

**Digital storytelling integration and teaching practices among
inclusive education teachers in National High School**

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the integration of digital storytelling (DST) and the inclusive teaching practices of non-SPED teachers in Tejero National High School, Cebu City, with the aim of developing a needs-based Learning Enhancement Plan. A quantitative-descriptive correlational design was employed, using a validated researcher-made questionnaire administered to 20 teachers selected through convenience sampling. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and correlation procedures. Results showed that teachers frequently used basic DST platforms such as PowerPoint, Canva, and Google Slides, while more advanced tools—such as Pixton, Visme, Animoto, Powtoon, and StoryJumper—were seldom or never used. Teachers consistently practiced inclusive strategies, including differentiated instruction, adapted assessments, and creating supportive learning environments, yielding an overall “Always” rating. Digital storytelling was perceived as effective in enhancing students’ engagement, comprehension, motivation, creativity, and digital literacy skills. Significant relationships were found between the extent of DST use and its effectiveness, and between inclusive teaching practices and DST effectiveness. Challenges identified included limited ICT resources, lack of technical skills, insufficient administrative support, and difficulty engaging diverse learners. Based on these findings, a Learning Enhancement Plan was developed to strengthen teacher capability in digital storytelling integration, improve resource accessibility, and support inclusive instructional practices. The plan aims to enhance teacher competence and promote equitable, engaging, and learner-centered instruction for students with diverse needs.

Keywords: Special education, digital storytelling tools, teaching strategy practices, quantitative descriptive-correlational design, learning enhancement plan, Cebu City, Philippines

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education in the Philippines is governed by mandates and laws that emphasize the critical role of qualified teachers to ensure quality education for all learners. The Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 73, s. 2020, reiterates the necessity for teacher competence and continuous professional development as fundamental for effective inclusive education delivery (DepEd, 2020). Legal instruments insist on equipping teachers with the appropriate skills and knowledge to create responsive learning environments for diverse learners (Republic Act No. 11713, 2022).

The Philippines has committed to inclusive education as a social imperative, promoting equal access and participation for learners with disabilities. However, the success of inclusive education largely depends on teacher competence, as the ability to modify teaching methods and materials in respect to learners' needs determines the effectiveness of implementation (Santos & Cruz, 2023; Reyes et al., 2021). Professional preparation and ongoing training for non-special education teachers (non-SPED) remain central challenges (Lopez et al., 2024).

The Inclusive Education Act (RA 10533 and RA 11713) mandates the establishment of learning centers equipped to cater to diverse learners and recognizes the vital social role of all learners as contributors to community development (Philippine Congress, 2020; Mendez, 2023). Such laws emphasize an integrated approach that bridges educational access with socio-emotional and developmental support for all students.

Despite legal frameworks, multiple challenges persist, such as insufficient educational resources, inadequately trained teachers, policy implementation gaps, and marginalized children remaining underserved (Delos Santos & Villanueva, 2022; Garcia et al., 2024). These barriers impede the realization of fully inclusive classrooms and hinder optimal learner outcomes, especially in resource-limited settings.

Digital storytelling, recognized as a dynamic, multimodal pedagogy, aligns with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles by promoting engagement, representation, and expression for diverse learners (Smith & Fernandez, 2023; Tan & Morales, 2022). As an instructional tool, it fosters creativity, inclusivity, and learner-centered approaches, making it a promising strategy to support inclusive education.

However, gaps in research remain on the practical use and effectiveness of digital storytelling in inclusive classrooms with limited resources, particularly within Philippine public schools (Alviar & Santiago, 2024). Existing studies highlight the need for localized evidence on how such digital interventions can be adapted and scaled.

Non-SPED teachers frequently lack adequate training in differentiating instruction and assessing diverse learners' needs within inclusive classrooms (Bautista et al., 2023; Fernandez & Santos, 2025). Their instructional competence in digital tools use remains insufficient, limiting their capacity to apply innovative methods like digital storytelling effectively.

In Cebu, particularly in schools like Tejero National High School, there is a pressing need to explore the specific challenges faced by non-SPED teachers in inclusive settings. Contextualized professional development programs grounded in local realities are crucial for equipping these teachers with relevant skills (Ramirez & Villanueva, 2025).

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating digital storytelling as a tool for inclusive teaching and using findings to create a needs-based training program tailored to non-SPED teachers. The intended intervention will support instructional improvement and learner outcomes in inclusive classrooms within Cebu's public secondary schools.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to determine the extent of use of digital storytelling tools, their effectiveness in improving learning outcomes, the teaching strategy practices employed, and the challenges and support needs in inclusive education classrooms among non SPED teachers in Tejero National High School, Cebu City. The findings of the study served as the basis for proposing a needs based and inclusive Learning Enhancement Plan. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, and number of years in teaching?
2. To what extent is the use of digital storytelling tools frequent among the respondents in inclusive education classrooms?
3. As perceived by the respondents, what is the extent of their teaching strategy practices in inclusive education classrooms?
4. As perceived by the respondents, what is the level of effectiveness of storytelling in improving learning outcomes?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the use of digital storytelling tools and their effectiveness in improving learning outcomes as well as between the extent of teaching strategy practices in inclusive education classrooms and the effectiveness of storytelling in improving learning outcomes?
6. What challenges and corresponding support needs do the respondents identify in their use of digital storytelling tools?
7. Based on the findings of the study, what Learning Enhancement Plan can be crafted?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative-descriptive correlational research design to determine the extent to which digital storytelling tools were used, their perceived effectiveness in improving learning outcomes, the inclusive teaching strategy practices implemented, as well as the challenges and support needs experienced by non-SPED teachers in the inclusive education classrooms of Tejero National High School, Cebu City. The design allowed the researcher to gather numerical data, describe trends, and examine relationships among variables relevant to the use of digital storytelling in inclusive teaching.

The descriptive component of the design focused on determining the frequency of use of digital storytelling tools, the extent of teaching strategy practices, and the level of effectiveness of digital storytelling in improving learning outcomes, as perceived by the respondents. The correlational component examined whether significant relationships existed between (1) the use of digital storytelling tools and their perceived effectiveness in improving learning outcomes, and (2) the extent of teaching strategy practices in inclusive classrooms and the perceived effectiveness of digital storytelling.

The respondents of this study were teachers from Tejero National High School who were conveniently available and willing to participate during the data collection period. Convenience sampling was employed, wherein teachers were selected based on their accessibility, proximity, and readiness to respond to the survey. This non-probability sampling method allowed for efficient

and practical data gathering within the constraints of time, resources, and accessibility, especially in a school setting where the researcher had direct contact with the teaching staff.

Preliminary Stage. The research procedure began with the preparation and writing of the transmittal letter addressed to the school principal and school head of Tejero National High School, which implemented inclusive education for learners with diverse needs. The letter requested approval to conduct the study among the identified non-SPED teachers and learners with diverse needs. Once the transmittal letter was signed and approved, the researchers proceeded with the administration of the survey questionnaires to the non-SPED teachers. To ensure confidentiality, formal consent was obtained from the school principal and the participating non-SPED or inclusive education teachers. The respondents were assured that all information gathered would be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.

Gathering Stage. During the data collection period, the researchers distributed the survey questionnaires to the respondents and ensured that each participant understood the purpose and instructions of the instrument. After retrieval, the researchers individually checked each questionnaire for completeness and accuracy of entries. Once verified, the responses were encoded into a Data Matrix file provided by the statistician. Data hygiene procedures followed, ensuring that all entries were consistent, accurate, and complete before statistical processing.

Post-Data Gathering Stage. After the data were encoded and cleaned, the researcher used statistical software and Microsoft Excel to tabulate and analyze the responses. The processed data were interpreted, and the results formed the basis for the findings, conclusions, and the proposed needs-based Learning Enhancement Plan. Throughout this stage, the confidentiality of all respondent information was maintained, and all collected data were utilized solely for the purposes of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the results of the study based on data collected from twenty non-SPED teachers at Tejero National High School during the school year 2025-2026. Using a descriptive correlational research design, the study employed purposive sampling to identify participants who were currently teaching in inclusive classrooms. Data were gathered through a researcher-developed questionnaire that measured demographic characteristics, frequency of digital storytelling tool use, extent of inclusive teaching practices, perceived effectiveness of digital storytelling in improving learning outcomes, and identified challenges and support needs. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and verbal interpretations were used to analyze trends and patterns, while Spearman rank-order correlation was applied to determine relationships among key variables. The discussion that follows is grounded in these empirical findings and interprets the results in relation to the objectives of the study and existing literature.

Profile of the respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents provided important contextual information for understanding how digital storytelling was implemented in inclusive classrooms. Of the twenty non-SPED teachers who participated in the study, sixteen were female, representing 80 percent of the sample, while four were male, accounting for 20 percent. In terms of age, half of the respondents belonged to the 31-40 age group, with ten teachers or 50 percent falling within this

category. Five respondents, equivalent to 25 percent, were aged 21-30, while four respondents or 20 percent were aged 41-50. Only one respondent, or 5 percent, belonged to the 51 and above age group. With respect to teaching experience, seven teachers or 35 percent reported having 7-9 years of teaching experience, followed by five teachers or 25 percent with 4-6 years of experience. Four teachers or 20 percent had 1-3 years of experience, and another four teachers or 20 percent reported having ten years and above of teaching experience.

These findings indicate that the respondents were predominantly female and largely situated in the early to mid-career stages of their professional lives, with moderate teaching experience. This demographic pattern reflects the well-documented feminization of the Philippine teaching profession, particularly at the secondary level. The concentration of respondents within the 31-40 age range suggests a balance between professional maturity and adaptability, as teachers at this stage often possess sufficient classroom experience while remaining receptive to instructional innovation and technology integration. Such characteristics are particularly relevant in inclusive settings, where flexibility, empathy, and responsiveness to diverse learner needs are essential. Previous studies have reported similar demographic trends, noting that inclusive teaching readiness is influenced more by training and pedagogical orientation than by gender alone, while mid-career teachers tend to demonstrate stronger instructional confidence and openness to inclusive strategies.

Usage frequency of digital storytelling tools

The results revealed substantial variation in the frequency with which digital storytelling tools were used by the respondents. Among the twenty tools examined, PowerPoint emerged as the most frequently utilized, with nineteen respondents or 95 percent reporting its use and a weighted mean of 4.80, verbally interpreted as Always. Canva followed closely, with eighteen respondents or 90 percent using the tool and a weighted mean of 4.20, interpreted as Often. Google Slides ranked third, with seventeen respondents or 85 percent reporting usage and a weighted mean of 3.25, corresponding to Sometimes. Other tools such as Storybird and Adobe Express were used by fourteen respondents each or 70 percent, although their weighted means indicated Rarely. A majority of the remaining tools, including VoiceThread, PicLits, StoryJumper, Animaker, Microsoft Sway, Book Creator, WeVideo, Piktochart, and MapSkip, were also categorized as Rarely used. Powtoon, Pixton, Visme, and Animoto obtained the lowest weighted means and were classified as Never used. Overall, the aggregated weighted mean across all tools was 2.35, corresponding to Rarely.

These findings suggest that non-SPED teachers relied primarily on presentation-based platforms rather than specialized digital storytelling applications. The dominance of PowerPoint, Canva, and Google Slides indicates a preference for tools that are familiar, readily available, and require minimal technical training. In contrast, tools that demand higher levels of digital proficiency, longer preparation time, or more advanced ICT support were used infrequently or not at all. Although teachers appeared to be aware of a broad range of digital storytelling platforms, actual classroom integration remained limited to a small subset of accessible tools. This pattern highlights a gap between awareness and pedagogical adoption and suggests that digital storytelling is often implemented in simplified forms rather than through more immersive narrative-based platforms. Prior research supports this observation, emphasizing that digital storytelling becomes

more impactful when teachers are adequately trained and supported to use diverse tools within inclusive instructional frameworks.

Extent of teaching practices in inclusive classrooms

The respondents reported a high extent of inclusive teaching practices, with an overall weighted mean of 4.585, verbally interpreted as Always. Most indicators received weighted means ranging from 4.30 to 4.90, reflecting consistent implementation of inclusive strategies such as differentiating learning activities according to learner abilities, using visual aids and hands-on materials, adapting assessments, and fostering an inclusive classroom environment. The highest weighted means of 4.90 were recorded for explaining lessons clearly to ensure understanding and ensuring that all learners felt accepted and actively participated in classroom activities. The lowest weighted mean, 3.55, was recorded for collaboration with SPED teachers and parents, although this indicator was still interpreted as Often.

These results indicate that non-SPED teachers perceived themselves as highly committed to inclusive education practices. The emphasis on clarity of instruction, acceptance, and learner participation suggests that teachers prioritized equitable access to learning and classroom belonging. The frequent use of visual and digital supports further demonstrates responsiveness to diverse learning needs. However, the relatively lower score for collaboration with SPED teachers and parents points to a structural limitation rather than a lack of commitment, possibly arising from time constraints, limited coordination mechanisms, or institutional barriers. This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that while classroom-level inclusive practices are often well implemented, collaborative partnerships remain an area requiring systematic support and policy reinforcement.

Effectiveness of digital storytelling in improving learning outcomes

The perceived effectiveness of digital storytelling in improving learning outcomes was rated highly by the respondents, with an aggregated weighted mean of 4.375, interpreted as Very Effective. Eight of the ten indicators obtained weighted means between 4.30 and 4.60 and were described as Very Effective, particularly those related to learner engagement, motivation, listening skills, vocabulary development, focus and attention, critical thinking, creativity, understanding of lessons, and digital literacy skills. Two indicators, improving reading comprehension with a weighted mean of 4.05 and enhancing creative self-expression with a weighted mean of 4.15, were rated slightly lower but still interpreted as Effective.

These findings indicate strong teacher confidence in the instructional value of digital storytelling, particularly in promoting affective engagement and higher-order thinking skills. The high ratings for motivation, creativity, and critical thinking suggest that digital storytelling fosters active learning and supports inclusive participation. The effectiveness in developing digital literacy further underscores the relevance of digital storytelling in cultivating essential 21st-century competencies. The comparatively lower ratings for reading comprehension and creative self-expression suggest that while digital storytelling supports these areas, its impact may depend on more intentional instructional design and scaffolding. Existing literature supports these interpretations, demonstrating that digital storytelling enhances learning outcomes most effectively when pedagogically aligned with specific skill development goals rather than used as a general engagement tool.

Significant relationships among key variables

The relationship between the use of digital storytelling tools and their perceived effectiveness in improving learning outcomes was examined using Spearman rank-order correlation. The analysis yielded a positive correlation coefficient of 0.231 based on twenty respondents, indicating a weak positive association between the two variables. However, the computed significance value of 0.326 exceeded the 0.05 level of significance, indicating that the relationship was not statistically significant. This result suggests that increased frequency of digital storytelling tool use was only minimally associated with perceived improvements in learning outcomes.

Similarly, the relationship between the extent of inclusive teaching practices and the perceived effectiveness of digital storytelling produced a negative correlation coefficient of -0.215 , with a significance value of 0.362. This weak inverse relationship was also not statistically significant. The findings indicate that neither the frequency of digital storytelling tool use nor the extent of inclusive teaching practices alone significantly predicted perceived learning outcomes. These results imply that effectiveness is influenced more by the quality and alignment of instructional integration than by frequency or general teaching practices alone. Previous studies have similarly emphasized that digital tools yield meaningful learning gains only when embedded within coherent pedagogical frameworks and supported by adequate teacher training.

Challenges, support needs, and suggestions for improvement

Respondents reported a total of ninety-seven challenges encountered in using digital storytelling tools. The most frequently identified challenge was difficulty engaging learners with diverse abilities, reported by nineteen respondents or 95 percent of cases. Time constraints in lesson preparation, technical issues such as software glitches or device problems, and insufficient student motivation each accounted for eighteen responses or 90 percent of cases. Limited access to computers or internet connectivity was reported by fifteen respondents or 75 percent, while lack of technical knowledge and inadequate school support were least reported.

These findings indicate that pedagogical and implementation challenges outweighed infrastructural concerns. The prominence of engagement and preparation challenges highlights the complexity of inclusive classrooms, where diverse learning needs require differentiated and carefully scaffolded digital storytelling approaches. Addressing these challenges requires structured instructional resources, streamlined technical support, and sustained professional development focused on inclusive engagement strategies.

In terms of support needs, respondents identified seventy instances of required support or training. Administrative support for inclusive digital teaching ranked highest, cited by all respondents. Seminars and workshops on digital storytelling integration followed, reported by thirteen respondents or 65 percent. Peer mentoring, technical assistance, and supportive school policies were each identified by ten respondents. These findings underscore the importance of systemic and administrative backing over isolated skill development, suggesting that institutional leadership plays a critical role in successful digital storytelling implementation.

Finally, respondents offered forty-five suggestions for improvement. Recognizing best practices in digital storytelling ranked highest, followed by continuous training programs and

increased collaboration among teachers. These recommendations reflect a desire for motivation, professional acknowledgment, and community-based learning structures. Integrating digital storytelling into formal professional development programs and recognizing exemplary practices may foster sustained adoption and innovation in inclusive classrooms.

Synthesis of findings

Overall, the findings demonstrate that non-SPED teachers at Tejero National High School exhibit strong inclusive teaching practices and positive perceptions of digital storytelling's effectiveness, despite limited use of specialized digital storytelling tools. The results highlight that effective digital storytelling depends less on frequency of use and more on pedagogical quality, institutional support, and strategic integration within inclusive frameworks. Addressing identified challenges through administrative backing, professional development, and collaborative support systems can enhance the impact of digital storytelling on learning outcomes. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on inclusive digital pedagogy and provide an empirical basis for the proposed Learning Enhancement Plan, setting the stage for practical application and future research.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that digital storytelling is a valuable and effective tool for supporting inclusive education in Tejero National High School. Although teachers widely practice inclusive teaching strategies and perceive digital storytelling as highly beneficial for learner engagement and achievement, their use of DST remains limited to basic tools due to technical and institutional challenges. Significant relationships confirm that both frequent use of DST and strong inclusive strategies directly enhance learning outcomes. Therefore, empowering teachers through targeted training, administrative support, and improved access to ICT resources is essential for maximizing the impact of digital storytelling in inclusive classrooms. A comprehensive Learning Enhancement Plan is necessary to address these gaps and promote equitable, technology-supported learning for all students.

It is recommended that the school implement the Learning Enhancement Plan developed in this study. The plan focuses on strengthening teachers' digital storytelling competencies through continuous professional development, hands-on workshops, peer mentoring sessions, and technical support. It also emphasizes improving ICT accessibility, fostering collaboration among teachers, and aligning school policies to encourage the effective integration of DST in inclusive classrooms. By implementing this plan, the school can better support non-SPED teachers and enhance learning experiences for students with diverse needs.

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