



**PERCEPTION OF SPECIAL AND GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS
REGARDING PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES IN ADAPTING CURRICULUM
FOR STUDENTS WITH DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS: A MIX METHOD STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

The present mixed-method study explored the perceptions of special and general education teachers regarding their practices and challenges in adapting curriculum for students with diverse learning needs. The teacher survey was conducted among 99 teachers with the help of the structured questionnaire consisting of the Likert-scale and open-ended items. Quantitative data indicated that teachers are highly using inclusive interventions of differentiated instructions, scaffolding, and constant evaluation with mean scores of 3.85 to 4.22. Nevertheless, educators indicated that they encountered moderate to strong difficulties, especially in balancing curriculum requirements and multiple needs of students ($M = 3.85$), in working with large classes ($M = 3.77$), and in resource shortage ($M = 3.67$). The qualitative results were characterized by the necessity to focus on student-based curricula, training of teachers, and technology integration. The research concludes that despite positive attitudes and practices of teachers towards inclusion, there exist systemic barriers to having a successful implementation. The findings emphasize the need for institutional support, flexible curriculum frameworks, and professional development to enhance inclusive education.

Keywords: Curriculum adaptation, inclusive education, diverse learning needs, teachers' practices, challenges

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum adaptation or differentiation is the process of modifying or adapting the curriculum according to the different ability levels of the students in one class (UNESCO, 2004, p.14). Also Wrights (2005) argues that curriculum adaptation includes changes to the following: quality, time, level of support, input, difficulty, output, participation, alternative objectives, and functional or replacement curriculum (p.1). In order to meet the varied needs of every student in a regular classroom, curriculum adaptation is therefore understood in terms of rearranging curriculum content, using appropriate grouping, instructional strategies, methods, and application of appropriate instructional resources (Yuen, Westwood & Wong, 2005).

In order to guarantee equal learning opportunities for every student, regardless of individual differences, educational systems around the world place a strong emphasis on inclusive education. A key element of inclusive education is curriculum adaptation, which gives teachers



the ability to change instructional strategies, content, and assessment techniques to meet a variety of learning needs. Effective curriculum adaptation is crucial for meaningful engagement and academic success in classrooms with students of different skill levels. Teachers frequently encounter practical difficulties when implementing modified curricula, despite policy commitments to inclusivity. Improving inclusive teaching strategies requires an understanding of teachers' practices and perceived difficulties. Through a survey-based investigation, this study examines teachers' experiences modifying curricula for students with a range of learning needs.

The majority of instructors do not use the new ways as planned since the old methodology of emphasizing lecture, blackboard, and textbook skills is still in place. Amenu (2005) states that the lack of instructional facilities, pre- and post-training in implementing active learning, and skilled professional assistants all impede the success of the teaching process. Theoretically, it is essential to raise the caliber of Ethiopian primary school teachers by directly involving their students in active learning strategies as a way to address the disparities in their educational backgrounds in order to make active learning the most applicable to the immediate needs of the students, society, and the country as a whole.

A research investigates the Loreto District teachers' experiences, difficulties, coping strategies, and insights. The results showed that while dealing with students that have different needs, a normal classroom day is full of changes, challenges, exhaustion, and welcoming. Nonetheless, employing varied activities, altering, and simplifying are some of the changes applied to classes to help students with various learning profiles. An inclusive teaching strategy, which includes tailoring assistance, never ignoring solutions, adapting to individual learning requirements, changing instructions, clear teaching, reteaching, and adaptability, was greatly influenced by the experience. Increasing self-confidence, acknowledging little victories, demonstrating a sense of belonging, offering feedback and reinforcement, and displaying extra attention and gratitude are all examples of inclusive education experiences that motivate students to do better in class. Lack of parental support, a lack of resources, challenges in identifying effective solutions, challenges in managing various learners, and challenges with students' attitudes and conduct are some of the challenges that are often experienced while helping diverse learners in the classroom. Unrealistic expectations, a lack of respect and cooperation, stigma and alienation, denial and resistance, and a misinterpretation of support are some of the misconceptions that parents, students, and even administrators have about inclusive policies. The unique circumstances of inclusive education have a significant impact on pupils, as seen by their growth and improvement, increased engagement, understanding, and satisfaction with the lesson. Teacher training understanding, moral and emotional support, more staff to accommodate a range of requirements, instructional materials, assistive technology, and useful life skills are among the areas where inclusive education has to be improved. In order to work in inclusive classrooms, new teachers are advised to be more patient, imaginative, perceptive, and resourceful; embrace lifelong learning; be committed rather than indolent; recognize students' talents; and celebrate minor victories (Casal & Villocino, 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have revealed that the success of inclusive education is dependent on the teacher (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Inclusive education curriculum adaptation techniques, including differentiated instruction, flexible assessment, and learning plans, have been demonstrated to increase learning outcomes among diverse students (Tomlinson, 2014).



Nevertheless, a number of studies have found that the following hurdles exist for teachers in particular: a lack of training, too many students in the class, the absence of teaching materials, and limited support from the school (Sharma et al., 2012). In developing countries, the following issues might be added to the list because of the nature of curricula and assessment practices in these settings. This study attempts to fill the research gap by offering empirical proof for based on teachers' self-reported practices and challenges.

Culturally appropriate pedagogy promotes equality by making sure that every student is represented in the curriculum. Studies have shown that incorporating literary and historical narratives from other civilizations fosters social awareness and critical thinking (Hernandez, 2022). Despite its benefits, schools still struggle when instructors don't know how to use culturally sensitive teaching methods (Mukminin et al., 2019). There are also cases when educators cannot find the balance between culturally inclusive education and needed curricular goals (Sorkos and Hajisoteriou, 2021). Schools should offer organized training programs and flexible policies in curriculums that would facilitate the successful assimilation of student cultures. Technology can be of much importance in helping in closing traditions in the field of education. Due to digital opportunities and multimedia resources, teachers can offer a large number of different perspectives in a more effective manner including their students (da Silva & Amorim, 2024). Nonetheless, digital inequality leads to inequity, especially in education systems with meager funding (Biasutti et al., 2019). Also, the educators might lack the technological expertise to incorporate digitally sensitive resources in their programs (Awang-Hashim & Kaur, 2019). To create culturally inclusive learning environments, these problems should be considered by providing equal distribution of resources, teacher training, and investment in education technology.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research used descriptive survey design to collect both quantitative and qualitative information regarding the practices and challenges faced by the teachers in adapting the curriculum.

Participants

The participants of the research were 99 teachers who taught in schools where special and general education background students take courses (students with different learning requirements). The teachers were not at the same level of teaching experience and professional training.

Instrument

The questionnaire was structured, and it included questions based on the five liker scale, which assessed the practices of the teachers with regards to the aspect of curriculum adaptation, which included various instructional methods, teamwork and lenient assessment tools. It consisted of 14 questions which were Likert items concerning practices and challenges of curriculum adaptation. An open-ended question with suggestions on how to improve the adaptation of curriculum was also employed in the study as a qualitative element.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed in terms of descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and the qualitative answers were examined thematically in terms of repetitive recommendations and concerns.

RESULTS



Below, the results of the study have been presented:

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 99)

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	20–30 Years	26	26.3
	31–40 Years	48	48.5
	41–50 Years	16	16.2
	51–60 Years	4	4.0
	Above 60 Years	5	5.1
Qualification	Bachelor/Master's	65	65.7
	M.Phil	26	26.3
	Ph.D	8	8.1
Gender	Male	45	45.5
	Female	54	54.5
Designation	Educator	49	49.5
	Junior Special Education Teacher (JSET)	19	19.2
	Senior Special Education Teacher (SSET)	14	14.1
	Private Teacher	1	1.0
	Headmaster	10	10.1
Professionals (Psychologist, Speech Therapist)	6	6.1	
Experience	1–10 Years	57	57.6
	11–20 Years	33	33.3
	21–30 Years	7	7.1
	Above 30 Years	2	2.0

The demographic data show that most of the participants (48.5%) were aged 31-40 years followed (26.3) in 20-30 years group. Majority of the respondents (65.7%) possessed a Bachelor or Master degree and a smaller percentage (26.3) an M.Phil and Ph.D. degree. With respect to gender, females (54.5) were slightly more than the males (45.5). As to designation, almost half of the respondents were teachers (49.5%), and the rest were found in the special instruction and professional offices. Also, most of the respondents (57.6) had an experience of 1-10 years of teaching experience, which is a relatively early to mid-career sample.

Table 2
Teachers' Practices in Adapting Curriculum for Students with Diverse Learning Needs

Teacher Practices	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
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I regularly modify my lesson plans to match the learning needs of different students.	99	1	5	3.85	1.417
I use a variety of teaching strategies to ensure every student can participate meaningfully.	99	1	5	4.08	1.158
I adapt learning materials (e.g., worksheets, activities) based on students' individual abilities.	99	1	5	3.92	1.201
I break down complex tasks into smaller, manageable steps for students who need extra support.	98	1	5	4.22	1.153
I provide alternative ways for students to demonstrate learning (e.g., oral responses, visuals, hands-on tasks).	99	1	5	4.10	1.083
I collaborate with colleagues to plan or review adaptations for diverse learners.	99	1	5	3.92	1.155
I use ongoing assessment during lessons to adjust my teaching.	99	1	5	4.00	1.210

Table 2 presents implications of how teachers adjust the curriculum to address the needs of students with different learning needs. In general, the average scores demonstrate that there is a high degree of engagement in the adaptive teaching practices, and all questions have a score of near or above 4.00 on the five-point scale. Breaking down complex tasks into smaller and manageable steps was noted to have the highest mean score ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 1.153$), which highlights the fact that teachers often apply scaffolding methods in order to assist those students who have to be given extra help. On the same note, the implementation of differentiated instruction ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.158$) and offering alternative means through which students can showcase their knowledge ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.083$) were also widely used, which represents the attempts of teachers to make the learning experience inclusive. Moderate, yet positive, results were found regarding modifying lesson plans ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.417$), adapting learning materials ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.201$), and collaborating with colleagues ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.155$), which mean that the changes in practices are adopted, but there is a certain deviation in the case of teachers. The consistent attempt to respond to the learning needs of students in real time is further demonstrated by the use of ongoing assessment to modify the instruction ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.210$). The higher standard deviations of the items, in turn, point to the fact that the level of application of the practices by teachers to a larger extent varies, which indicates the necessity of additional professional growth and encouragement to make the application more uniform.

Table 3

Challenges faced by teachers in Adapting Curriculum for Students with Diverse Learning Needs

Challenges	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
I find the curriculum too rigid to easily adapt for diverse learners.	99	1	5	3.35	1.185
I struggle with having enough time to plan and implement curriculum modifications.	99	1	5	3.65	1.141
I lack adequate teaching resources to support individualized learning.	99	1	5	3.67	1.258



I sometimes feel overwhelmed when managing a classroom with a wide mix of learning needs.	99	1	5	3.73	1.180
I believe I need more training or professional development in curriculum adaptation.	99	1	5	3.60	1.199
My class size makes it difficult to focus on each learner's individual needs.	99	1	5	3.77	1.368
I find it challenging to balance curriculum demands with my students' learning differences.	99	1	5	3.85	1.213

Table 3 emphasizes how teachers are struggling with changing the curriculum to accommodate learners with varying learning requirements. The average scores with a range of 3.35 to 3.85 show that the teachers are reasonably challenged to moderate or highly challenged in a variety of areas of curriculum adaptation. The strongest issue that was mentioned was balancing curriculum needs and student learning differences ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.213$) indicating that educators are not always able to meet requirements of the curriculum demands and the needs of the students with learning differences. The same way, the high number of students in a classroom ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.368$) and handling classrooms with vast differences in learning requirements ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.180$) were found to be the major obstacles, which are structural and classroom management limitations. These challenges are also promoted by lack of proper teaching resources ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.258$) and the lack of time to plan and implement changes ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.141$). Also, teachers reported a lack of training and professional development ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.199$), which showed the gaps in readiness to inclusive practices. In spite of the fact that curriculum rigidity was rated with the lowest mean score ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.185$), it is still a significant issue. The standard deviations between items are relatively high and it implies that the teachers are varied in the experience, meaning that some of them can cope successfully, others have significant challenges to endure, which is why the system needs support and specific interventions.

Thematic Analysis of Teachers' Suggested Strategies for Improving Curriculum Adaptation

The thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data of the open-ended responses of participants. Coded responses were categorized into major themes that represented the recommendations that the teachers gave on how the curriculum can be modified to suit the students with various learning needs. Eleven dominant themes were found in the data. Table 1 gives the frequency of each theme of response.

Table 4

Themes and Frequency of Responses

Theme	Frequency
Student-Centered and Need-Based Curriculum	18
Flexibility and Differentiation	15
Skill-Based and Practical Learning	12
Use of Technology and Assistive Tools	10
Inclusive Teaching Strategies and UDL	9
Teacher Training and Professional Development	14
Collaboration and Stakeholder Involvement	8
Resource Availability and Classroom Support	11
Curriculum Reform and Policy Changes	9



Assessment and Evaluation Reforms	7
Inclusion and Equity	10

As it was observed, instructors put a lot of emphasis on the relevance of flexed and student-centered curriculum design. The recurring references of the differentiation, the training of the teachers, and the practical learning suggest the necessity of the transition towards the new models of the inclusive and skill-based learning instead of the traditional rote-based education. Also, the combination of technology and cooperation between the stakeholders is held as a necessity of successful curriculum adjusting. There were also policy-level issues that revealed that the system should be restructured and that more teachers should be involved in the process of curriculum development.

FINDINGS

The findings show that educators are also active participants in the curriculum reforms procedures to accommodate different learners. Breakeing of complex tasks into manageable steps, use of different teaching strategies and offering alternative means by which learning can be done were some of the most common strategies that most teachers reported using. Constant evaluation and cooperation with other employees were also implemented, but with some degree of differences among interviewees. Though these are good practices, there are a number of issues the teachers are grappling with. The most noticeable ones are the inability to balance between curriculum expectations and individual learning variations, large classes, inadequate instructional materials, and lack of time to make plans to make adaptations. Also, most teachers stated that they wanted more professional training in inclusive education. The qualitative data analysis has shown that the significance of student-centered curriculum, flexible teaching, skill-based learning, and utilizing assistive technology, as well as the necessity of policy reforms are among the main themes. The teachers highly stressed professional development and the concept of working together to enhance practices in the curriculum adjustments.

DISCUSSION

The results are similar to the literature available that indicates that teachers usually express a good attitude towards inclusive education and are not unwilling to adopt adaptive strategies. Nevertheless, the implementation of their effectiveness is usually limited by the structural and institutional difficulties or inadequacy of resources, lack of training, and overwhelming workload. The adaptive practices high mean scores imply that the teachers are attempting to address to the various learning needs, yet there are discrepancies that could imply that they are not applied equally in the classrooms.

The issues that arise in this study, such as high classroom sizes, and rigidity in the curriculum, are in line with prior studies that have been carried out in developing nations. The focus on Universal Design of Learning (UDL), integration of technologies, and student-centered teaching is the evidence of the increased attention that the educators pay to current practices of inclusiveness. These results pointed out that curriculum adaptation is to be considered not only an individual teacher responsibility, but a systematic procedure which needs the institutional support and policy-level intervention.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that teachers play a crucial role in implementing inclusive education through curriculum adaptation. Although they are very committed and adopt various adaptive instructional approaches, their work is hampered by various problems that include lack of resources, training, time and inflexible curriculum.



These challenges need to be addressed in the enhancement of the quality of inclusive education. Even the most motivated teachers would still have difficulties in addressing the needs of the diverse learners without proper support. Thus, it is crucial to increase mechanisms of systemic support to guarantee equal learning opportunities of all learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are proposed. First, to start with, monthly and systematic professional development activities must be organized to improve teachers in their curriculum adaptation and inclusive instructions. Second, the educational leadership must establish flexible curriculum models like Universal Design of Learning (UDL) which can support all learners. Third, there should be adequate teaching materials, assistive technologies, and classroom support services to aid in proper implementation of inclusive practices. Fourth, decreasing the workload and size of the classes could allow teachers to plan and provide more individual instructions. Lastly, there must be a good policy level investment to facilitate inclusive education by reforming the curriculum, supporting the teacher population, and continuously monitoring the implementation.

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