LAC sessions, case conferences, and partnership activities with parents, SPED personnel, and ILRC specialists. Phase 4, Monitoring and Evaluation, assesses effectiveness through school-head monitoring, documentation of best practices, identification of further improvement areas, and sustainability planning.

Area of concern	Objective	Key strategies	Persons involved	Budget (est.)	Time frame
Limited specialised training	Enhance competencies in inclusive education & mainstreaming	Training, SPED experts, demo teaching, workshops	School head, SPED teachers, L&D coordinator, teachers	₱15,000	Aug–Oct 2027
Differentiated instruction & accommodations	Strengthen ability to modify instruction/materials	Workshops, modified resources, accommodation guides	SPED & master teachers, teachers	₱10,000	2027–2028
Inclusive behaviour management	Improve capacity for behavioural challenges	PBIS training, case conferences, behaviour plans	Guidance, SPED, school head, teachers	₱8,000	2027–2028
Assistive technology	Increase competence in assistive/adaptive tools	Hands-on training, resource sharing, adaptive materials	ICT coordinator, SPED, teachers	₱12,000	Nov 2027–Feb 2028
Assessment & progress monitoring	Strengthen inclusive assessment	Assessment workshops, monitoring training, templates	Master & SPED teachers, teachers	₱7,000	2027–2028
Collaboration with parents & specialists	Improve collaborative support	Parent orientations, case conferences, teams	School head, parents, SPED, ILRC	₱5,000	Mar–May 2028
Workload & stress	Support well-being & resilience	Wellness, time-management, peer support	School head, guidance, teachers	₱8,000	2028
Sustained professional development	Institutionalise continuous growth	Monthly LAC, PLC, research sharing	School head, LAC leaders, teachers	₱10,000	2027–2028

Table 15. Summary of the INCLUDE intervention plan (adapted from the original manuscript; total estimated budget ₱75,000 from MOOE, SEF, GPTA, Division funds, and partners).

INCLUDE should be evaluated, not merely implemented. A practical evaluation would re-administer the TEIP and practice scales after Phases 1–2 and again after Phase 3, track the use of differentiated materials and assistive tools, document case conferences and referrals, and collect learner participation data. If readiness and practice move together, as the correlation predicts, the programme is working. If readiness rises but practice does not, the bottleneck is likely time, materials, or support, not confidence. If practice rises but readiness does not, teachers may be complying without confidence, and coaching should focus on mastery and feedback. This evaluative stance turns INCLUDE from a one-off project into a learning system for the school and the ILRC.

Conclusion:

General education teachers at Cesar M. Cabahug Elementary School enter the ILRC mainstreaming transition with a strong foundation and a clear, specific gap. They reported high overall readiness (M = 3.84) and frequently practiced inclusive classroom strategies (M = 3.84), with particular strength in instructional flexibility, welcoming parent relationships, classroom culture, and cooperative learning. The gap is not in willingness or in general teaching skill; it is in individualisation: designing tasks for specific learners, using assistive technology, preventing and de-escalating behaviour, identifying need for specialist intervention, and monitoring individual progress. That gap is explained, not excused, by the profile: experienced, graduate-exposed teachers, most with master's units but few with specialised SPED training (4.88%), working as generalists with limited access to SPED expertise.

The strong, positive, and significant relationship between readiness and classroom practices ($r = 0.744$, $p < .001$) is the study's central inferential finding. It means that readiness and practice move together in this school, and that investing in readiness through targeted, practice-based capacity-building is a reasonable strategy for improving practice. Correlation does not prove causation, and self-report, single-school, and cross-sectional limits require caution, but the finding aligns with prior Philippine and international evidence and provides a clear direction for action. The challenge ranking reinforces that direction: workload and stress (M = 4.15), attention strain (M = 4.00), placement doubts (M = 3.98), and insufficient specialised competence (M = 3.93) are not signs of resistance; they are signals of demands that exceed current resources.

The study therefore recommends implementing INCLUDE through school-based LAC sessions, workshops, demonstration teaching, mentoring, and collaborative planning, with priority to differentiated instruction, curricular accommodations, positive behaviour support, assistive technology, individualised assessment, and learner engagement. General education teachers should strengthen partnerships with SPED teachers, parents, guidance personnel, and ILRC specialists to address academic, behavioural, and social-emotional needs. School programmes should promote participation and social interaction among learners with and without disabilities. Other schools in the Division of Mandaue City can adapt the plan, and SPED supervisors can enhance training content to fit local needs. Future research should use larger, multi-school samples, longitudinal designs, classroom observation, and learner outcome data to test whether INCLUDE raises readiness, sustains practice, and improves participation and learning for learners with disabilities. Mainstreaming will succeed not when learners are merely transferred, but when receiving teachers are prepared, supported, and confident that they can teach every learner in the room.

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