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INCLUSIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH DIVERSE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Sumaira Ameen

BS, Department of English, The Cosmic Degree College (For Women) ,University of Okara

ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is an important approach to ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to participate in meaningful learning experiences, regardless of their abilities, disabilities, cultural backgrounds, languages, socioeconomic circumstances, or individual learning differences. The purpose of this study is to examine inclusive teaching strategies that support students with diverse educational needs and promote academic achievement, social participation, emotional well-being, and classroom engagement. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach based on a review of recent academic literature concerning differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), cooperative learning, scaffolding, formative assessment, assistive technology, and individualized educational support. The literature suggests that inclusive teaching becomes more effective when teachers recognize individual differences, provide multiple ways of accessing information, offer flexible learning activities, and establish supportive classroom environments. Differentiated instruction enables teachers to adjust learning content, processes, and assessment according to students' readiness and learning profiles, while UDL encourages teachers to design accessible learning experiences from the beginning. Cooperative learning and peer support can also promote communication, collaboration, and a sense of belonging among students. However, successful inclusion may be limited by insufficient teacher preparation, large class sizes, inadequate teaching resources, restricted access to assistive technologies, and limited collaboration among educators, families, and specialists. The study concludes that inclusive teaching requires a combination of flexible instructional methods, accessible educational materials, continuous assessment, teacher professional development, and institutional support. Because this study synthesizes existing literature rather than collecting new experimental data, its conclusions represent themes reported in previous research rather than newly measured effects. The study provides recommendations for educators and educational institutions seeking to develop equitable, supportive, and academically effective classrooms.

Keywords:*Inclusive education, inclusive teaching strategies, diverse educational needs, differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning, special educational needs, cooperative learning, assistive technology, individualized instruction, formative assessment, educational accessibility, student engagement, academic achievement, teacher professional development, and equitable learning environments.*

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become an important priority in contemporary educational systems because classrooms increasingly include students with different abilities, interests, cultural experiences, languages, socioeconomic circumstances, and learning requirements. Every student has the right to access quality education and participate in learning activities that support intellectual, social, emotional, and personal development. However, students do not learn in identical ways or at the same pace. Some students understand new concepts through visual materials, while others benefit from spoken explanations, practical activities, repeated demonstrations, or individual guidance. Bakogiannis, A., & Papavasiliou, E. (2026 found thatStudents with disabilities, learning difficulties, language barriers, and other educational needs may require additional accommodations to participate successfully in classroom activities. Therefore, teachers must develop flexible instructional approaches that recognize learner diversity and reduce barriers to learning. Inclusive teaching is not simply the placement of students with different needs in the same classroom; it involves designing educational experiences that allow all learners to participate meaningfully and demonstrate their

knowledge.Traditional teaching methods often rely on a common pace, identical instructional materials, and standardized assessment procedures. Although these methods may be appropriate for some learners, they can create difficulties for students who require alternative explanations, additional practice, accessible formats, or different ways of demonstrating understanding. Inclusive teaching strategies address these challenges by adapting instruction to students' individual strengths and needs while maintaining meaningful educational expectations. Differentiated instruction, for example, allows teachers to modify content, learning processes, instructional resources, and assessment methods according to students' readiness and learning profiles. Universal Design for Learning encourages educators to anticipate learner diversity during lesson planning by providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and action or expression. These approaches help teachers create learning environments in which students have different pathways to achieving shared educational goals. Recent reviews of differentiated instruction emphasize the importance of purposeful planning, learner assessment, flexible activities, and supportive classroom environments. Inclusive teaching also requires attention to students' social and emotional experiences. Learners who feel respected, accepted, and supported are more likely to participate in classroom discussions, collaborate with peers, ask questions, and develop confidence in their abilities. In contrast, inaccessible learning materials, negative attitudes, bullying, and inflexible classroom routines can discourage participation and reinforce educational inequalities. Bakhytzhamal, S., Dinara, Y., & Gao, C. (2026). Explained thatTeachers can respond to these challenges by establishing respectful classroom expectations, using cooperative learning activities, encouraging peer support, and providing constructive feedback. Collaboration between general education teachers, special education professionals, school administrators, families, and support specialists is equally important because students' needs may extend beyond a single lesson or subject. Research on social and pedagogical support in mainstream schools highlights the contribution of differentiated instruction, scaffolding, cooperative learning, technology-supported teaching, and family collaboration to inclusive educational practice.

Technology has also expanded the opportunities available for inclusive teaching. Assistive technologies, digital learning platforms, captioned videos, text-to-speech applications, speech-to-text tools, and accessible electronic resources can help students access instructional content in ways that suit their needs. However, technology should not be treated as an automatic solution to educational difficulties. Its usefulness depends on accessibility, appropriate selection, teacher preparation, student preferences, and integration with effective instructional methods. Similarly, inclusive teaching cannot depend exclusively on individual teacher effort; schools need adequate resources, manageable workloads, professional development, supportive leadership, and clear policies that promote equal participation. Recent research continues to identify gaps between the goals of inclusive education and the practical conditions under which teachers work. In this context, the present study examines inclusive teaching strategies for students with diverse educational needs, with particular attention to differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning, cooperative learning, scaffolding, formative assessment, assistive technology, and collaborative support. It considers how these approaches may contribute to academic progress, participation, independence, and a sense of belonging, while also examining barriers that affect their implementation.

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RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To examine the inclusive teaching strategies that support academic achievement, classroom participation, and equitable learning opportunities for students with diverse educational needs.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How do inclusive teaching strategies support academic achievement, classroom participation, and equitable learning opportunities for students with diverse educational needs?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive education is based on the principle that all students should have meaningful opportunities to learn, participate, and progress within educational environments that respect their individual differences. It recognizes that diversity is a normal feature of classrooms rather than a problem that must be eliminated. Students may differ in cognitive abilities, physical development, communication skills, language proficiency, cultural experiences, emotional needs, and prior educational opportunities. An inclusive classroom responds to these differences by reducing unnecessary barriers and providing suitable learning opportunities for every student.Inclusive education involves more than enrolling students with disabilities in mainstream schools. It requires adjustments to teaching practices, assessment procedures, classroom environments, learning resources, and institutional policies. Teachers must identify barriers that prevent participation and design strategies that help students overcome them. Catama, B. V. (2025). Explains thatThese may include inaccessible instructional materials, rigid teaching methods, limited opportunities for collaboration, and assessment procedures that allow only one way of demonstrating knowledge. An inclusive approach emphasizes participation, belonging, reasonable accommodations, and high expectations supported by appropriate assistance.Miller et al. (2025), in their scoping review of equitable and inclusive evidence-based teaching practices, examined 85 eligible publications, including empirical studies, systematic reviews, and conceptual papers. Their work identified instructional practices, social-emotional and behavioral support, and assessment practices as important areas for supporting students with disabilities and other marginalized learners. This suggests that effective inclusion requires a coordinated combination of academic instruction and broader classroom support rather than reliance on a single teaching technique.

Bakhytzhamal et al. (2026) similarly emphasized the importance of teacher-led support, differentiated instruction, scaffolding, cooperative learning, and collaboration with families and specialists. Their review highlighted the potential contribution of these approaches to academic progress, emotional well-being, and social participation. However, it also identified practical barriers, including limited teacher training, insufficient resources, and high student-teacher ratios. These findings indicate that inclusive education depends on both classroom-level teaching decisions and the wider conditions in which teachers work. Differentiated instruction is a teaching approach in which educators adapt learning activities, instructional

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materials, support, and assessment to respond to differences among students. Rather than expecting all learners to complete every task in the same way and at the same pace, teachers provide alternative pathways toward shared or appropriately individualized learning goals. Differentiation may involve adjusting the content students study, the processes through which they learn, the products they create, or the classroom environment in which learning occurs.For example, during a reading lesson, some students may work with grade-level passages, while others use shorter texts, vocabulary previews, audio recordings, or additional guided practice. Catama, B. V. (2025). revealed thatDuring a mathematics lesson, one group may solve abstract problems while another uses concrete objects, number lines, or visual models to understand the same underlying concept. Students may demonstrate understanding through written answers, oral explanations, diagrams, practical demonstrations, or digital presentations, provided that the method measures the intended learning objective.Differentiation does not mean lowering expectations for students who need support. Instead, it involves identifying the assistance, challenge, and instructional pathway required for each student to make progress. Teachers can use diagnostic assessments, classroom observations, student work, and individual conversations to determine which adaptations are appropriate. Flexible grouping can also help teachers provide targeted instruction without permanently separating students according to perceived ability.A 2025 scoping review of differentiated instruction practices analyzed 22 research articles and identified approaches such as adjusting the pace of learning, offering choices, providing teacher and peer support, designing varied activities, using customized questions, and maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere. These practices are relevant to inclusive classrooms because they create opportunities for students with different readiness levels and learning profiles to engage with meaningful educational tasks. Dell'Anna et al. (2026) further examined practice-oriented research on differentiation in primary and secondary education. Their review highlighted the importance of understanding how differentiation is implemented in actual classrooms and noted that research has paid substantial attention to in-class activities compared with planning before lessons or follow-up afterward. This observation suggests that successful differentiation requires more systematic planning, including the selection of suitable resources, the identification of learning objectives, and the evaluation of student progress after instruction. Nevertheless, differentiated instruction can be challenging when teachers manage large classes, have limited preparation time, or lack access to suitable teaching materials. To address these challenges, educators can begin with manageable adaptations, such as providing vocabulary lists, offering two levels of practice, using visual instructions, and allowing alternative response formats. Regular assessment can then guide further adjustments.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework for planning instruction that anticipates learner diversity from the beginning. Instead of designing a lesson for a hypothetical average student and making changes only when difficulties arise, UDL encourages educators to provide flexible ways for students to access information, remain engaged, and demonstrate learning. This proactive approach can reduce barriers for students with disabilities while also benefiting students who have different language backgrounds, learning preferences, or levels of prior knowledge.UDL is commonly organized around three principles: multiple means of engagement, multiple means of representation, and multiple means of action and expression. Multiple means of engagement involve offering relevant choices, maintaining motivation, and supporting persistence. Multiple means of representation involve presenting information through varied formats, such as spoken explanations, written text, diagrams, videos,

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demonstrations, and tactile materials. Multiple means of action and expression allow students to demonstrate knowledge through different accessible methods, depending on the learning objective.For example, a teacher introducing a scientific concept might combine a short explanation, a labeled diagram, a demonstration, and an accessible video. Students could then demonstrate their understanding through a written response, an oral explanation, a concept map, or a practical activity. Dell'Anna, S., Frizzarin, A., & Biagiotti, G. (2026). Elaborated onSuch flexibility helps students engage with the same central concept through different pathways without automatically separating them from their classmates.Recent literature emphasizes the relationship between UDL and inclusive instructional planning. Catama (2025) examined UDL applications, reported educational outcomes, and implementation challenges, highlighting its potential to make instructional design more accessible. An integrative review published in 2025 also discussed UDL as a framework for connecting special education and inclusive classroom practice, while cautioning against treating it solely as a method for supporting students formally identified for special education. Research on UDL implementation also emphasizes that merely adopting the terminology does not guarantee effective inclusion. Teachers need to apply the framework meaningfully by ensuring that instructional alternatives are accessible, relevant, and connected to learning objectives. The quality of implementation, availability of resources, and teachers' understanding of learner variability all influence the potential value of UDL. Therefore, schools should support educators through practical training, collaborative lesson planning, and evaluation of student experiences and outcomes.Cooperative learning is an instructional approach in which students work together toward shared learning goals while contributing individual effort and responsibility. It can support inclusive education by creating opportunities for students to exchange ideas, explain concepts, practice communication, and develop relationships with classmates. When structured appropriately, cooperative activities allow students with different abilities and experiences to contribute meaningful strengths to a common task.Examples include paired reading, small-group problem-solving, peer tutoring, collaborative projects, and structured classroom discussions. In a science lesson, students might work together to investigate a question, with different members responsible for collecting information, recording observations, organizing materials, and presenting conclusions. In a language lesson, students may take turns reading, summarizing, and discussing a text.

METHODOLOGY

The study, titled "Inclusive Teaching Strategies for Students with Diverse Educational Needs," adopts a qualitative literature-based methodology to examine instructional approaches that promote equitable learning opportunities in diverse classrooms. The methodology focuses on identifying, organizing, and interpreting relevant academic literature published in 2025 and 2026. Sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, systematic reviews, scoping reviews, and research studies addressing inclusive education, differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning, cooperative learning, formative assessment, assistive technology, and teacher professional development. Relevant literature was identified through scholarly search resources and academic publication platforms. Priority was given to publications that directly examined inclusive classroom practices, educational accessibility, student participation, teacher preparedness, and academic or social outcomes. The literature was reviewed to identify recurring concepts, reported benefits, implementation challenges, and recommendations for improving teaching practices.The review process involved

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examining publication titles, abstracts, research objectives, methodological approaches, major findings, and conclusions to determine their relevance to the research question. Studies addressing instructional strategies for students with disabilities, learning difficulties, language differences, and other educational needs were considered particularly relevant. The information was then organized into thematic categories, including differentiated instruction, UDL, scaffolding, cooperative learning, flexible assessment, assistive technology, social-emotional support, and institutional collaboration. These categories provided a structure for comparing findings across different publications and identifying similarities and differences in the reported evidence. Particular attention was given to whether a study reported academic outcomes, student engagement, participation, belonging, or implementation barriers. The methodology is a narrative qualitative review rather than a fully reproducible systematic review; therefore, it does not claim to include every relevant publication or to provide a comprehensive statistical estimate of the effectiveness of inclusive teaching strategies.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design based on a review of existing literature. The design is appropriate because the primary objective is to understand how inclusive teaching strategies are described, implemented, and evaluated in educational research rather than to test an intervention with newly recruited participants. The study does not involve collecting original survey responses, conducting classroom experiments, or interviewing teachers and students. Instead, it examines published evidence to develop an integrated understanding of instructional practices that address diverse educational needs. The research design allows information from different educational contexts and methodological traditions to be compared while preserving the contextual differences reported by the original authors.The analysis follows a thematic synthesis process. First, relevant publications are grouped according to their primary focus, such as differentiation, UDL, assistive technology, peer collaboration, or teacher preparation. Second, recurring findings are identified, including the importance of flexible instruction, accessible learning materials, continuous feedback, positive classroom relationships, and institutional support. Third, the findings are compared to determine where the literature converges, where reported outcomes vary, and which practical challenges remain unresolved. Finally, the themes are integrated to develop recommendations for inclusive classroom practice. The design recognizes that the reviewed studies differ in populations, settings, and methods; therefore, their findings should not be treated as directly equivalent. The resulting conclusions represent an interpretation of existing literature and should be understood as evidence-informed insights rather than causal findings from a new empirical experiment.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis examines the reviewed literature to identify the main ways inclusive teaching strategies may support students with diverse educational needs. The information is organized into thematic categories covering instructional flexibility, accessibility, student participation, assessment, social-emotional development, and teacher support. The first theme, differentiated instruction, indicates that adapting learning activities, instructional materials, task difficulty, and classroom support can help teachers respond to differences in students' readiness and learning profiles. The second theme, Universal Design for Learning, highlights the importance of planning lessons that provide multiple ways to access

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information, maintain engagement, and demonstrate understanding. These approaches suggest that inclusion is strengthened when teachers anticipate learner diversity instead of relying exclusively on adjustments made after students encounter difficulties.The third theme concerns cooperative learning and scaffolding. The reviewed literature identifies structured peer interaction, explicit instruction, guided practice, and gradual withdrawal of support as potentially useful approaches for increasing participation and supporting skill development. The fourth theme focuses on formative assessment and flexible assessment methods. These practices allow teachers to identify misunderstandings, monitor individual progress, and provide alternative ways for students to demonstrate learning where appropriate. The fifth theme concerns assistive technology and accessible materials. Digital accessibility tools, communication supports, captioned resources, and text-to-speech applications may reduce particular barriers, although their usefulness depends on students' needs, appropriate selection, and teacher guidance. The sixth theme emphasizes social-emotional support, classroom belonging, and culturally responsive teaching, indicating that meaningful inclusion involves both academic access and respectful participation.The final theme concerns implementation challenges. Across the reviewed literature, insufficient teacher training, limited resources, large class sizes, inadequate specialist support, and inconsistent institutional commitment appear as important barriers to effective inclusion. The analysis also indicates that strategies should not be considered universally effective simply because they are widely recommended. Outcomes may differ across age groups, educational subjects, disability categories, language backgrounds, and school contexts. Consequently, inclusive teaching should be evaluated through several indicators, including academic progress, participation, task completion, independence, student confidence, and sense of belonging. Since this study does not use newly collected numerical data, no original statistical tests, percentages, or experimental effect sizes are calculated. The analysis instead synthesizes reported findings and identifies practical patterns that can guide educators and future research.

FINDINGS

The literature review identifies several major findings regarding inclusive teaching strategies for students with diverse educational needs.First, differentiated instruction is an important approach to responding to learner diversity. Adjusting the pace of instruction, task complexity, learning materials, and levels of support can provide students with different pathways toward meaningful learning objectives. Recent research emphasizes the value of flexible activities, student choice, teacher guidance, and ongoing assessment. However, successful differentiation requires purposeful planning and should not be reduced to preparing separate worksheets without considering individual learning goals. Second, Universal Design for Learning supports proactive accessibility. Planning multiple ways to present information, engage learners, and demonstrate understanding can help reduce barriers before they interfere with learning. The reviewed literature suggests that UDL is most useful when applied meaningfully to lesson design rather than treated as a checklist or a framework exclusively for students with identified disabilities. Third, cooperative learning and scaffolding can support academic participation and social inclusion. Structured peer activities give students opportunities to communicate, share ideas, and contribute to group goals. Modeling, guided practice, clear instructions, and gradual release of responsibility can help students develop skills and independence. Nevertheless, teachers must ensure that group activities provide equitable participation and that scaffolding is adjusted to individual

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progress. Fourth, flexible assessment and assistive technology can improve access to learning. Formative assessment helps teachers identify difficulties and adjust instruction, while accessible resources may allow students to receive information and express their understanding in alternative ways. The literature emphasizes the importance of matching assessment methods and technological tools to the learning objective and the student's requirements. These approaches complement rather than replace effective teaching and professional judgment. Fifth, social-emotional support and teacher collaboration are essential components of inclusive practice. Respectful classroom relationships, constructive feedback, family involvement, and coordination among educators and specialists can contribute to students' participation and sense of belonging.

CONCLUSION

Inclusive teaching strategies play an important role in creating educational environments in which students with diverse educational needs can access meaningful instruction, participate in classroom activities, and make progress toward academic and personal goals. This study examined the contribution of differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning, cooperative learning, scaffolding, formative assessment, assistive technology, culturally responsive teaching, and social-emotional support to inclusive classroom practice. The reviewed literature suggests that these approaches can help teachers respond to differences in students' abilities, learning preferences, language backgrounds, disabilities, and prior educational experiences. By offering flexible learning pathways, accessible materials, constructive feedback, and appropriate levels of support, teachers can reduce barriers and create more equitable opportunities for participation.The study also highlights that effective inclusion requires more than the use of individual teaching techniques. Teacher preparation, family collaboration, specialist support, adequate resources, and supportive school leadership are essential for translating inclusive principles into consistent classroom practice. Educators should monitor student progress and adjust instructional approaches according to evidence of learning rather than assuming that the same strategy will work equally well for every student. Schools should also recognize academic achievement, independence, engagement, emotional well-being, and social belonging as interconnected dimensions of educational success.Despite the potential benefits of inclusive teaching, practical barriers such as large class sizes, insufficient training, limited funding, and inadequate access to assistive technologies continue to affect implementation. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated action by teachers, school administrators, families, policymakers, and educational support professionals. Since the present study is based on existing literature rather than original empirical data, its conclusions should be interpreted as a synthesis of reported evidence rather than proof of a new causal relationship. Future research should investigate inclusive strategies across different age groups, educational subjects, disability categories, and school contexts through classroom observations, interviews, surveys, and carefully designed intervention studies. Overall, inclusive teaching is best understood as an ongoing process of designing accessible instruction, respecting learner differences, evaluating progress, and ensuring that every student has a meaningful opportunity to learn and participate.

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