

# The Teaching Strategies of Aklan on Teachers in Inclusive Classrooms

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## Abstract

*This study explored the teaching strategies employed by Aklanon teachers in delivering instruction to children with special needs within inclusive classrooms. The participants were primarily middle-aged teachers (average age of 38) with around 12 years of teaching experience and graduate-level academic units. Most handled learners with specific learning disabilities and demonstrated strong professional values—particularly compassion, patience, perseverance, and a commitment to fostering the holistic development of each child. Collaborative engagement with colleagues and parents emerged as the most frequently used instructional strategy, reflecting a community-oriented approach to inclusion. To address behavioral challenges among learners with special needs, teachers relied mainly on patience and mentorship from experienced special education practitioners. The study recommends that teachers engage in regular reflective practice to evaluate the effectiveness of their instructional methods, continuously enhance their competence in classroom management and discipline, and employ diverse assessment tools—formal, informal, and alternative—to better support student progress.*

**Keywords:** Inclusive Education, Teaching Strategies, Special Needs, Reflective Practice, Collaboration

## Introduction

The global call to “leave no one behind” echoes the vision of Education for All, affirming that every individual—regardless of sex, age, socioeconomic status, race, culture, beliefs, or personal aspirations—has the right to access quality education. To realize this vision, states must ensure equitable access to educational opportunities supported by appropriate facilities, technologies, and protective mechanisms that foster meaningful learning. Yet, despite international commitments, an estimated 64 million children worldwide remain deprived of quality education due to inadequate programs and limited resources. If unaddressed, this number will continue to rise, hindering global efforts to achieve inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all [1].

In the international context, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States has long provided a framework ensuring equal access to education for learners with disabilities. Originally enacted in 1975 as the Education of Handicapped Children Act, IDEA was later amended in 1990, 1997, and 2004 to strengthen provisions for inclusive educa-

tion and emphasize “scientific, research-based interventions” to identify and support students with specific learning disabilities (NCLD, 2023). In the Philippines, this vision is reinforced by Republic Act No. 11650, signed into law on March 15, 2022, mandating the establishment of Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs) in every city and municipality to ensure access to quality education for learners with disabilities (Golez, 2022).

Aligned with these global and national mandates, teacher preparation and professional development must be continuously redefined to meet the demands of 21st-century education. As Nesipbayeva emphasized, modern teachers must be equipped to provide technology-supported learning and to integrate digital tools that enhance student engagement [2]. Similarly, Shukla highlighted that teaching competence encompasses composite skills such as lesson introduction, effective questioning, reinforcement, classroom management, and understanding of child psychology all crucial in inclusive settings [3].

In this light, the Libacao College of Science and Technology (LCST), as a leading institution offering the Bachelor of Spe-

cial Needs Education (BSNEd) program, initiated this study in the Province of Aklan to examine the teaching strategies used by educators in inclusive classrooms. By situating the research within its local context, the LCST community aims to contribute data-driven insights that can inform curriculum design, enhance instructional competence, and promote best practices in inclusive education. The findings of this study are expected to benefit teachers by identifying effective approaches in addressing the diverse needs of learners with disabilities, while also serving as a resource for parents and policymakers in strengthening support systems for inclusive education.

The study involved 35 general education teachers from the Division of Aklan, each with experience teaching students with special needs mainstreamed in their classes. These teachers, drawn primarily from the Kalibo Integrated Special Education Center (KISEC) and Banga Elementary School Special Education Center (BESSEC), were examined in terms of demographic characteristics (age, educational attainment, years of service, position, performance appraisal, and training). The research explored their teaching competencies, instructional challenges, and coping mechanisms in addressing the learning and behavioral needs of children with disabilities.

Ultimately, this study underscores the value of research-driven inclusive education as a foundation for effective policy implementation, teacher development, and collaborative practice. By identifying and analyzing the strategies employed by Aklanon teachers, this research seeks to advance pedagogical innovation and support the broader goal of inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education for all.

## Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design, which allows the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate one or more variables [4]. Because the study included a focus group discussion (FGD), Streefkerk recommended the use of a mixed-method approach to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the problem and to enhance the credibility of the findings [5].

The questionnaire was developed through an intensive review of related literature and studies. The items for the demographic profile of the Aklanon teachers were adapted from the instrument of Urgal, which has been used in her published works to collect teachers' demographic and professional information [6]. Questions concerning low-incidence disabilities were based on descriptions by SWWC, while those on high-incidence disabilities followed the definitions from OERCommons [7, 8]. To assess teaching competencies, the study drew from several sources: ResumesAU for professional knowledge, Lynch (2018) for professional practice, Educationtopia (2023) for professional values, and Meador for professional relationships [9, 10]. The sixty research-based teaching strategies identified by McNary

et al. served as the basis for constructing questions on teaching strategies [11].

The questionnaire underwent content validation by the principal of the Kalibo Integrated Special Education Center (KISEC), the principal of the Banga Special Education Center (BESSEC), and three special education teachers who were not part of the respondent group. After validation, the instrument was administered to the respondents. A separate set of guide questions was also prepared for the FGD, which included ten (10) participants from KISEC and eight (8) from BESSEC.

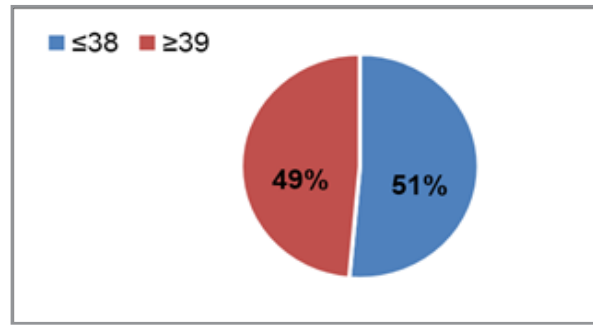
Data collection began with the distribution of the questionnaires, followed by the focus group discussions conducted after retrieval of the responses. During the FGD, teachers were asked to describe the challenges they encountered in handling children with special needs and to share coping strategies they found effective. For data analysis, descriptive statistics were used to summarize quantitative data. Tables and graphs were prepared to present results for each variable. Status and classification data were analyzed using percentages, ratios, and proportions, while prioritization questions were assigned rankings. The weighted mean was computed to determine the extent of identified needs and to establish the central tendency of each dataset.

To analyze the qualitative data gathered from the FGD, thematic analysis was employed following the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke [12]. The researchers familiarized themselves with the data, generated initial codes, and identified recurring patterns and emerging themes related to teachers' coping mechanisms and classroom experiences. This integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a more holistic understanding of the teaching strategies of Aklanon teachers in inclusive classrooms.

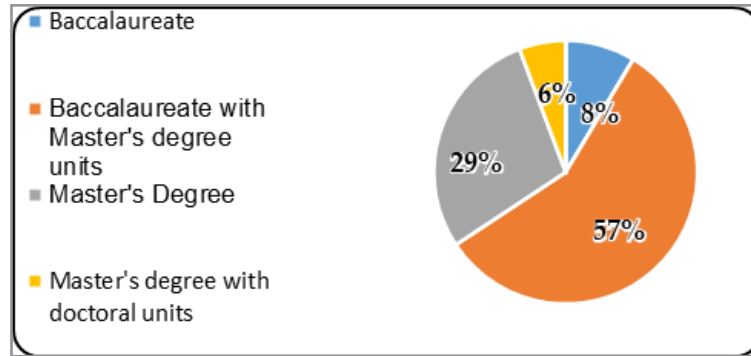
## Results and Discussion

The data presentation, analysis, and the interpretation were presented in figure and tabular form. The topics included the demographic of Aklanon teachers, their teaching competencies, teaching strategies, and challenges as well as their coping mechanisms in handling children with special needs.

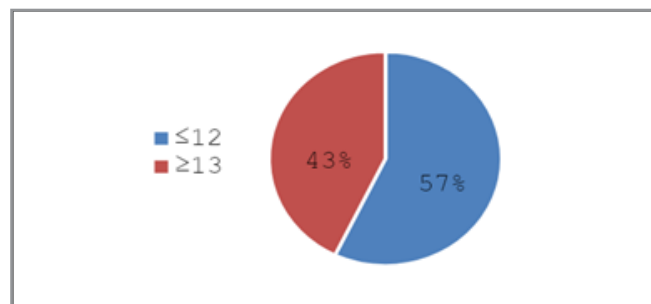
The age of the Aklanon teachers in inclusive classroom was 38 years as depicted on Figure 1. As to their educational attainment, as shown in Figure 2, majority of them obtained master's degree units beyond their bachelor's degree (57%), master's degree (29%), and doctoral units (6%). Among them (8%) revealed that they did not seek advanced studies beyond their bachelor's degree. Figure 3 shows that majority of them (57%) had taught up to twelve (12) years while the rest of them (43%) had taught for more than thirteen (13) years. As compared across the USA, the average age of teachers was 42.4 years with 14.5 years of teaching experience in which 40.7% of them garnered master's degree [13].



**Figure 1:** The age of Aklanon teachers



**Figure 2:** The educational attainment of Aklanon teachers



**Figure 3:** The number of years in teaching of Aklanon teachers

Table: 1 show that 80% of the Aklanon teachers held the teacher positions while 11% of them were holding the SPED Teacher positions. The highest position, the Master Teacher I position,

was held by 8.57% of them. The positions held by these teachers are under the permanent status either by, appointment, promotion, or transfer [14].

**Table 1:** The positions held by Aklanon teachers

POSITION	N	%age
Teacher I	13	37.14
Teacher II	7	20.00
Teacher III	8	22.86
SPED Teacher I	3	8.57
SPED Teacher II	1	2.86
Master Teacher I	3	8.57
TOTAL	35	100.00

Table: 2 highlights the teacher performance of teacher for the last two year. As shown, 77.14% of the Aklanon teachers performed outstandingly while 8.57% of them performed very satisfactorily. There were 14.29% of them did not have performance appraisal yet for they were not even one year in teaching. As the teachers exude the high level of teacher performance against the

challenges and achieve the school's basic objectives, it could be guaranteed that effective schools could be created [15]. Additionally, the magnitude of the influence of teacher performance on student learning outcomes reached almost 50% among the variables [16].

**Table 2:** Over-all performances of Aklanon teachers for the last two years

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL	N	%age
Outstanding	27	77.14
Very Satisfactory	3	8.57
Without Performance Rating	5	14.29
TOTAL	35	100.00

Table: 3 depicts the training/workshop that Aklanon teachers attended. As shown, they all had attended the Teaching Effectiveness and Pedagogy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Almost all of them attended the Effective Classroom Management and Teacher Development. The Learning Assessment, Subject Content, and Understanding Students were attended by more than majority of them. A handful of them attended the training/workshop in Research in Education, Radio-based Education, Inclusive Education, and Special Educa-

tion. It is convincing for teachers to attend training/workshop in Teaching Effectiveness and Pedagogy for it improves quality of teaching and teacher-student communication; eliminates monotonous learning; and encourages cooperative learning environment, to mention a few [17]. Likewise, the ICT, teachers can explore students' learning in many ways in which students can learn effectively, and they can reach a larger number of students, using a kind of information technological tools [18].

**Table 3:** Training/workshop attended Aklanon teachers by the number of hours

TRAINING/WORK-SHOP	Training Hours							%age
	<5	5-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	>25	Total	
Teaching Pedagogy	7	9	1	5	10	8	35	100
Understanding the Students	1	6	2	6	1	8	24	69
Effective Classroom Management	4	13	2	6	1	8	34	97
Subject Content	5	8	2	6	2	7	30	86
Teacher Development	2	12	1	5	2	10	32	91
Learning Assessment	4	9	2	3	3	9	30	86
Information Communication	5	11	4	2	3	10	35	100
Technology (ICT)	5	11	4	2	3	10	35	100
Research in Education		1					1	3
Radio-based Education					1		1	3
Inclusive Education					1		1	3
Special Education				1			1	3

Table: 4 presents the teaching competencies of Aklanon teachers. As shown, the professional relationship (4.21), professional practice (3.81), and professional knowledge (3.54) were described to be high, having the professional values (4.46) to be very high to rank first. Their professional knowledge came out to

be in the last rank. It is evident that their professional relationship immersed the most for it coincides with the teaching strategy that they occasionally utilized in the inclusive classrooms to be collaborating with colleagues and parents.

**Table 4:** Teaching competencies of Aklanon teachers

ITEM/SCALE	Weighted Mean	Description	Rank
Professional Knowledge	3.54	High	4
Professional Practice	3.81	High	3
Professional Values	4.46	Very High	1
Professional Relationship	4.21	High	2
MEAN	4.01	High	

As shown in Table 5, Aklanon teachers occasionally used all the teaching strategies as evidenced by its general weighted mean of 3.41. They occasionally collaborated with colleagues and parents (3.49) as in the first rank. It is then followed by integrating assistive technology (3.48) as in second rank. Interacting with students (3.40) comes third in the rank. Classroom management and discipline ranked fifth, while organizing lesson plans for an

effective learning environment ranked sixth. What ranked the last was using formal, informal, and alternative student assessment. The teachers evidently involved families in the learning process. which is essential in creating an inclusive classroom environment. Teachers can achieve this by establishing open lines of communication with families, regularly sharing information about their child's progress, and involving them in de-

cision-making processes. Besides, the teachers can respect the diverse backgrounds and cultures of their students' families, recognizing that each family has unique needs and preferences [19]. Needless to say, that the teachers were not challenged with

the collaboration between general and special education teachers and lack of professional development for all teachers on inclusion [20].

**Table 5:** Summary tables for teaching strategies

Item/Scale	Weighted Mean	Description	Rank
Interacting with student	3.40	Occasionally	3
Organizing Lesson Plans for an Effective Learning Environment	3.36	Occasionally	5
Using formal, informal, and alternative student assessment	3.35	Occasionally	6
Classroom Management and Discipline	3.37	Occasionally	4
Integrating Assistive Technology	3.48	Occasionally	2
Collaborating with Colleagues and Parents	3.49	Occasionally	1
Mean	3.41	Occasionally	

Table: 6 presents the themes that emerged from the focus group discussions regarding the difficulties encountered by Aklanon teachers in handling children with special needs. Thematic analysis revealed that nearly half of the participants (48.57%) cited student behavior as a major concern. More than a quarter (25.71%) reported challenges in handling students with varying disabilities, while 22.86% identified communication and comprehension difficulties as barriers to effective instruction. A smaller proportion (11.43%) found it challenging to assess students according to their specific disabilities, and one participant

noted students' reluctance to perform schoolwork.

These findings align with Adewumi & Mosito, who observed that teachers accommodating learners with special needs often face diverse challenges, including inadequate training, heavy workloads, limited parental support, and insufficient resources [21]. Similarly, the difficulties identified by Aklanon teachers highlight the pressing need for sustained professional development, collaborative support systems, and resource provision to strengthen inclusive education in local settings.

**Table 6:** Difficulties encountered by Aklanon teachers in handling children with special needs

Difficulties Encountered	Total (N=35)	%age
Student behavioral problems	17	48.57
Handling different kinds of disabilities	9	25.71
Students' assessment as to disabilities	4	11.43
Difficulty in communication and understanding	8	22.86
Students are reluctant to do school work	1	2.86

Table: 7 consolidates the information gathered from the focus group discussions to illustrate how teachers coped with the challenges encountered inside inclusive classrooms. Thematic analysis revealed several coping mechanisms that helped teachers manage the behavioral and instructional needs of learners with disabilities. Among the most frequently mentioned strategies were patience (20%), seeking advice from veteran special education teachers (14.29%), and keen observation and the use of positive reinforcement (17.14%). Teachers emphasized the importance of possessing good behavior, being patient and kind-hearted, understanding, loving, committed, and sympathetic toward children. They also highlighted the need to maintain a well-planned seating arrangement, to keep students productively engaged through continuous learning activities, to allow time for

play, and to avoid scolding or showing frustration. One teacher shared, "We should extend special care to cater to their needs. Kon ano ro kinahangean it mga unga, duyon do itao kanda ag dapat may dulce pirme si titser." — translated as, "Whatever the students need, we should provide it to them, and teachers must always have candies to offer." This reflection captures the compassion and cultural warmth that define Aklanon teachers' approach to inclusion.

Overall, the findings suggest that when teachers are dedicated to helping all students learn, they can effectively cope with stress and classroom challenges, especially when provided with institutional and collegial support [22].

**Table 7:** Coping mechanisms on the difficulties encountered by the respondents

Difficulties Encountered	Total N=35	Percentage
Being steady, consistent, and firm	2	5.71
Online classes through video calls	2	5.71
Use of Support Instructional Materials (SIMs)	1	2.86
Keen observation and employ positive reinforcement	4	11.42
Patience	7	20.00

Asking assistance from the student's guardians/parents	2	5.81
Recreational activities with the students	1	2.86
Mentoring from veteran special education teacher	5	14.29
Adjustment over time	2	5.81
Practicing the designed learning styles	2	5.81
Setting goals for students based on areas of strength and difficulty	2	5.81
Using varied teaching strategies	2	5.71
No suggested coping mechanism	3	8.57
Total	35	100.00

## Conclusions

The study revealed that Aklanon teachers in inclusive classrooms had an average of 12 years of teaching experience and an average age of 38 years. Most of them held the position of Teacher I and had received outstanding performance ratings over the past two years. All respondents had participated in training and workshops on Teaching Pedagogy and Information and Communications Technology (ICT). The majority of learners with special needs under their instruction were identified as having Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD).

In terms of teaching competence, the teachers demonstrated very high proficiency, particularly in the area of professional values. They actively collaborated with colleagues and parents and utilized assistive technology to address the diverse needs of students with disabilities. However, behavioral problems among students and the challenge of managing multiple types of disabilities emerged as the most significant difficulties in inclusive classroom settings.

To cope with these challenges, the teachers emphasized patience, mentorship from experienced special education teachers, and the importance of maintaining empathy and compassion toward their students. They highlighted the need for good classroom organization—such as planned seating arrangements, engaging tasks to keep students meaningfully occupied, and opportunities for play—to support effective learning and behavior management. Teachers also recognized the importance of providing timely reinforcement and emotional support to foster positive student engagement and development.

Overall, the findings underscore the commitment of Aklanon teachers to inclusive education, reflecting both their professional dedication and their deep sense of care for children with special needs. Their insights and strategies offer valuable implications for teacher training, policy formulation, and the continued promotion of inclusive educational practices [23].

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