

Inclusive education in Practice: A Qualitative Exploration of Support Strategies for Students with Special Needs in Regular School Settings

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Abstract: Inclusive education aims to offer equitable learning opportunities, meaningful participation, and a sense of belonging to students with special needs within regular school environments. This study examined teachers lived experiences in implementing inclusive education and the support strategies they employed to address the diverse needs of learners. Utilizing a phenomenological qualitative design, the study involved eight regular classroom teachers from Van Lang School and Doan Thi Diem Halong School in Halong City, Quang Ninh Province, Vietnam, who were selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through semi-structured individual interviews and analyzed using a thematic analysis. The findings identified eight themes: inclusive education as equality and belonging, flexible and differentiated teaching strategies, peer support and meaningful participation, emotional and behavioral management, limited formal training and experiential learning, collaboration with parents and school personnel, challenges in resources, time, and classroom management, and positive experiences of student success and inclusion. Teachers noted that inclusive education requires patience, adaptability, collaboration, continuous learning, and meaningful opportunities for students to participate. The findings further suggest that effective inclusion requires more than individual teacher efforts; it relies on professional development, adequate resources, collaborative support, systematic monitoring, and a supportive classroom culture. Based on the findings, an Inclusive Classroom Support and Development (ICSD) Framework was proposed to enhance teacher capacity, stakeholder collaboration, classroom resources, student-centered engagement, monitoring and evaluation, and inclusive classroom culture. This study highlights the importance of coordinated school-level support to strengthen inclusive education practices and improve the experiences of students with special needs in regular school settings.

Keywords: inclusive education; students with special needs; teachers' experiences; support strategies; differentiated instruction

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is receiving considerable attention as a way to ensure that all students, including those with special needs, have equal access, participation, and a sense of belonging in schools. Instead of keeping students with disabilities separate, it encourages their involvement in regular classrooms. Recent research highlights that for inclusion to work well, schools need to be supportive, teachers should have a positive attitude, and there should be teaching practices and systems in place that cater to the diverse needs of learners (Burak et al., 2025; Wanbin et al., 2023). There is also evidence showing that inclusion helps students socially and fosters better understanding and acceptance among classmates (Aisy & Aprilia, 2025; Kart & Kart, 2021). Therefore, inclusive education is not just about putting students with special needs in regular classes; it is about creating an environment where they can truly participate and feel like they belong.

In the classroom, teachers play a key role in making inclusive education work. They need to adjust their teaching methods, offer the right support, use different strategies, and address the various academic, behavioral, and social needs of students. Studies have found that how prepared teachers feel, their confidence, their professional development, and the resources they have access to all affect how well inclusion is implemented (Ackah-Jnr et al., 2024; Foykas et al., 2025; Gal et al., 2025; Rapisa et al., 2026). Using differentiated instruction, peer

support, flexible classroom setups, and ensuring meaningful participation can help meet the diverse learning needs in regular classrooms (Bunga et al., 2025; Gaitas et al., 2024). In addition, collaboration among teachers and other school staff is crucial because inclusive education is a shared responsibility when it comes to planning, supporting, and monitoring students with special needs (Jaya et al., 2023; Kluge et al., 2025).

Even with all these advancements, implementing inclusive education in real classrooms is not easy. Teachers often face a mix of challenges, such as meeting the varied needs of learners, dealing with behavioral and emotional issues, having limited teaching resources, managing large classes, and not having enough time to give each student the attention they need. Studies and reviews have pointed out that teachers often aren't adequately prepared, don't get enough support from their institutions, and face resource limitations, which all make it tough to practice inclusion effectively (Aryani et al., 2025; Das & Haque, 2025; Motitswe, 2025; Rapisa et al., 2026). To tackle these issues, teachers might need to adapt their teaching methods through experience, reflection, working with others, and ongoing professional development. However, most research has focused on teacher skills, attitudes, teaching methods, and systemic challenges, with fewer studies diving into how teachers actually experience and understand inclusive education in their day-to-day classroom activities.

This gap is particularly significant within regular school settings in Halong City, Quang Ninh Province, Vietnam. Understanding teachers' lived experiences can offer contextual insights into the strategies they employ, the challenges they face, the ways they adapt their practices, and the forms of support they deem necessary for students with special needs. Such qualitative evidence can enhance existing research by focusing more on teachers' perspectives and the practical realities of implementing inclusion at the classroom level. In this context, the present study investigated the lived experiences of regular classroom teachers implementing inclusive education at Van Lang School and Doan Thi Diem Halong School in Halong City, Quang Ninh Province, Vietnam. Specifically, the study examined teachers' experiences, reflections, and insights regarding inclusive education and identified support strategies used to address the needs of students with special needs. Based on the findings, the study also proposed an Inclusive Classroom Support and Development (ICSD) Framework to enhance teacher preparation, collaboration, classroom resources, student-centered engagement, monitoring, and the development of supportive inclusive classroom environments.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study explored teachers' experiences in implementing inclusive education and the support strategies they use for students with special needs in regular school settings. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of participants in an inclusive learning setting?
2. How did the participants reflect on and describe their experiences in the inclusive setting?
3. What insights can be derived from the participants' experiences regarding the implementation of inclusive education in regular school settings?
4. What intervention program can be proposed based on the findings of this study to strengthen inclusive education practices and support students with special needs?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Inclusive Education and the Inclusion of Students with Special Needs

Inclusive education ensures that every student, including those with special needs, receives quality education in regular classrooms. It is about fairness and social justice (Burak et al., 2025). This approach focuses on making learning accessible and ensuring that everyone feels like they belong by reducing barriers to participation (Wanbin et al., 2023). Moving from separate special education settings to fully inclusive ones can be challenging. Teachers often struggle with different teaching methods and worry about meeting the diverse needs of students in mainstream classrooms (Wang et al., 2025). However, research shows that inclusion can lead to better social interactions, higher self-esteem, and improved academic results for students with special needs. It also helps peers without disabilities develop empathy and understanding (Aisy & Aprilia, 2025; Kart & Kart, 2021). For inclusion to work well, teachers' attitudes, skills, and teamwork between general and special education professionals are crucial. Professional development that focuses on proven inclusive strategies can boost teachers' confidence and improve their classroom practices, which are key to successful inclusion (Gal et al., 2025; Rodríguez-Oramas et al., 2021). Policies on inclusive education should emphasize ongoing teacher training, provide resources, and create supportive environments where all students can succeed (Aryani et al., 2025; Isyatirradhiyah et al., 2025). However, implementing these policies often faces challenges,

such as limited resources, social stigma, and inconsistent support, which require joint efforts from schools and governments to address (Rakgwata & Randima, 2025). Globally, countries such as China have adopted inclusive education in regular classrooms, recognizing the importance of positive attitudes, institutional support, and better teaching skills to improve inclusion quality (Alduais & Deng, 2022; Wanbin et al., 2023). In Finland, differing views among mainstream and special education teachers show ongoing challenges in aligning practices with inclusive principles (Wang et al., 2025). Although the Vietnamese context was not directly covered here, the global themes of preparing teachers, developing supportive policies, and promoting inclusive school cultures are very relevant to Vietnam's educational reforms.

Teachers' Competencies and Preparedness for Inclusive Education

Teachers' competencies and preparedness are fundamental to successful inclusive education, encompassing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and ongoing professional development. This involves understanding diverse learners' needs and applying strategies such as differentiated instruction and adaptive assessment. Research highlights that competencies include subject expertise, classroom management, and instructional adaptation, which facilitate learning for students with special educational needs (SEN) (Eriksen Bergstrand & Xenofontos, 2026; Foykas et al., 2025; Rapisa et al., 2026). Preparedness for diverse learners is linked to formal training and practical experience. Exposure to students with SEN and specialized training enhances teacher readiness, particularly in behavioral management and collaborative practices (Foykas et al., 2025; Nissim & Shamma, 2025). Teacher self-efficacy is crucial: those confident in their abilities employ more effective practices, manage classrooms better, and demonstrate positive attitudes toward inclusion (Cheng et al., 2026; Foykas et al., 2025; Gal et al., 2025). However, emotional concerns regarding unfamiliarity or challenges can hinder preparedness, underscoring the importance of affective and contextual dimensions in professional growth (Nissim & Shamma, 2025). Differentiated instruction is a key skill that involves careful planning, adjusting the pace of lessons, and using different teaching methods to match students' readiness, interests, and prior knowledge. To make it work well in diverse or multigrade classrooms, teachers use thematic and multimodal methods, group students by ability, and choose resources that fit the context. However, challenges such as insufficient training and limited access to technology can hinder implementation (Bunga et al., 2025; Feng et al., 2024; Hasanuddin et al., 2024). Teachers also highlight the need for assessment strategies that help them tweak their teaching, encouraging students to manage their own learning and become more independent in inclusive settings (Hasanuddin et al., 2024). Managing a classroom in an inclusive setting means creating a safe emotional environment, having a clear structure, and building positive relationships between teachers and students, as well as encouraging students to work together. Teachers find that using inclusive routines and adapting learning spaces can be helpful, but they also face systemic issues such as large class sizes, insufficient support staff, and a lack of specialist resources (Eriksen Bergstrand & Xenofontos, 2026). Professional development and training are crucial for helping teachers become more capable of handling inclusion. Research suggests that comprehensive, practice-based training programs that combine cognitive knowledge, emotional readiness, and sensitivity to context are especially important for multicultural and diverse classrooms (Ackah-Jnr et al., 2024; Foykas et al., 2025). Focused professional development in multicultural education boosts teachers' confidence, which in turn improves how clearly they teach and manage their classrooms (Cheng et al., 2026). Additionally, dialogic and collaborative training for special education teachers helps create more interactive and inclusive learning environments that benefit all students (Rodríguez-Oramas et al., 2021).

Support Strategies and Differentiated Instruction in Inclusive Classrooms

Support strategies and differentiated instruction are important for creating inclusive classrooms that cater to the diverse needs of all students, especially those with special educational needs. In the classroom, this often means using adaptive teaching methods and peer support, which have been shown to boost both social and academic inclusion. For example, when you pair students with moderate needs with more proficient peers, it encourages cooperation and reduces feelings of isolation. This highlights how strategic seating arrangements and social interaction can support meaningful participation (Gaitas

et al., 2024). Flexible and differentiated teaching depends on careful instructional planning, such as learner profiling and curriculum mapping. This helps teachers adjust the pace and content to meet the varied needs of their students. Using thematic and multimodal strategies, along with grouping by ability and contextually relevant teaching aids, strengthens engagement in multigrade and diverse classroom settings (Bunga et al., 2025). Visual and interactive learning materials are key to making content accessible and engaging for students with different learning preferences and abilities. AI technologies play a significant role by personalizing learning experiences through adaptive systems, speech-to-text, and text-to-speech functionalities, which improve comprehension and inclusive participation (Irawan & Anwar, 2025). Additionally, remedial and individualized support, such as differentiated assessment models and culturally responsive instruction, aligns learning tasks with students' prior knowledge and cultural backgrounds, boosting self-regulation and motivation (Hasanuddin et al., 2024; Prihartanto et al., 2025). Lesson study frameworks used in English language classrooms show that tailored worksheets, homogeneous grouping, and targeted teacher assistance can lead to significant improvements in engagement, especially for lower-ability learners (Upa et al., 2025).

Peer support and cooperative learning strategies are important for building inclusive environments and boosting both social integration and academic progress. When teachers intentionally use peer tutoring and regularly switch up group partners, it enriches social experiences and cuts down on exclusion, showing how academic and social inclusion are closely linked (Gaitas et al., 2024). This kind of collaborative learning goes hand in hand with classroom participation frameworks that fit with student-centered approaches. These frameworks encourage active engagement, critical thinking, and differentiated instruction, all supported by technology to promote inclusivity in higher education (Nyagope, 2024). It is crucial to adapt learning tasks and activities to match students' readiness and cultural backgrounds for inclusive practice. Competency-based education models that include culturally responsive teaching ensure that the curriculum and assessments reflect students' identities and mastery levels, which boosts engagement and performance (Prihartanto et al., 2025). In addition, ongoing reflective teaching practices and assessment techniques help teachers adjust their instruction on the fly, supporting continuous improvement and responding to students' changing needs (Bunga et al., 2025; Ramaila, 2025). This kind of adaptive classroom management, with inclusive routines and learning spaces, also enhances emotional safety and peer collaboration (Bunga et al., 2025).

Systemic Support and Sustainable Inclusive Education

Getting inclusive education right depends on having strong support at both the system and school levels to ensure that things go smoothly. One area that needs a shake-up is how we prepare teachers and keep them learning on the job. Currently, many teachers do not have the skills they need for inclusive teaching because of issues in teacher education programs (De Souza, 2025). In Malawi, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Change Projects have shown that when social learning is brought in and the community is involved, it can help teacher-educators break through these barriers and get better at supporting inclusivity through critical practice (De Souza, 2025). School principals are key players here. They are the ones who can push for inclusive policies, gather resources, and help with professional development. However, they often face hurdles, such as a lack of resources, pushback against changes, and a lack of training (Rivana et al., 2024). Support teachers are also crucial in creating inclusive environments, but their roles are often unclear and limited to working with individuals or small groups outside the main classroom. To make things work better, it is important to improve collaboration among educators and clearly define what support teachers should be doing. This helps build strong support networks in schools and communities (Astudillo et al., 2025). Moreover, when teachers and support staff work well together through clear communication, defined roles, and good organizational support, it not only reduces stress for the professionals but also boosts student inclusion (Ufermann et al., 2025).

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach to explore

the lived experiences of regular classroom teachers implementing inclusive education for students with special needs in regular school settings in the Philippines. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study focused on understanding teachers' experiences, perceptions, practices, challenges, and reflections, rather than measuring variables quantitatively. The phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to examine how teachers experienced and understood inclusive education and the meanings they attached to their experiences. This approach also provided an in-depth understanding of teachers' common experiences in supporting students with special needs within the selected school contexts.

Participants and Sampling

The participants were eight regular classroom teachers, four from Van Lang School and four from Doan Thi Diem Halong School in Halong City, Quang Ninh Province, Vietnam. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who had direct and relevant experience in teaching and supporting students with special needs in inclusive classroom settings. Participants were required to be currently employed as regular classroom teachers in either of the selected schools, have direct experience teaching students with special needs, have at least one year of experience in inclusive education, voluntarily agree to participate, and provide informed consent. Teachers who had no direct experience teaching students with special needs or who declined to participate were excluded from the study.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews, which allowed the researcher to maintain consistency across participants while also providing opportunities for teachers to elaborate on their experiences and provide additional explanations. An interview guide was developed based on the research questions and focused on teachers' support strategies, classroom accommodations, collaboration practices, challenges, professional development experiences, and perceptions of inclusive education. Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the school administrators, and eligible teachers were invited to participate after being informed about the purpose and procedures of the study. Interviews were conducted according to the participants' availability and lasted approximately 45–60 minutes. With the participants' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded, while field notes were also taken to document relevant observations and contextual information. The recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim, reviewed for accuracy, and organized using participant codes to protect anonymity.

Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, meanings, and themes related to teachers' experiences of inclusive education. The analysis followed the six-phase framework of Braun and Clarke (2021). The researcher first became familiar with the data by repeatedly reading the transcripts and reviewing the audio recordings. Meaningful statements and recurring ideas were then identified and assigned initial codes. Related codes were subsequently grouped into broader categories and potential themes. The emerging themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that they were sufficiently supported by the data and aligned with the research objectives. Each final theme was then clearly defined and named according to its central meaning. Finally, the themes were interpreted and presented in relation to the research questions and relevant literature, with selected participant quotations used to support the findings and provide evidence of the participants' experiences.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the study was established through four criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was strengthened through prolonged engagement with the interview data, repeated review of transcripts, and careful documentation of participants' responses. Dependability was supported by maintaining a clear record of the research procedures and data analysis process. Confirmability was addressed through reflective note-taking and systematic coding to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in the participants' accounts. Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, data collection

procedures, and findings so that readers could determine the applicability of the findings to contexts with similar characteristics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Themes Emerging from Teachers' Experiences in an Inclusive Learning Setting

Theme	Description	Responses / Participants
1. Inclusive Education as Equality and Belonging	Participants described inclusion as providing equal opportunities, fair treatment, respect, and a sense of belonging to students with special needs.	Co-participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 described inclusion in terms of equality, participation, respect, belonging, and opportunities for students to demonstrate their abilities.
2. Flexible and Differentiated Teaching Strategies	Teachers adapt instruction, activities, and learning tasks according to students' abilities and needs.	Co-participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 reported using flexible and differentiated strategies, including simplified instructions, visual aids, hands-on activities, peer support, and alternative tasks.
3. Peer Support and Meaningful Participation	Peer interaction and meaningful classroom roles were used to encourage participation and reduce the feelings of exclusion.	Co-participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 described pairing students with peers, group activities, classroom roles, and alternative ways of contributing to activities.
4. Emotional and Behavioral Management	Teachers experienced challenges related to tantrums, emotional outbursts, attention difficulties, and disruptive behaviors, and responded through patience, flexibility, and structured limits.	Co-participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 described behavioral and emotional difficulties and their efforts to provide space, establish limits, adjust strategies, and maintain classroom participation.
5. Limited Formal Training and Experiential Learning	Teachers reported that much of their knowledge about inclusive education came from classroom experience, observation, reflection, workshops, and trial and error, rather than formal preparation.	Co-participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 described learning through experience, observation, workshops, trial and error, and reflection on classroom practice.
6. Collaboration with Parents and School Personnel	Collaboration with assistant teachers, parents, counselors, and other school personnel was viewed as essential for addressing students' academic, behavioral, and emotional needs.	Co-participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 reported communication and coordination with parents, assistant teachers, co-teachers, and counselors to support students.
7. Challenges in Resources, Time, and Classroom Management	Participants experienced difficulties balancing diverse learner needs because of limited resources, short lesson periods, large classes, behavioral concerns, and competing demands for teachers attention.	Co-participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 reported challenges involving behavior, limited time, large classes, insufficient resources, and the difficulty of providing individual support.
8. Positive Experiences of Student Success and Inclusion	Teachers identified successful moments when students with special needs participated, contributed, demonstrated their abilities, and experienced peer recognition.	Co-participants 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 shared successful experiences involving student participation, completed tasks, group contributions, confidence, and peer acceptance.

Table 1 presents eight themes describing teachers' experiences in implementing inclusive education: equality and belonging, flexible and differentiated teaching strategies, peer support and meaningful participation, emotional and behavioral management, limited formal training and experiential learning, collaboration with parents and school personnel, challenges in resources and time, and positive experiences of student success. Overall, the findings show that teachers viewed inclusion as providing equal opportunities, respect, participation, and belonging for students with special needs. They adapted their teaching through differentiated activities, visual and hands-on materials, peer support, and alternative learning tasks, consistent with the importance of differentiated instruction and peer-supported practices in inclusive classrooms (Bunga et al., 2025; Gaitas et al., 2024). Teachers also experienced difficulties in managing emotional and behavioral concerns, particularly when training and support were limited, which is consistent with previous findings on teacher challenges in inclusive settings (Alhassan et al., 2025; Gal et al., 2025). The participants further reported learning through classroom experience, observation, reflection, and workshops, highlighting the importance of continuous teacher preparation and professional development (Ackah-Jnr et al., 2024; Foykas et al., 2025). Collaboration with parents, assistant teachers, counselors, and other school personnel was also considered important, supporting the view that inclusive education requires shared responsibility and coordinated support (Jaya et al., 2023; Kluge et al., 2025). At the same time, limited resources, time constraints, large classes, and competing classroom demands affected teachers' ability to provide individualized support, similar to challenges identified in previous studies (Das & Haque, 2025; Motitswe, 2025). Despite these challenges, teachers described meaningful experiences when students participated, demonstrated their abilities, gained confidence, and experienced peer acceptance, reflecting the potential of inclusive education to promote social participation and positive learner experiences ('Aisy & Aprilia, 2025; Kart & Kart, 2021). Overall, the findings indicate that inclusive education is both challenging and meaningful and requires flexible teaching, collaboration, adequate resources, and continuing professional support.

Table 2. Participants' Reflections on Their Experiences in the Inclusive Setting

Theme	Reflection/Meaning	Participants' Reflections / Responses
1. Inclusion as Acceptance and Belonging	Teachers realized that inclusion is more than simply placing students in the same classroom; it involves acceptance, respect, equal opportunity, and belonging.	Co-participants 1, 2, 3, and 5 reflected that students should be treated fairly, feel that they belong, participate in classroom activities, and have their abilities recognized and appreciated.
2. Teaching as a Process of Adaptation	Teachers realized that inclusive teaching requires flexibility and adjustment according to individual students' needs.	Co-participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 described learning to modify activities, instructions, materials, grouping, and classroom responsibilities based on students' abilities.
3. Patience and Understanding in Managing Behavior	Teachers developed greater awareness that students' emotional and behavioral responses require patience, understanding, and appropriate management strategies.	Co-participants 1, 2, 4, 5, and 8 reflected on experiences involving tantrums, frustration, emotional responses, and difficulty maintaining engagement, which taught them to respond patiently while establishing appropriate limits.
4. Learning Through Experience and Reflection	Teachers recognized that actual classroom experience became an important source of professional learning.	Co-participants 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 8 indicated that their knowledge developed through teaching experience, observation, reflection, workshops, and sharing strategies with colleagues.
5. Challenges as Opportunities for Professional Growth	Difficulties with diverse needs, behavior, limited time, and resources encourage teachers to become more resourceful and	Co-participants 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8 reflected on the difficulty of balancing different learner needs, managing behavior, and providing individual support within

	responsive.	limited time and resources.
6. Collaboration as Essential to Inclusion	Teachers realized that supporting students with special needs requires cooperation among teachers, parents, assistants, counselors, and other school personnel.	Co-participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 emphasized communication, consultation, shared planning, and feedback among teachers, parents, assistant teachers, and specialists.
7. Student Success as a Source of Meaning	Teachers found their inclusive experiences meaningful when they witnessed students participate, succeed, gain confidence, and receive peer recognition.	Co-participants 1, 3, 5, and 8 reflected on moments when students successfully completed activities, contributed to group tasks, demonstrated abilities, gained confidence, and experienced peer acceptance.

Table 2 presents teachers' reflections on their experiences in inclusive learning settings. The findings show that teachers understood inclusion as more than placing students with special needs in the same classroom; it also involves acceptance, respect, equal opportunity, and a sense of belonging. Teachers also reflected that inclusive teaching requires continuous adjustment of activities, instructions, materials, grouping, and classroom responsibilities based on students' needs. This supports the importance of flexible and differentiated teaching in inclusive classrooms (Bunga et al., 2025; Gaitas et al., 2024). Teachers further recognized the importance of patience and understanding when managing students' emotional and behavioral concerns, highlighting the need for appropriate teacher preparation and support (Alhassan et al., 2025; Gal et al., 2025). Their experiences also became an important source of professional learning through observation, reflection, workshops, and sharing practices with colleagues, consistent with the importance of continuous professional development in inclusive education (Foykas et al., 2025; Ackah-Jnr et al., 2024). Although teachers experienced challenges related to diverse learner needs, limited time, behavior, and resources, these difficulties encouraged them to become more resourceful and responsive. Collaboration with parents, teachers, assistants, counselors, and other school personnel was also viewed as essential to providing appropriate support, which is consistent with previous studies emphasizing collaboration in inclusive education (Jaya et al., 2023; Kluge et al., 2025). Finally, teachers found their experiences meaningful when they observed students participating, succeeding, gaining confidence, and being accepted by their peers. Overall, Table 2 shows that teachers' reflections demonstrate how inclusive education promotes both student development and teachers' professional growth.

Table 3. Insights Derived from the Findings of the Study

Insight	Description	Supporting Participants' Responses
1. Inclusive Education Is Sustained Through Teacher Agency and Adaptability	Teachers play an active role in sustaining inclusion by adapting instruction and developing strategies according to students' needs, particularly when formal preparation is limited.	Co-participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 described developing and adjusting strategies through classroom experience, observation, experimentation, and reflection.
2. Inclusion Is Operationalized Through Meaningful Participation	The findings indicate that inclusion does not simply entail providing the same instruction to all students; rather, it involves creating meaningful opportunities for every learner to participate.	Co-participants 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8 demonstrated this through peer support, meaningful classroom roles, adapted activities, and alternative ways of demonstrating understanding.
3. Collaboration Functions	Inclusive education is a	Co-participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8

as the Structural Backbone of Inclusion	shared responsibility that requires coordinated support from teachers, parents, assistant teachers, counselors, and school personnel.	consistently reported communication, coordination, feedback, and consultation as important elements of supporting students.
4. Behavioral and Emotional Challenges Reflect Systemic Support Gaps	Behavioral and emotional difficulties are not only classroom management concerns but are intensified by limited time, resources, staffing, and specialized support.	Co-participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 described behavioral difficulties alongside challenges involving limited time, resources, large classes, and insufficient individual support.
5. Experiential Learning Highlights Gaps in Formal Professional Preparation	Teachers' heavy reliance on experience, observation, and trial and error indicates the need for more structured and continuous professional development in inclusive education.	Co-participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 discussed learning through experience, while several specifically reported limited or insufficient formal training.
6. Classroom Culture Shapes Social and Emotional Inclusion	Inclusion is strengthened when classroom environments promote respect, peer acceptance, cooperation, confidence, and a sense of belonging.	Co-participants 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 described student confidence, peer encouragement, cooperation, acceptance, and belonging as meaningful outcomes of inclusive classroom experiences.
7. Inclusive Education Requires Systemic Rather Than Individual Solutions	The findings suggest that teacher effort alone is insufficient; sustainable inclusion requires institutional investment in training, resources, collaboration and administrative support.	Co-participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 recommended stronger professional development, additional resources, specialized support, parent involvement, and administrative assistance.

Table 3 presents the key insights derived from teachers' experiences and reflections on inclusive education. The findings show that teachers need to be flexible and adaptable in responding to the different needs of students with special needs. Meaningful participation is also important because students benefit when they are given opportunities to join activities, interact with peers, and demonstrate their abilities. Collaboration among teachers, parents, assistant teachers, counselors, and other school personnel was also identified as essential in providing appropriate support. The findings further show that emotional and behavioral concerns can be difficult to manage when teachers have limited training, time, resources, and specialized support. Teachers also developed their knowledge through actual classroom experiences, reflection, workshops, and sharing practices with colleagues, showing the importance of continuous professional learning (Foykas et al., 2025; Ackah-Jnr et al., 2024). A supportive classroom culture characterized by respect, empathy, cooperation, acceptance, and participation can further strengthen inclusion. Overall, the findings indicate that inclusive education requires not only individual teacher efforts but also collaboration, professional development, adequate resources, and school-wide support. These insights serve as the basis for the proposed Inclusive Classroom Support and Development (ICSD) Framework in Table 4.

Table 4. Proposed Inclusive Classroom Support and Development (ICSD) Framework

Program	Basis from the Findings	Proposed	Intervention	/	Expected Outcome
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Component		Activities
1. Professional Development and Training	Teachers reported limited formal preparation and relied heavily on experience, observation, and trial and error learning.	Regular workshops, mentoring, peer coaching, and training on inclusive pedagogy, differentiated instruction, classroom management, and student engagement should be conducted.
2. Collaborative Support System	Participants emphasized the importance of coordination among teachers, parents, assistant teachers, counselors, and other school staff.	Regular coordination meetings, structured communication, collaborative planning, and feedback mechanisms should be established among stakeholders.
3. Classroom Resource Enhancement	Teachers identified limited instructional materials and difficulty in addressing diverse learning needs.	Visual aids, manipulatives, adaptive learning materials, interactive resources, and other appropriate classroom tools should be provided.
4. Student-Centered Engagement	Successful experiences have shown that students benefit from peer support, meaningful classroom roles, group activities, and opportunities to contribute.	Implement peer-assisted learning, cooperative activities, meaningful classroom responsibilities, and alternative ways for students to demonstrate their learning.
5. Monitoring and Evaluation System	Teachers commonly adjusted their strategies through reflection after classroom experiences, but the process was largely informal.	The study recommends the introduction of reflective journals, peer feedback, student progress monitoring, regular review meetings, and evaluation of inclusive teaching practices.
6. Inclusive Classroom Culture Development	The participants emphasized equality, respect, empathy, participation, peer acceptance, and belonging as important aspects of inclusion.	Establish classroom norms and activities that promote respect, empathy, cooperation, peer mentoring, and acceptance of individual differences.

Table 4 presents the proposed Inclusive Classroom Support and Development (ICSD) Framework based on the findings of the study. The framework addresses the main needs identified from teachers' experiences and reflections. The first component, professional development and training, responds to teachers' limited formal preparation and emphasizes workshops, mentoring, peer coaching, and training in inclusive teaching, differentiated instruction, classroom management, and student engagement. This is consistent with the importance of continuous professional development and teacher preparation in strengthening inclusive practices (Foykas et al., 2025; Ackah-Jnr et al., 2024). The second component, collaborative support system, focuses on regular communication and shared

planning among teachers, parents, assistant teachers, counselors, and school personnel. This supports previous findings that collaboration is important in addressing diverse learner needs (Jaya et al., 2023; Kluge et al., 2025). The third component, classroom resource enhancement, responds to teachers' concerns about limited instructional materials by providing visual aids, manipulatives, adaptive materials, and interactive resources. The fourth component, student-centered engagement, promotes peer-assisted learning, cooperative activities, classroom responsibilities, and alternative ways of demonstrating learning to increase participation and belonging (Bunga et al., 2025; Gaitas et al., 2024). The fifth component, monitoring and evaluation, provides a more systematic approach to teacher reflection, student progress monitoring, and improvement of inclusive practices. Finally, inclusive classroom culture development promotes respect, empathy, cooperation, peer acceptance, and recognition of individual differences. Overall, the ICSD Framework provides a practical and school-based response to the challenges identified in the study and emphasizes that effective inclusion requires teacher preparation, collaboration, resources, meaningful participation, monitoring, and a supportive classroom culture.

Table 5. Practical Implementation of the ICSD Framework

ICSD Component	Priority Action	Practical Implementation	Responsible Persons/Groups
Professional Development and Training	Strengthen teachers' knowledge and skills	Quarterly training, mentoring sessions, peer coaching, and sharing of effective inclusive teaching practices should be conducted.	School administrators, teachers, invited specialists
Collaborative Support System	Improve coordination among stakeholders	Schedule regular teacher–parent meetings, case discussions, collaborative planning, and feedback sessions.	Teachers, parents, assistant teachers, counselors, administrators
Classroom Resource Enhancement	Address limitations in instructional materials	Visual aids, tactile materials, differentiated worksheets, manipulatives, and interactive learning resources should be developed and provided.	Teachers, school administrators, resource personnel
Student-Centered Engagement	Increase meaningful student participation	Peer-assisted activities, cooperative learning, flexible grouping, classroom roles, and alternative ways of demonstrating learning should be used.	Classroom teachers and peers
Monitoring and Evaluation System	Make reflection and monitoring systematic	Use teacher reflection logs, student-progress records, peer feedback, and periodic reviews of inclusive classroom practices.	Teachers, school administrators, support personnel
Inclusive Classroom Culture Development	Strengthen belonging, respect, and acceptance	Establish classroom norms that promote empathy, cooperation, respect for differences, peer support, and active participation.	Teachers, students, parents, school personnel

Table 5 presents the practical implementation of the Inclusive Classroom Support and Development (ICSD) Framework. This translates the proposed framework into specific actions that schools and teachers can implement. Professional development can be strengthened through quarterly training, mentoring, peer coaching, and the sharing of effective practices. Collaboration can be improved through regular teacher–parent meetings, case discussions, joint planning, and feedback sessions. Classroom resource enhancement can be implemented by developing visual aids, tactile materials, differentiated worksheets, manipulatives, and interactive learning resources. Student-centred engagement can be

promoted through peer-assisted activities, cooperative learning, flexible grouping, classroom roles, and alternative ways of demonstrating learning. The monitoring and evaluation component can be implemented through teacher reflection logs, student-progress records, peer feedback, and periodic reviews of classroom practices. Finally, an inclusive classroom culture can be strengthened through classroom norms and activities that promote empathy, cooperation, respect for differences, peer support, and active participation. These actions are consistent with the study's findings that teachers need continuous professional support, adequate resources, collaboration, and practical strategies to address diverse learner needs (Foykas et al., 2025; Jaya et al., 2023; Kluge et al., 2025). Overall, Table 5 provides a practical guide for translating the ICSD Framework into school-level activities and clarifies the responsibilities of teachers, administrators, parents, peers, and other support personnel.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study show that teachers experience inclusive education as a process that requires flexibility, patience, collaboration, and continuous adjustment. In relation to the first research question, teachers described inclusion as promoting equality, respect, participation, and belonging while using differentiated teaching, peer support, and alternative learning activities to respond to students' needs. These findings support the view that inclusive education goes beyond placing students with special needs in regular classrooms and requires meaningful participation and appropriate support (Burak et al., 2025; Wanbin et al., 2023). In relation to the second research question, teachers reflected that their experiences helped them become more patient, adaptable and resourceful. They also recognized that classroom experience, reflection, workshops, and collaboration with colleagues contributed to professional learning. This is consistent with research emphasizing teacher preparation, experience, and continuous professional development for effective inclusive practices (Foykas et al., 2025; Ackah-Jnr et al., 2024). The findings further indicate that behavioral and emotional concerns, limited resources, large classes, and time constraints remain important challenges. Similar challenges have been reported in previous studies, which have identified limited training, insufficient resources, and inadequate support as barriers to effective inclusion (Gal et al., 2025; Das & Haque, 2025; Motitswe, 2025). In relation to the third research question, the findings suggest that successful inclusion requires meaningful student participation, supportive classroom culture, collaboration, and systemic support rather than relying solely on individual teacher efforts. Collaboration with parents, assistant teachers, counselors, and administrators was particularly important, supporting previous research on shared responsibility and coordinated support in inclusive education (Jaya et al., 2023; Kluge et al., 2025). The findings also have important implications for inclusive educational practices. Schools must provide regular professional development, adequate instructional resources, opportunities for peer collaboration, and appropriate monitoring of student progress. Teachers should also be supported in using differentiated instruction, peer-assisted learning, flexible grouping, and other student-centered strategies (Bunga et al., 2025; Gaitas et al., 2024). Finally, the fourth research question is addressed through the proposed Inclusive Classroom Support and Development (ICSD) Framework, which focuses on professional development, collaboration, classroom resources, student-centered engagement, monitoring and evaluation, and an inclusive classroom culture. Overall, the findings confirm that sustainable inclusive education requires coordinated efforts among teachers, school leaders, parents, support personnel, and students

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that inclusive education in regular school settings is a meaningful but challenging process that requires teachers to respond to the diverse academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs of students with special needs. The teachers' experiences showed that inclusion involves more than placing students in the same classroom; it requires equality, acceptance, meaningful participation, flexible teaching, peer support, and a positive classroom environment. Teachers demonstrated adaptability by modifying activities, instructions, materials, grouping, and classroom responsibilities according to students' needs. However, limited formal training, insufficient resources, time constraints,

large classes, and behavioral concerns created challenges in providing individualized support. The findings also highlight the importance of collaboration among teachers, parents, assistant teachers, counselors, and school administrators. Teachers' reflections further showed that classroom experience, reflection, and professional interaction contributed to their learning and growth. Overall, sustainable inclusive education requires not only committed teachers but also continuous professional development, adequate resources, collaborative support, and strong school-level commitment. Based on these findings, the proposed Inclusive Classroom Support and Development (ICSD) Framework provides a practical approach for strengthening inclusive classroom practices through professional development, collaboration, resource enhancement, student-centered engagement, monitoring and evaluation, and the development of an inclusive classroom culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, schools are encouraged to strengthen teachers' preparation for inclusive education through regular training, mentoring, peer coaching, and professional development activities focused on differentiated instruction, classroom management, behavioral support, and student engagement. School administrators should establish stronger collaborative support systems involving teachers, parents, assistant teachers, counselors, and other school personnel to ensure that the needs of students with special needs are addressed through coordinated planning and intervention. Adequate instructional resources, including visual aids, tactile materials, differentiated learning materials, manipulatives, and interactive resources, should also be provided to help teachers respond effectively to diverse learner needs. Teachers are encouraged to continue using student-centered strategies such as peer-assisted learning, cooperative activities, flexible grouping, and alternative ways of demonstrating learning to promote meaningful participation and belonging. Schools should likewise strengthen behavioral and emotional support by providing appropriate guidance, consultation, and referral mechanisms for students who require additional assistance. A systematic monitoring and evaluation process should be established through teacher reflection, student-progress records, peer feedback, and periodic reviews of inclusive classroom practices. Furthermore, schools should promote an inclusive classroom culture characterized by respect, empathy, cooperation, acceptance, and recognition of individual differences. School leaders should provide sustained administrative support by allocating appropriate resources, time, and opportunities for teachers to collaborate and improve their inclusive practices. The proposed Inclusive Classroom Support and Development (ICSD) Framework may be adopted and further contextualized by schools to provide a coordinated approach to professional development, collaboration, resource enhancement, student-centered engagement, monitoring, and inclusive classroom culture. Finally, future researchers may conduct similar studies involving a larger number of participants and other school contexts to further explore inclusive education practices and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions designed to support students with special needs.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was limited to eight regular classroom teachers from Van Lang School and Doan Thi Diem Halong School in Halong City, Quang Ninh Province, Vietnam. Since the study used a qualitative phenomenological approach and purposive sampling, the findings reflect the participants' experiences and may not represent the experiences of all teachers implementing inclusive education in other schools or settings.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future researchers may conduct similar studies involving more teachers from different schools and educational settings to gain a broader understanding of inclusive education. Further research may also examine the effectiveness of teacher training, classroom support strategies, and the proposed Inclusive Classroom Support and Development (ICSD) Framework in improving the learning experience and participation of students with special needs.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The study observed ethical principles by obtaining permission from the school administrators and securing informed consent from the participating teachers. Participation was voluntary, and the participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using participant codes, and the collected information was used for research purposes while respecting the participants' privacy and rights.

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AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used solely to assist in aligning and formatting the manuscript according to the journal's prescribed format. No other aspects of the research were assisted by AI.