



# **LIVED EXPERIENCES OF NEWLY HIRED SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS TEACHING SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION LEARNERS IN MAINSTREAM CLASSES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of newly hired Senior High School English teachers in fostering professional growth within inclusive mainstream classrooms. It aimed to examine their experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights in teaching learners with special needs (SNED). Fourteen teachers from private and public schools were selected through purposive sampling; seven participated in in-depth interviews and seven in focus group discussions to ensure rich and comprehensive data. Thematic analysis was employed to systematically interpret the data. Findings revealed that teachers' experiences centered on developing professional identity and commitment while facing academic and behavioral challenges, emotional burden, role conflict, and insufficient preparation for inclusive teaching. They also encountered difficulties in adjusting instruction, materials, and assessment, alongside institutional and resource constraints. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated resilience and adaptability through collaborative support, differentiated instruction, inclusive assessment practices, and effective classroom management strategies. Their coping mechanisms included fostering peer support, ensuring equity and inclusion, regulating emotional responses, and actively seeking institutional assistance. Moreover, teachers emphasized the importance of empathy, strong teacher-parent collaboration, continuous professional development, and strategic instructional adaptation to meet diverse learner needs. The study highlights the need for strengthened training, adequate resources, and sustained support systems to enhance inclusive education practices. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of SNED integration in mainstream classrooms and provide valuable implications for teachers, school administrators, policymakers, and future researchers in improving inclusive and equitable education.

**Keywords:** *Mainstream Classroom, Senior High School English Teachers, Qualitative Research, Phenomenological Approach, Thematic Analysis, Philippines*

## INTRODUCTION

As inclusive education continues to expand, newly hired Senior High School English teachers are increasingly confronted with the challenge of addressing the diverse needs of learners with special needs within mainstream classrooms. Many of these teachers lack the necessary skills and expertise to effectively teach students with conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, partial deafness, and partial blindness, which can negatively affect both teaching performance and teacher self-efficacy. In addition, mainstream classrooms often lack sufficient resources and assistive technologies needed to support equitable learning opportunities. The absence of strong institutional and collegial support further intensifies the difficulty of balancing the needs of the general student population with those of learners requiring specialized attention, often resulting in heightened stress and feelings of professional isolation.

Studies conducted in various international contexts reveal similar challenges. In Indonesia, teachers were found to be inadequately prepared to address diverse learners due to limited experience in inclusive teaching (Utami et al., 2021). Likewise, in Malaysia, English teachers reported difficulties in designing instruction suitable for learners with varying disabilities, citing issues related to preparedness and time constraints (Karuppannan et al., 2021). In Japan, insufficient training in inclusive education has also been identified as a barrier preventing teachers from effectively meeting the needs of students with special needs in mainstream classrooms (Pryor et al., 2023).

In the Philippine context, particularly in Iligan City, teachers encounter systemic, instructional, and environmental barriers when accommodating learners with special needs. Many educators lack formal training in inclusive strategies, limiting their ability to respond effectively to diverse learning requirements. Furthermore, weak collaboration among key stakeholders, including parents, school administrators, and policymakers, hinders the implementation of inclusive practices (Allam & Martin, 2021). Similarly, experiences from Tagum City highlight practical challenges faced by teachers, such as adapting instructional materials and providing accommodations for learners with visual impairments, including the use of large-print materials and assistive technologies during assessments.

Existing literature emphasizes that inadequate training, limited resources, and insufficient time are critical barriers to effective inclusive education (Palanca et al., 2021; Gur & Yikmis, 2021). While these studies provide valuable insights into inclusive education challenges, there remains a significant research gap concerning the lived experiences of newly hired Senior High School English teachers specifically. Addressing this gap is timely and necessary, as it allows for a deeper understanding of how novice educators navigate inclusive teaching contexts and respond to the needs of learners with special needs.

This study, therefore, aimed to explore the experiences and strategies of newly hired Senior High School English teachers in promoting inclusive practices within mainstream classrooms in Tagum City. It sought to identify effective teaching approaches that fostered engagement, social integration, and equitable learning opportunities for students with special needs. Furthermore, the findings of this study were intended to inform professional development initiatives, guide policy improvements, and contribute to the enhancement of inclusive education practices.

## Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of the newly hired Senior High School English teachers in teaching Special Needs Education Learners in the mainstream classes?
2. How do newly hired Senior High School English teachers address the challenges when teaching Special Needs Education Learners in mainstream classes?
3. What insights do newly hired Senior High School English teachers gain from their experiences in engaging with Special Needs Education Learners in mainstream classes?

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of newly hired Senior High School English teachers in inclusive classrooms, particularly in teaching learners with special needs. Phenomenology was utilized to understand how teachers perceive, interpret, and make meaning of their experiences in real classroom settings (Coog, 2021; Donato & Lovitos, 2023). The study was conducted in Tagum City, Davao del Norte, Philippines, focusing on teachers from both public and private Senior High School institutions. The specific names of the institutions were not disclosed to maintain confidentiality and comply with ethical considerations.

The study employed a purposive sampling method, selecting participants based on predetermined criteria relevant to the research objectives. The participants were 14 newly hired Senior High School English teachers, with seven participating in In-Depth Interviews (IDI) and seven in Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (a) teachers with three years of teaching experience or less, (b) English teachers handling mainstream classrooms with learners with special needs, (c) teachers currently employed in private or public schools within Tagum City, and (d) holders of valid teaching licenses. Teachers with more than three years of experience and those without a valid teaching license were excluded to ensure that participants had direct and relevant experiences with the phenomenon under study.

The primary instrument used in this study was a researcher-made semi-structured interview guide, which was utilized for both the IDIs and FGDs. The instrument consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses regarding teachers' experiences, coping mechanisms, teaching strategies, and challenges in inclusive

classrooms. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility for follow-up questions and probing to gain deeper insights. The interview guide was subjected to expert validation to ensure its clarity, appropriateness, and alignment with the research objectives.

Data were gathered through a systematic data collection procedure. First, ethical clearance was obtained from the appropriate ethics review committee. After securing approval, permissions were sought from school administrators and relevant educational authorities. Participants were recruited through direct invitation (via email, messaging applications such as Messenger, and formal letters) and public postings (e.g., social media platforms like Facebook). Interested participants were provided with an Information and Consent Form (ICF), which detailed the purpose of the study, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their rights as participants, including voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any time.

The actual data collection involved conducting face-to-face In-Depth Interviews (IDI) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) using the semi-structured interview guide. All sessions were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants, and field notes were also taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim, ensuring that participants' exact words and meanings were preserved. To enhance the credibility of the findings, member checking was conducted by allowing participants to review and validate the preliminary interpretations of the data.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework. The process involved: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report. This systematic approach enabled the identification of patterns and meaningful themes that reflected the lived experiences of the participants.

The scope of the study was limited to newly hired Senior High School English teachers in Tagum City, Davao del Norte, who had experience teaching learners with special needs in mainstream classrooms. The study focused on their lived experiences, including their challenges, coping mechanisms, and instructional strategies in inclusive education settings.

The limitations of the study include its small sample size, which is typical of phenomenological research but limits generalizability. The findings are context-specific and may not be applicable to other regions or educational settings. Additionally, as the study relied on self-reported data, there is a possibility of response bias. The researcher's active role in data collection and analysis may also introduce subjectivity; however, measures such as member checking and adherence to systematic thematic analysis were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

Overall, the study aimed to provide rich, in-depth insights into the experiences of newly hired Senior High School English teachers in inclusive classrooms, contributing to the development of more responsive and inclusive teaching practices.

## RESULTS

**Table 1**  
**Lived Experiences of the Newly Hired Senior High School English Teachers in Teaching Special Needs Education Learners in the Mainstream Classes**

Major Themes	Core Ideas
<p><b>Dealing with Learners' Academic and Behavioral Challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• struggling with student comprehension and readiness</li> <li>• struggling with students' ability to sound out / utter letters and words</li> <li>• feeling challenged due difficulty on what strategy to apply</li> <li>• needing for more special attention to improve student engagement</li> <li>• managing attention – triggered tantrums during participation</li> <li>• navigating speech-related social challenges despite strong cognitive ability</li> <li>• having high intellectual ability alongside immature communication and comprehension skills</li> <li>• handling students with autism while managing challenges beyond academics</li> <li>• struggling to determine appropriate strategies due to inconsistent student behavior</li> </ul>
<p><b>Developing Professional Growth and Commitment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• finding fulfillment in teaching despite the need for more training as a newly hired teacher</li> <li>• feeling motivated yet challenged to do one's best as a teacher</li> <li>• embracing flexibility and understanding in handling inevitable diverse learner cases</li> <li>• developing greater passion, creativity, and professional growth through teaching diverse learners</li> <li>• viewing the experience as a preparation for future challenges in delivering equitable, quality education</li> <li>• developing greater patience in teaching students with special needs</li> <li>• increased confidence and motivation upon seeing positive results from my students</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing professional capability to better support learners with special needs in future teaching</li> </ul>
<p><b>Adjusting Instruction, Materials, and Assessment Practices</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adapting lesson plans through continuous trial and error to meet diverse learner needs</li> <li>• modifying lesson delivery to meet the specialized needs of students with special needs</li> <li>• providing specialized printed materials with large fonts to accommodate student needs</li> <li>• struggling to find suitable strategies for both students with special needs and their classmates</li> <li>• adjusting lesson pacing to meet the needs of students with special needsexperiencing the need to develop new combinations of techniques, learning styles, and strategies</li> <li>• becoming more flexible as a teacher through teaching students with special needs</li> <li>• feeling an increased differentiated strategies for the students with special needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Navigating Emotional Burden and Role Conflict in Inclusive Teaching</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• juggling multiple roles while experiencing exhaustion from diverse student needs</li> <li>• experiencing inclusion-related exhaustion and guilt from limited attention to students</li> <li>• teaching SNED students in mainstream classrooms presents challenges due to the diverse range of learners and being a new teacher</li> <li>• handling SNED without prior training and as a non-SNED teacher pose a challenge</li> <li>• feeling anxious about handling a special needs student while adjusting teaching approaches</li> <li>• balancing workload between regular students while managing the added demands of supporting students with special needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Experiencing Unpreparedness and Training Gaps in Handling SNED Learners</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognizing the need for training for non-special needs education (SNED) teachers</li> <li>• acknowledging unpreparedness for teaching learners with special educational needs</li> <li>• recognizing the challenge of handling students with special needs as an English teacher without prior knowledge</li> <li>• recognizing the gap between college training, which focused on academics, and the broader needs for SNED students</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• experiencing uncertainty in selecting effective teaching strategies especially for SNED learners</li> <li>• lacking training and exposure to handling special needs case</li> </ul>
<p><b>Confronting Institutional Resource, and Structural Constraints</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognizing the need for specialized resources and support for students with special needs in public schools</li> <li>• lacking support for special needs in the school</li> <li>• experiencing lack of institutional support for handling special needs learners</li> <li>• relying on student-provided gadgets due to lack of school resources</li> <li>• spending excessive time navigating classrooms across buildings instead of preparing lessons</li> <li>• encountering time management issues when catering to SNED questions</li> </ul>

**Table 2**

**Coping Mechanisms of Newly Hired Teachers in Addressing Challenges when Teaching Children with Special Needs Education Learners in Mainstream Classes**

Major Themes	Core Ideas
<p><b>Ensuring Equity, Fairness, and Social Inclusion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• balancing attention by providing study materials for both the student with special needs and classmates</li> <li>• treating the student with special needs like any other classmate</li> <li>• fostering inclusion by ensuring the student feels like part of the class while monitoring understanding</li> <li>• acting as both a friend and guide, offering special attention when needed, while explaining the reasons to classmates to maintain fairness</li> <li>• ensuring the student with special needs is included and not left behind, despite the potential for exclusion by other students</li> <li>• implementing inclusive and flexible seating arrangements by prioritizing front seating for</li> </ul>

	<p>nearsighted students while allowing learners with physical disabilities to choose comfortable and safe seating positions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● balancing tasks by providing personalized activities tailored to the student's specific needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Adjusting Pacing and Assessment for Accessibility</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● monitoring lesson pacing while consistently checking for understanding to ensure that students with special needs remain engaged, supported, and free from frustration during learning activities</li> <li>● adapting lesson pacing to accommodate the learning needs of students with special needs</li> <li>● extending time for students with special needs to ensure they can keep up with the lesson</li> <li>● printing larger fonts and allowing the use of gadgets to support students with specific learning needs</li> <li>● putting in extra effort during examinations by reading questions aloud to support the SNED student</li> <li>● encouraging classmates to support and help prevent bullying while fostering understanding and empathy</li> </ul>
<p><b>Establishing Peer and Collaborative Support Systems</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Utilizing peer support systems to enhance communication, reduce anxiety, and balance diverse learner needs through collaborative strategies</li> <li>● pairing students with high-performing peers to support learning</li> <li>● encouraging inclusive participation and leadership to boost student confidence</li> <li>● ensuring collaboration and group activities are tailored to the capacity of students with special needs</li> <li>● ensuring equal participation from all students to maintain inclusivity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Regulating Behavior and Emotional Responses</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● incorporating attention-grabbing techniques and using structured attention signals to effectively engage SNED students while managing tantrums and misbehavior in a supportive manner</li> <li>● allowing independent work when a student with special needs resist collaboration</li> <li>● maintaining firm yet supportive discipline and authority, despite emotional reactions, to ensure</li> </ul>

	<p>compliance while facilitating a structured and effective learning environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● recognizing independent achievement and reinforcing it through positive feedback</li> <li>● managing fear while projecting confidence in handling students with special needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Engaging Collaborative and Institutional Support Systems</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● collaborating with colleagues to identify effective strategies for supporting students with special needs</li> <li>● maintaining clear and respectful communication with parents to manage expectations and ensure proper support</li> <li>● seeking guidance from colleagues to address challenges in handling special needs learners</li> <li>● coordinating with parents to identify student needs and manage tantrum triggers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Planning and Differentiating Instruction for Diverse Learners</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● simplifying instructions and using visual aids to enhance student understanding</li> <li>● focusing on providing written instructions for students who struggle verbally but excel in written tasks</li> <li>● addressing challenges by analyzing and understanding each student's strengths and weaknesses</li> </ul>

**Table 3**

**Insights Gained by Newly Hired Senior high School English Teachers from their Experiences in Engaging with Special Needs Education in Mainstream Classes**

<b>Major Themes</b>	<b>Core Ideas</b>
<p><b>Fostering Teacher-Parent Collaboration</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● establish a partnership between education and family as key</li> <li>● encourage collaboration between teachers and parents for SNED support</li> <li>● encourage acceptance among parents to better support children with special needs</li> <li>● foster collaboration with parents for effective support of special needs students</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• highlight the importance of parent conferences to keep parents updated on their children's progress in the classroom</li> <li>• coordinate with parents to identify specific needs and triggers for better classroom support</li> <li>• seeking advice and guidance from experienced SNED teachers to address instructional challenges</li> <li>• collaborating with stakeholders to overcome resource limitations</li> <li>• coordinating with parents to identify student needs and manage tantrum triggers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cultivate Empathy and Build Meaningful Relationships</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintain patience and understanding when working with SNED learners</li> <li>• develop sensitivity in identifying and responding to learners' needs</li> <li>• build open and approachable teacher-student relationships to foster trust</li> <li>• protect students' emotions by practicing sensitivity in communication</li> <li>• realize that SNED learners has emotional needs and slow pacing, teachers must be sensitive, understanding, and considerate</li> <li>• develop greater empathy and compassion through interaction with students</li> <li>• recognize that SNED learners need additional support, gaining confidence is a big achievement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reframe Perceptions of Learners with Special Needs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand that SNED learners need additional support, not that they are slow learners</li> <li>• recognize students' unique talents beyond academic performance</li> <li>• correct misconceptions by recognizing that students with special needs can understand when properly supported</li> <li>• overcome misconceptions by recognizing that students with special needs can also excel</li> <li>• recognize perceived weakness as strengths while developing patience and self-awareness</li> <li>• understand that teaching involves not only delivering content but also understanding each learner as an individual</li> <li>• realize that students with special needs can form friendships</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prepare to handle diverse types of learners with varying needs</li> </ul>

<p><b>Adapt and Strategize English Instruction to Meet Diverse Needs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learn to adjust and became flexible when it comes to SNED learners</li> <li>• adjust lesson pacing to avoid rushing when teaching students with special needs</li> <li>• recognize the diversity of learners and provide strategies to address different learning needs while ensuring inclusivity</li> <li>• adapt lessons to emphasize application, ensuring students, particularly those with special needs, can effectively apply what they have learned</li> <li>• providing peer assistance during tasks to support engagement in learning activities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strengthen Teachers' Capacity through Training</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide training and seminars to support non-SNED teachers in handling students with special needs</li> <li>• recognize the importance of professional development in preparing teachers for handling students with special needs</li> <li>• advocate for more DepEd training in special education with non-aligned backgrounds</li> <li>• recognizing the importance of professional development training focused on special needs to enhance teaching effectiveness</li> <li>• realizing the value of workshops and seminars to broaden knowledge on properly handling students with special needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Provide Adequate Resources for Inclusive SNED Support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• access to tailored resources enhances handling of special needs cases.</li> <li>• provide resources that ensure security and inclusion for SNED students is crucial.</li> <li>• improve continuously in utilizing available resources for SNED students</li> <li>• institutions need to recognize and provide resources for learners with special needs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Commitment to Differentiated and Responsive Instruction for Diverse Learners</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• going the extra mile as an English teacher to ensure students with special needs benefit from lessons</li> <li>• recognizing the effectiveness of differentiated activities for diverse learners but in exchange of challenges by maintaining it</li> <li>• using multiple approaches to address the diverse needs of students with special needs</li> </ul>

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Lived Experiences of the Newly Hired Senior High School English Teachers in Teaching Special Needs Education Learners in the Mainstream Classes**

#### **Dealing with Learners' Academic and Behavioral Challenges**

The findings under this theme highlight the difficulties newly hired teachers encounter in addressing both academic and behavioral needs, particularly among struggling readers and students with conditions such as autism. Participants reported challenges in managing literacy gaps alongside behavioral concerns, which often disrupted classroom dynamics. These results are consistent with Foley (2022), who emphasized that beginning teachers often feel unprepared to handle diverse learner needs. Similarly, Honteveros et al. (2025) noted that teacher confidence in inclusive classrooms is strongly influenced by the level of preparation and institutional support. The findings also align with Villatima (2025), who reported a decline in reading achievement across grade levels, contributing to instructional challenges. Overall, the results confirm that academic difficulties are often closely linked with behavioral issues, reinforcing the need for comprehensive support systems for teachers.

#### **Developing Professional Growth and Commitment**

Despite the challenges, participants demonstrated significant professional growth and a strengthened sense of commitment to inclusive education. Teachers expressed fulfillment in supporting learners with special needs and reported increased patience, flexibility, and dedication. These findings are consistent with Pérez-Salas et al. (2021), who argued that engagement in inclusive classrooms fosters deeper professional commitment. Likewise, Alharbi and Iqtadar (2024) emphasized that inclusive teaching enhances teachers' confidence and motivation. The results also support Palei (2024), who highlighted that inclusive education promotes empathy and adaptability. Thus, the study reveals that inclusive teaching, while challenging, serves as a catalyst for professional development and identity formation among newly hired teachers.

#### **Adjusting Instruction, Materials, and Assessment Practices**

This theme reflects the necessity for flexibility in instructional practices within inclusive classrooms. Participants reported modifying lesson plans, simplifying instructions, and creating specialized materials to accommodate diverse learners. These findings are consistent with Zulaikha and Laeli (2023) and Ricaforte et al. (2025), who emphasized that differentiated instruction and adaptive teaching strategies are essential in addressing the varied needs of learners and enhancing student engagement, particularly for those with disabilities. The results confirm that inclusive teaching requires continuous adjustment, innovation, and responsiveness in instructional strategies to ensure meaningful participation and learning for all students.

## **Navigating Emotional Burden and Role Conflict in Inclusive Teaching**

Participants reported experiencing emotional strain as they navigated multiple roles, including educator, counselor, and emotional support provider. Feelings of anxiety, overwhelm, and emotional exhaustion were common among newly hired teachers. These findings are consistent with Nath et al. (2024), who identified emotional labor as a significant aspect of teaching in inclusive settings. Additionally, Spray et al. (2025) discussed “reality shock,” which is evident in the participants’ experiences as they adjusted to classroom demands. Wang et al. (2021) further supported these findings by highlighting the psychological strain experienced by teachers providing emotional support to students. The study confirms that emotional challenges are a critical component of inclusive teaching, particularly for novice educators.

## **Experiencing Unpreparedness and Training Gaps in Handling SNED Learners**

The findings reveal that participants felt inadequately prepared to teach students with special educational needs due to limited training and experience. Teachers expressed uncertainty in applying appropriate instructional strategies and accommodating diverse learners. These results are consistent with Cerbo and Dy (2024), who found that teachers without formal training in special education often struggle with inclusive practices. Similarly, Tiwari (2024) emphasized that gaps in pre-service education contribute to teachers’ lack of readiness. The findings also align with Vergara et al. (2025), who highlighted the importance of continuous professional development in improving teachers’ competence. These results indicate that insufficient training remains a significant barrier to effective inclusive teaching.

## **Confronting Institutional Resource and Structural Constraints**

This theme highlights the systemic challenges faced by teachers, including limited resources, lack of institutional support, and time constraints. Participants reported difficulties in accessing instructional materials, technology, and support systems, particularly in public schools. These findings are consistent with Sutrisno and Briganti (2025), who identified resource limitations as a major barrier to inclusive education. Rizk and Hillier (2022) also emphasized the importance of technology in supporting learners with disabilities, aligning with participants’ concerns about limited access. Additionally, Dagoy et al. (2024) highlighted time management challenges among teachers balancing diverse learner needs and administrative tasks. These findings confirm that institutional and structural factors significantly affect the implementation of inclusive education.

## **Coping Mechanisms of Newly Hired Teachers in Addressing Challenges when Teaching Children with Special Needs Education Learners in Mainstream Classes**

### **Ensuring Equity, Fairness, and Social Inclusion**

The results revealed that newly hired teachers prioritize equity and fairness by balancing individualized support with inclusive practices. Participants emphasized providing additional attention to SNED learners while ensuring that they remain socially integrated with their peers. This indicates that teachers view inclusivity not only as academic support but also as fostering a sense of belonging within the classroom. This interpretation is consistent with Rodriguez et al. (2024) and Simón et al. (2021), who emphasized that inclusive education requires equitable access to learning opportunities and that fairness involves providing differentiated support rather than treating all learners the same. The findings reinforce the importance of inclusive and equitable classroom practices in promoting both academic success and social inclusion for learners with diverse needs.

### **Adjusting Pacing and Assessment for Accessibility**

The findings show that teachers adjust pacing and assessment strategies to accommodate diverse learner needs. Participants reported slowing down instruction, extending time, and modifying assessments to ensure accessibility and meaningful participation. These practices reflect teachers' recognition that rigid instructional approaches are ineffective in inclusive classrooms. These results are consistent with Anugrah and Muliati (2025) and Wherfel et al. (2024), who emphasized that flexible pacing and modified assessments are essential components of differentiated instruction that promote fairness and accessibility for all learners. The findings highlight that adaptive pacing and assessment strategies are crucial in ensuring that students with diverse needs can actively participate and demonstrate their learning in inclusive education settings.

### **Establishing Peer and Collaborative Support Systems**

The results indicate that teachers employ peer and collaborative strategies to support SNED learners. Participants described the use of buddy systems and structured group activities to enhance both academic and social engagement, suggesting that peer interaction is viewed as a vital component of inclusive learning. This finding aligns with Huber and Carter (2023), who identified peer-mediated strategies as effective in supporting students with special needs. Additionally, Freire et al. (2024) emphasized the role of peer relationships in fostering a sense of belonging and improving social integration among learners. The consistency of these findings with existing literature confirms that collaborative approaches are highly effective in promoting both academic participation and social development in inclusive classrooms.

## **Regulating Behavior and Supporting Emotional Stability**

The findings reveal that teachers actively manage classroom behavior while providing emotional support to students. Participants reported using structured routines, clear expectations, and emotional regulation strategies to maintain a positive and supportive learning environment. This reflects their understanding of the need to balance discipline with empathy in inclusive classrooms. These results are consistent with Yolanda et al. (2025) and Anshu (2025), who emphasized that structured classroom management and emotional intelligence are essential in addressing both behavioral and emotional needs of learners. The findings further indicate that effective emotional and behavioral management serves as a critical coping mechanism, enabling teachers to foster student engagement and maintain a positive classroom climate in inclusive teaching settings.

## **Engaging Collaborative and Institutional Support Systems**

The findings show that teachers rely on collaboration with colleagues, school administrators, and parents to address classroom challenges. Participants emphasized the importance of professional support, shared practices, and open communication with parents in improving student outcomes. This reflects the understanding that inclusive teaching is a collective effort that extends beyond the individual teacher. These results are consistent with Lakkala et al. (2021) and Woodcock and Hardy (2023), who highlighted the significance of professional collaboration and strong school–parent partnerships in supporting inclusive education. The findings underscore that sustained collaboration is essential in effectively addressing the complexities of inclusive classrooms and in promoting meaningful learning experiences for all students.

## **Planning and Differentiating Instruction for Diverse Learners**

The results indicate that teachers engage in careful planning and differentiation to meet the needs of diverse learners. Participants reported modifying tasks, simplifying instructions, and using varied materials to enhance learning. This suggests that teachers recognize the importance of flexible and responsive instruction. These findings are consistent with Ouyang and Ye (2023), who identified differentiation as a key strategy in inclusive education. Godor (2021) also emphasized flexible instructional practices, while Yudistira and Hasanah (2024) highlighted the importance of understanding learners' needs. The consistency of these findings with prior research confirms that differentiated instruction is fundamental in supporting inclusive classrooms.

### **Insights Gained by Newly Hired Senior high School English Teachers from their Experiences in Engaging with Special Needs Education in Mainstream Classes**

## **Fostering Teacher–Parent Collaboration**

The findings reveal that newly hired teachers recognize the importance of strong collaboration with parents in supporting SNED learners. Participants emphasized

continuous communication and shared responsibility in addressing students' needs, although challenges such as parental denial were also noted. This suggests that teachers view collaboration not only as a support mechanism but also as an emotional process that requires patience, empathy, and understanding. These findings are consistent with Bakir and Elmal (2025) and McCaleb (2022), who emphasized the critical role of parental involvement and the teacher's responsibility in guiding parents toward acceptance and active engagement. The results underscore that sustained communication and partnership between teachers and parents are essential components of effective inclusive education.

### **Cultivating Empathy and Building Meaningful Relationships**

The results show that teachers developed empathy and built meaningful relationships with SNED learners, fostering trust and emotional connection. Participants recognized that patience, care, and emotional support are essential in promoting student engagement and well-being. This indicates that teachers view emotional connection as a core component of effective inclusive teaching. These findings are consistent with Dogra (2025) and Gyeltshen and Gyeltshen (2022), who emphasized the importance of empathy and positive teacher–student relationships in understanding students' needs and enhancing engagement. The results highlight that emotional connection plays a vital role in creating supportive and inclusive classroom environments that promote both learning and well-being.

### **Reframing Perceptions of Learners with Special Needs**

The findings indicate that teachers transformed their initial perceptions of SNED learners over time. Participants moved from viewing these students as limited in ability to recognizing their unique strengths and potential. This reflects a shift in mindset that is essential for effective inclusive teaching. This result is consistent with Jury et al. (2021), who noted that positive teacher attitudes support inclusive practices. Similarly, Rodriguez (2024) emphasized that inclusive education helps correct misconceptions about learners' abilities. Adeoye et al. (2023) further supported the importance of valuing diversity, indicating that the findings are strongly aligned with prior research.

### **Adapting and Strategizing English Instruction to Meet Diverse Needs**

The findings reveal that teachers adapted their instructional strategies to better support SNED learners. Participants reported using simplified instructions, scaffolding, repetition, and slower pacing to enhance understanding. This suggests that teachers developed practical strategies through experience and reflection. These findings are consistent with Naja and Hameed (2024), who emphasized the need for flexible instructional approaches in inclusive classrooms. Yuliana and Sukinah (2025) also highlighted the effectiveness of scaffolding strategies, while Faerm (2023) emphasized reflective teaching practices. The results align with previous studies, confirming that adaptive instruction is essential in inclusive education.

## **Strengthening Teachers' Capacity through Training**

The results underscore the critical role of professional development in enhancing teachers' competence in inclusive education. Participants highlighted the need for continuous training, workshops, and seminars to strengthen their instructional skills and build confidence in handling diverse learners. This suggests that teachers perceive professional development as an essential component in effectively addressing the complexities of inclusive classrooms. These findings are consistent with Ng'andu (2023) and Kholil et al. (2023), who emphasized that structured professional development significantly improves teaching practices and equips educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to implement inclusive strategies effectively. Overall, the results affirm that sustained professional growth is vital in strengthening teachers' capacity to deliver responsive and inclusive education.

## **Providing Adequate Resources for Inclusive SNED Support**

The findings reveal that teachers recognize the critical importance of adequate resources in supporting SNED learners. Participants emphasized the need for specialized instructional materials, institutional support, and active government involvement to create effective and sustainable inclusive learning environments. This highlights the understanding that access to appropriate resources is fundamental to the successful implementation of inclusive education practices. These findings align with Ramadani (2024) and Alshoura (2023), who both emphasized that sufficient resources and strong institutional support are essential in ensuring meaningful learning experiences and improving outcomes for students with special educational needs. Overall, the results underscore that without adequate resources and systemic support, the effectiveness of inclusive education remains limited.

## **Commitment to Differentiated and Responsive Instruction for Diverse Learners**

The findings reveal that teachers developed a strong commitment to differentiated and responsive instruction. Participants emphasized flexibility in teaching strategies, task modification, and goal setting to accommodate diverse learners. This indicates that teachers internalized inclusive practices as part of their professional identity. These findings are consistent with Kaur and Bhatia (2024), who emphasized flexible pedagogical practices in inclusive education. Baldoza (2026) also highlighted the importance of instructional adaptability, while Woodcock et al. (2023) linked teacher commitment to inclusive practices with student success. The results align with previous studies, confirming that commitment to differentiation is central to effective inclusive teaching.

## **Conclusions**

This study explored the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of newly hired Senior High School English teachers in teaching Special Needs Education (SNED) learners in mainstream classrooms. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of how these teachers navigate inclusive education and respond to its demands.

In response to the first research question, the findings revealed that newly hired teachers experience a range of academic, behavioral, emotional, and institutional challenges in inclusive classrooms. These include managing learners' diverse academic and behavioral needs, adjusting instructional practices, and coping with emotional burden and role conflict. Despite these difficulties, teachers demonstrated professional growth and commitment, highlighting their resilience and dedication to fostering inclusive learning environments. However, experiences of unpreparedness and limited institutional support indicate gaps in training and resources necessary for effective inclusive teaching.

With regard to the second research question, the study found that teachers employ various coping mechanisms to address these challenges. These include ensuring equity and social inclusion, adjusting pacing and assessment, establishing peer support systems, regulating behavior and emotions, engaging in collaboration with colleagues and parents, and implementing differentiated instruction. These strategies reflect teachers' adaptability and their ability to balance the diverse needs of learners while maintaining effective classroom practices. The findings suggest that coping in inclusive classrooms is a dynamic process that involves both instructional and relational approaches.

In answering the third research question, the study revealed that teachers gained significant insights from their experiences. These include recognizing the importance of teacher-parent collaboration, developing empathy and meaningful relationships with learners, reframing perceptions of students with special needs, and strengthening their instructional strategies. Teachers also acknowledged the need for continuous professional development and adequate resources to support inclusive education. These insights contributed to a deeper understanding of inclusive teaching and reinforced their commitment to differentiated and responsive instruction.

Overall, the study concludes that while newly hired Senior High School English teachers face considerable challenges in teaching SNED learners in mainstream classrooms, they demonstrate strong adaptability, reflective practice, and professional growth. Their experiences highlight the need for enhanced training, institutional support, and resource provision to strengthen inclusive education. At the same time, their coping mechanisms and insights underscore the potential for teachers to become effective facilitators of inclusive learning through continuous learning and commitment.

## **Recommendations**

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of newly hired Senior High School English teachers in teaching Special Needs Education (SNED) learners within mainstream classrooms. It sought to highlight the challenges they encountered, the coping strategies they employed, and the insights they developed in implementing inclusive education. While the findings provide meaningful contributions to the field, several areas remain open for further investigation and application.

First, future research may examine the long-term professional development of teachers in inclusive education. Since this study focused on early teaching experiences, a longitudinal approach could provide deeper insights into how teachers' skills, attitudes, and instructional practices evolve over time. Such research would help determine whether continuous exposure to SNED learners strengthens teachers' inclusive competencies and teaching effectiveness.

Second, future studies may expand the scope of participants by including teachers from other subject areas such as Mathematics, Science, and Technical-Vocational disciplines. Inclusive education is implemented across all learning areas; therefore, exploring diverse teaching contexts would provide a more comprehensive understanding of inclusive practices. This may also reveal subject-specific challenges and strategies that were not captured in the present study.

Third, it is recommended that future research incorporate the perspectives of SNED learners and their parents. Including these stakeholders would offer a more holistic understanding of inclusive education, particularly in evaluating how teaching strategies are experienced by learners and supported at home. Their insights may also help validate the effectiveness of current practices and identify areas for improvement in both academic and socio-emotional support.

Fourth, future researchers may utilize quantitative or mixed-method approaches to examine the effectiveness of the inclusive strategies identified in this study. For instance, the impact of differentiated instruction, scaffolding techniques, and peer support systems on students' academic performance, engagement, and language development may be measured. Comparative studies across different regions, schools, or districts may also be conducted to determine how variations in implementation influence outcomes. If some findings appear context-specific or unexpected, further research may be necessary to verify these results and explore underlying factors.

Fifth, future studies may investigate the role of institutional and administrative support in enhancing inclusive teaching. Factors such as mentoring systems, professional learning communities, and access to instructional resources may be quantitatively assessed to determine their influence on teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. Comparative analyses across different contexts may further explain how support systems contribute to or hinder inclusive education practices.

Sixth, research may also evaluate the effectiveness of teacher education and training programs in preparing educators for inclusive classrooms. Qualitative studies may explore teachers' lived experiences regarding their training, while quantitative studies may assess the alignment of teacher education curricula with the actual demands of inclusive teaching. Findings from such studies may guide improvements in teacher preparation programs to ensure responsiveness to diverse learners.

In terms of application, the findings of this study may inform the development of intervention and training programs aimed at strengthening teachers' capacity for inclusive

education. Schools and educational institutions may design targeted professional development programs focusing on differentiated instruction, behavior management, emotional support strategies, and the use of assistive technologies. Additionally, structured mentoring programs for newly hired teachers may be implemented to provide guidance and support in managing inclusive classrooms effectively.

### **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

The researcher affirms that this study was conducted in full compliance with established ethical standards in research. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that they were fully informed about the purpose, procedures, and nature of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all respondents were given the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or consequence. The researcher ensured that the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were strictly maintained by not disclosing any identifying information in any part of the research. All data collected were handled in accordance with the Data Privacy Act, with appropriate measures taken to securely store and protect participants' personal information.

The researcher also ensured that the well-being of the participants was safeguarded throughout the research process by creating a respectful, safe, and non-threatening environment during interviews and discussions. No form of harm—physical, emotional, or psychological was inflicted on any participant. Furthermore, the researcher declares that there is no conflict of interest in the conduct of this study. All sources and references were properly cited, and plagiarism was strictly avoided. The interpretation of the findings was carried out with objectivity and integrity, ensuring that no personal bias influenced the results. The data and findings were used solely for academic and research purposes. Lastly, the researcher acknowledges the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to assist in refining the language and organization of this manuscript; however, all ideas, analyses, and interpretations presented in this study are entirely the researcher's own.

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