

The Utilization of Innovative Teaching Strategies for Inclusive Education: Benefits and Challenges Experienced by Filipino Teachers in Thailand

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Abstract — This study investigated the use of innovative pedagogical strategies for inclusive education among Filipino teachers in Thailand, aiming to explore the advantages, challenges, and demographic factors affecting their pedagogical strategies. Employing a mixed-method study design, the study collected quantitative data from structured questionnaires distributed among 100 Filipino special education teachers, supplemented with qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews. Results showed that Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI) were most commonly applied in inclusive classrooms, especially in the use of multimedia resources and lesson planning based on the requirements of the learners. The most common challenges identified were limited access to assistive technology, insufficient specialized training, and cultural adaptation issues. Correlational analysis revealed that teaching experience made a significant difference in the level of strategy implementation. The study concluded that, despite the unflinching dedication of Filipino teachers to inclusive pedagogy, additional institutional and policy support is critical for the establishment of more efficient pedagogical strategies. The study highlights the need to offer targeted professional development and context-specific support mechanisms to enhance inclusive education in international pedagogical settings.

Keywords — *Inclusive Education, Innovative Teaching Strategies, Universal Design for Learning, Differentiated Instruction, Filipino Teachers, Thailand, Special Education, Multicultural Teaching, Professional Development, Instructional Challenges*

I. Introduction

Background and Rationale

Inclusive education, rooted in social justice and equity principles, remains a leading priority in international education reforms. Universal initiatives, such as the Education for All 2030 agenda (EFA, 2030) and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), promote inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all learners, with a specific focus on learners with disabilities

(UNESCO, 2020). These global commitments have been successfully translated into national policy, as seen in Thailand's National Education Act (1999) and the Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Act (2007), which both have provisions to promote greater access and participation for a wide variety of learners.

Even with these policy actions, implementation of inclusive education remains mixed, especially in multicultural and multilingual contexts where further complexities arise. In the case of Thailand, Filipino teachers form a significant proportion of the foreign teaching staff, particularly in the field of special education. Such teachers employ various innovative pedagogical approaches—such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiated Instruction (DI), assistive technology, flipped classrooms, and gamification—to address diverse learning needs and promote more equitable learning environments.

Filipino teachers in Thailand, however, still face significant challenges to the holistic application of inclusive education. Structural constraints, limited access to resources, issues with cultural adaptation, and organizational barriers prevent the full and consistent implementation of these interventions. The study aimed to investigate how these teachers employ innovative methodologies, the benefits that such strategies offer for inclusive practices, and the ongoing challenges that persist. In doing so, the study aimed to make empirical contributions that can guide policy, enhance professional development, and strengthen support mechanisms, thereby improving inclusive education in multicultural settings.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significance for multiple stakeholders involved in advancing inclusive education in multicultural contexts. School administrators can draw on these findings to strengthen professional development initiatives and make informed decisions about allocating resources that support the effective use of innovative teaching strategies. For policymakers, the study provides empirical evidence that can inform the refinement of inclusive education policies, as well as teacher preparation and continuous training programs that address the needs of educators working in diverse environments. Curriculum developers may benefit from the insights generated, which can guide the design of learner-responsive instructional modules grounded in inclusive pedagogy. Filipino special education teachers and their peers in international settings can benefit from the documentation of best practices and practical coping strategies for overcoming instructional challenges. Ultimately, learners with disabilities are the primary beneficiaries, as the study contributes to the creation of more responsive, equitable, and supportive learning environments that honor diversity and promote meaningful participation.

Aim of the Study

The study aimed to examine the extent to which Filipino teachers in Thailand utilize innovative teaching strategies in inclusive education, and to identify the benefits, challenges, and demographic factors that influence these practices in multicultural classroom settings.

Objectives of the Study

1. To describe the demographic profile of Filipino special education teachers in Thailand in terms of age, sex, civil status, years of teaching experience, highest educational attainment, and specialization in inclusive education.
2. To assess the extent to which innovative teaching strategies, particularly Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI), are utilized in inclusive classroom settings.
3. To determine the perceived benefits of applying these innovative strategies on student engagement, learning outcomes, and classroom inclusivity.
4. To evaluate the severity of challenges encountered in implementing inclusive strategies, including issues related to access to resources, institutional support, and cultural adaptation.
5. To analyze the relationship between teacher demographic characteristics and the degree of utilization of innovative teaching strategies.
6. To explore the coping mechanisms adopted by Filipino teachers in addressing instructional challenges within diverse and resource-limited environments.
7. To recommend evidence-based capacity-building programs and policy interventions aimed at enhancing inclusive education practices in multicultural international school contexts.

Hypothesis of the Study

The subsequent hypothesis was tested at a significance level of 5%.

The null hypothesis (H_0) supposes that there is no significant correlation between the demographic profiles of Filipino teachers in Thailand and the level at which innovative pedagogies for inclusive education are utilized.

The statistical test conducted resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis. The results revealed meaningful associations between diverse demographic variables, specifically years of teaching experience, and the degree to which innovative instructional strategies, such as Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction, were being practiced in inclusive classroom settings.

Conceptual Framework

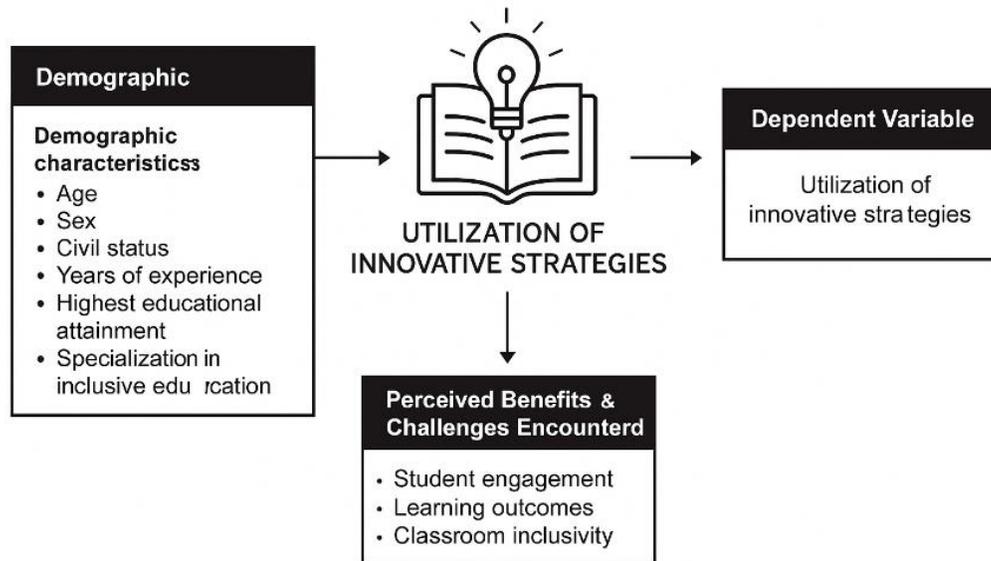


Figure 1: Schematic Diagram of the Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the research, with a focus on the use of innovative teaching strategies by Filipino teachers in Thailand to facilitate inclusive education. The actual implementation of innovative strategy forms the core component of this framework, serving as both the mediating variable and the vital process by which the relationship between teacher characteristics and learning outcomes is established. The framework explains how demographic factors, such as age, gender, marital status, years of teaching experience, highest educational attainment, and specialization in inclusive education, influence the extent to which teachers implement these strategies in their classrooms. This implementation then leads to perceived advantages and disadvantages, such as improved students' participation, better academic learning results, and greater classroom inclusivity. The diagram also locates the implementation of innovative strategies as the dependent variable, indicating that the research seeks to explore the relationship between teacher demographics and practices related to the use of inclusive teaching strategies. The arrows drawn on the figure illustrate the directional associations: demographic traits influence the use of strategy, which in turn affects the perceived advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education provision.

Literature Review

Inclusive education has assumed a central position in global educational policies, most recently exemplified by initiatives such as Sustainable Development Goal 4, which promotes

equitable and inclusive quality education for all learners (UNESCO, 2020). In Thailand, national laws—the National Education Act B.E. 2542 and the Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Act B.E. 2550—mandate inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream education. The effectiveness of these legislative interventions, however, remains variable, mainly due to language differences, insufficient teacher preparation, and contextual issues typical of multicultural classrooms (Lersilp et al., 2022). Filipino teachers have proven to be an integral part of inclusive education development in Thailand, often using context-responsive and culturally adaptive pedagogical practices in the absence of formal institutional endorsement or special training (Ulla, 2018; Bayot & Asio, 2021). Their role is vital, considering the lack of special education experts in many Thai schools, as well as the increasing diversity of learner needs.

Effective adoption of instructional strategies is central to the development of inclusive classrooms that can cater to diverse learner profiles. The most commonly supported strategies include Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiated Instruction, Flipped Learning, and the use of Assistive Technologies (Meyer et al., 2014; Sancar & Atasoy, 2023). UDL provides adaptable learning opportunities through multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression, thereby allowing all learners to access learning opportunities regardless of their abilities (Lowrey et al., 2020). Differentiated Instruction involves modifying instructional approaches to adapt to students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles, which has been proven successful in meeting the needs of diverse classrooms (Tomlinson, 2017). Empirical evidence suggests that the systematic application of these strategies leads to increased student engagement, academic achievement, and learner autonomy (Alnahdi, 2020; Almogren, 2023). However, international educators in Thailand still face significant challenges, including insufficient access to instructional resources, a lack of knowledge about local policies, and inadequate opportunities for professional growth (Yazon et al., 2022).

The successful application of inclusive learning approaches is heavily dependent on teachers' competence, commitment, and motivation. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) has been recognized as a vital facilitator of inclusive practice, especially when it is work-based and responsive to the realities of classroom life (Loreman, 2021). Nevertheless, Filipino overseas teachers are often faced with restricted access to localized CPD opportunities, which threatens the long-term sustainability of inclusive practices. Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) explains how the motivation and persistence of teachers to use inclusive approaches are determined by the satisfaction of their autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs. When teachers feel supported, competent, and connected within their professional community, they are more likely to adopt innovative approaches. In addition, Southeast Asian regional studies, in which research was conducted, demonstrate that peer support and mentoring can promote resilience and preparedness to participate in inclusive actions, even in instances where resources are scarce (Alghamdi & Abdulaziz, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2022).

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are rooted in four interconnected theories. Tyler's (1949) model of instructional design emphasizes a recursive process that involves setting clear objectives, sequencing content, and conducting continuous assessment. Universal Design for Learning (UDL; Meyer et al., 2014) serves as a theoretical foundation for inclusive instruction, recognizing learner diversity as a crucial starting point for effective instructional design. Expanding on this idea, Differentiated Instruction (Tomlinson, 2017) promotes the tailoring of content and instructional approaches to meet learners' diverse needs. Finally, Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) offers a motivational framework that explains how intrinsic elements are essential for teachers' long-term motivation to engage in inclusive practices. Together, the theories underpin the present study's pursuit of how Filipino teachers in Thailand engage in innovative practices, the problems they encounter, and their role in advancing inclusive education.

II. Methodology

The research employed a mixed-methods design, successfully combining quantitative and qualitative methods, thereby allowing for an in-depth exploration of the application of innovative strategies by Filipino special education teachers in inclusive schools in Thailand. The quantitative strand consisted of administering a standardized survey questionnaire to collect information from a purposively sampled population of 100 Filipino special education teachers who were actively working in urban and suburban areas of Thailand during the 2023-2024 period. The tool collected information on the participants' demographic data, frequency of strategy use, perceived effectiveness, and ease of implementation, all of which were measured on a five-point Likert scale.

To complement the quantitative results, the qualitative aspect involved semi-structured interviews with a purposive subsample of the respondents. The primary objective of the interviews was to gather detailed information on the teachers' experiences, perceived difficulties, and coping mechanisms employed during the implementation of inclusive education.

Quantitative data were treated using descriptive statistics to present an in-depth picture of demographic attributes and patterns of strategy use. Spearman rank-order correlation and point-biserial correlation tests were used to determine whether there was a relationship between demographic characteristics and the level of teaching strategy use. Thematic analysis was employed in the qualitative data to identify emergent themes, contextual concerns, and adaptive practices mentioned by the participants.

Before the data collection began, ethical approval was granted. Informed consent was obtained from all participants; therefore, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and adherence to data protection protocols were maintained throughout the study.

III. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Filipino Teachers (n = 100)

Profile Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	21–30	48	48.0%
	31–40	26	26.0%
	41–50	13	13.0%
	51–60	12	12.0%
	61–65	1	1.0%
Sex	Male	22	22.0%
	Female	78	78.0%
Civil Status	Single	63	63.0%
	Married	34	34.0%
	Widowed	1	1.0%
	Separated	1	1.0%
	Others	1	1.0%
Years of Teaching Experience	Less than 5 years	36	36.0%
	5–10 years	29	29.0%
	11–15 years	15	15.0%
	16–20 years	12	12.0%
	More than 20 years	8	8.0%
Highest Educational Attainment	Bachelor’s Degree	78	78.0%
	With Master’s Units	16	16.0%
	Master’s Graduate	3	3.0%
	With Doctorate Units	2	2.0%
	Others	1	1.0%
Specialization in Special Education	Emotional & Behavioral Disorders	22	40.7%
	Learning Disabilities	13	24.1%
	Autism Spectrum Disorder	13	24.1%
	Intellectual Disabilities	10	18.5%
	Gifted Education	10	18.5%
	Physical Disabilities	6	11.1%
	Sensory Impairments	7	13.0%
	Early Intervention	7	13.0%
	Transition Services	2	3.7%
	Multiple Disabilities	2	3.7%
	Others	10	18.5%

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 100 Filipino teachers surveyed in Thailand. A high proportion of respondents were aged 21 to 30 years (48%) and were female (78%). The majority of respondents were single (63%), with a considerable proportion having less than five years of teaching experience (36%). Regarding educational qualifications, the majority

of respondents had a bachelor's degree (78%). In terms of specialization, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (40.7%) and Learning Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder (each 24.1%) were the most common fields of study. These statistics highlight the presence of a young, early-career, and academically qualified teaching force undertaking a range of special education tasks within Thailand's inclusive education system.

Table 2. Level of Utilization of Universal Design for Learning Strategies

Indicator	Mean	Description
Multimedia and visual tools	4.58	Very Highly Utilized
Multiple content formats	4.57	Very Highly Utilized
Diverse expression formats	4.49	Highly Utilized
Instructional adaptation	4.40	Highly Utilized
Flexible assessments	4.28	Highly Utilized
Average	4.46	Highly Utilized

Table 2 shows the level of utilization of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies among Filipino teachers. The highest-rated indicators were the use of multimedia and visual tools (mean = 4.58) and multiple content formats (mean = 4.57), both of which were classified as *Very Highly Utilized*. Other strategies, such as allowing diverse forms of student expression, adapting instruction, and using flexible assessments, were also *Highly Utilized*, with means ranging from 4.28 to 4.49. The overall average of 4.46 indicates that UDL strategies are consistently and effectively applied in inclusive classrooms.

Table 3. Level of Utilization of Differentiated Instruction

Indicator	Mean	Description
Tailored lesson plans	4.39	Highly Utilized
Modified resources	4.32	Highly Utilized
Alternative materials	4.27	Highly Utilized
Adjusted pacing	4.14	Highly Utilized
Targeted grouping	4.13	Highly Utilized
Average	4.25	Highly Utilized

Table 3 shows the level of utilization of Differentiated Instruction practices among Filipino teachers in Thailand. All of the indicators, including specially designed lesson plans (mean = 4.39) and particularly designed grouping strategies (mean = 4.13), had a Highly Utilized rating. The mean rating of 4.25 indicates that the teachers systematically and actively apply differentiated instructional practices to respond to the varied needs of students in inclusive classroom settings.

Table 4. Challenges in Implementing Innovative Strategies

Category	Challenge	Mean	Interpretation
Resources	Limited assistive tools	3.79	Highly Challenging
Training	Lack of specialization	3.61	Highly Challenging
Institutional	Inadequate support	3.62	Highly Challenging
Cultural	Language barriers	3.75	Highly Challenging

Table 4 provides a detailed description of the significant challenges faced by Filipino teachers in implementing inclusive teaching practices. Across each of the established categories—namely, resources (mean = 3.79), training (mean = 3.61), institutional support (mean = 3.62), and cultural barriers (mean = 3.75)—all were rated as Highly Challenging. The results indicate that teachers all agree that there are significant challenges, particularly in accessing assistive technology, receiving specialized training, and overcoming linguistic, cultural, and systemic barriers within the school environment.

Discussion

The results of the research are meaningful, as they shed light on the inclusive pedagogy practices used by Filipino teachers in Thailand, as well as the difficulties they face. Demographic information reveals a workforce that is predominantly comprised of young women in the early stages of their professional careers, with limited experience and training in special education. This is consistent with the international trend among young professionals in international school contexts and highlights the need for ongoing mentoring and capacity-building programs. While most participants had a bachelor's degree, a minority had completed postgraduate training or additional qualifications in inclusive pedagogy. These findings align with Loreman's (2021) findings, who reported that international teachers often experience substantial constraints in accessing specialized and culturally tailored in-service training in inclusive pedagogy.

Despite the lack of experience and formal professional training, the teachers reported a significant adoption of innovative practices, focusing on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI). As seen from Tables 2 and 3, very high or high ratings were obtained in the use of multimedia materials, diverse content formats, and differentiated instruction. These results demonstrate the determination and resilience of the teachers in providing flexible instruction, despite limitations imposed by limited resources. The general use of UDL and DI supports earlier studies that have found inclusive practices to have significant positive impacts on learner motivation and academic performance (Lowrey et al., 2020; Tomlinson, 2017). The relatively lower scores on more sophisticated dimensions, i.e., flexible assessment and targeted grouping, imply that such instructional adaptations require additional support, training, and resources. To solve the challenges, Table 4 outlines a shared set of issues that prevent the comprehensive implementation of inclusive education among Filipino teachers. These issues include limited access to assistive technology, poor preparation, lack of institutional support, cultural and linguistic differences, and have all been rated as Highly Challenging. The results are

supported by Ulla (2018) and Bayot and Asio (2021), who found that migrant teachers often face challenges of contextual adaptation and professional support. The existence of these problems underscores the need for host institutions to develop inclusive support strategies that promote the professional growth and well-being of international teachers. Without such interventions, the sustainability of inclusive practices is at risk.

Together, these results validate the relevance of the theoretical framework informing the research. The successful blending of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI) demonstrates the real-world applicability of Tyler's (1949) model of curriculum. It asserts the inclusive design principles outlined by Meyer et al. (2014). In addition, the difficulties reported align with aspects of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), specifically regarding teachers' sense of competence and relatedness, which are often limited by societal and institutional structures. When autonomy and professional growth are not supported, even highly motivated educators can suffer from burnout or reduced effectiveness. As a result, progress towards more inclusive education in transnational environments requires not only pedagogical creativity but also a structural commitment to developing teacher capability, instating support structures within institutions, and implementing policy reform.

IV. Conclusion

This study highlights the critical contributions of Filipino teachers to realizing inclusive education in multicultural schools in Thailand through the use of innovative pedagogical approaches, such as Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction. Although adaptable and committed, these teachers face a multitude of challenges, ranging from limited assistive services, a lack of specialist training, limited school-based support, and a language barrier. The results reiterate the importance of teacher capacity, contextual responsiveness, and systemic facilitation in realizing sustainable, inclusive education. The study also emphasizes the need for action-oriented interventions that mend professional development gaps, promote institutional support, and create environments in which teachers are empowered, supported, and integrated into professional communities.

V. Recommendations

Based on these discoveries, Thai policymakers and schools, as well as analogous contexts, may introduce capacity development programs that include localized Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for inclusive pedagogy. Host institutions shall provide a budget for mentoring schemes, peer mentorship networks, and the supply of required materials to improve the readiness of international teachers to teach in diverse classrooms. Policy changes shall provide culturally responsive training and may implement inclusive support structures which shall meet both the teaching and professional needs of foreign teachers. In addition, subsequent studies will be

conducted to analyze the long-term impacts of these interventions and to conduct cross-comparative studies of models from different multicultural settings, thereby further developing the understanding of inclusive educational practices worldwide.

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