

## &lt;Original Article&gt;

# A Systematic Literature Review of Inclusive Practices in Japan: A PRISMA Approach

Gloricel Hernandez FLORES\* · Dianne CHAMBERS\*\*

## Abstract

This systematic literature review examines the inclusive education practices implemented in Japan and explores their relevance and potential adaptation to the Philippine educational context. A total of eleven studies published between 2015 and 2025, sourced from databases including Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC, were analyzed following PRISMA guidelines. The review identified five core practices: differentiated instruction, collaborative teaching, co-teaching, reasonable accommodation, and interdisciplinary collaboration. The findings demonstrate that Japan's inclusive education model promotes active participation and ensures that students with disabilities have equitable access to the general curriculum. In the Philippine context, adopting these practices could significantly improve the inclusivity of education, by addressing challenges such as limited teacher training, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient resources. The study concludes by recommending key strategies for overcoming these barriers, including targeted teacher development, resource allocation, and fostering family and community involvement.

**Keywords:** Inclusion, Inclusive, Practice, Elementary, Teachers, PRISMA

## Introduction

Inclusive education refers to an education system in which all students, including those with disabilities, learn together in regular classrooms (Ainscow, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). This approach focusses on proactively changing curricula, teaching methods, and resources to better meet the needs of, and support, diverse learners (UNESCO, 2020). Inclusive education goes beyond just putting students together. It aims to change all aspects of education, including practices and settings, to promote equity, reduce discrimination, and provide all students more chances to learn (Slee, 2018).

The importance of inclusive education comes from its capacity to help students grow as individuals by fostering acceptance, empathy, and understanding in schools (Florian, 2017). These values go beyond the classroom and help make societies accessible to everyone. In addition, inclusive education makes learning better for all students, not just those with diverse needs, by creating learning settings that are diverse and dynamic.

Inclusive practices include a variety of teaching methods and strategies that are intended to meet the needs of all students in regular classrooms (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). These strategies include differentiated instruction, where teachers adjust content and activities to match learners' varying readiness and interests; collaborative and co-teaching, in which general and special educators work together in different ways to support students; and the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which provides multiple ways for students to access information, engage with lessons, and demonstrate understanding (Ainscow, 2020; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; UNESCO, 2020). Collaborative teaching may involve teachers planning together or even teaching specific subjects in different classrooms. Co-teaching involves more than one teacher working together in the same classroom to support all students. Inclusive classrooms may also employ assistive technologies such as text-to-speech tools or tactile diagrams, as well as peer-supported cooperative learning to build collaboration and social skills (UNESCO, 2020).

Flexible assessment options, such as allowing students to present their knowledge through projects, oral reports, or visual representations instead of

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\* Hiroshima University, Japan

\*\* Edith Cowan University, Australia

written tests alone, ensure that diverse learners can succeed. For example, in a Grade 4 science lesson on plant life cycles, a teacher might combine visual aids, videos, and real plant specimens to explain the concept; allow some students to write a report while others draw diagrams; provide captioned videos for students with hearing impairment; and organize mixed-ability group discussions where every child has a role. These approaches illustrate how inclusive strategies transform the classroom into an environment where all learners are valued, engaged, and supported (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; UNESCO, 2020). Successful inclusive practices also entail active engagement with parents, communities, and other stakeholders in the educational process (Ainscow, 2020).

Many countries have made inclusive education a key part of their systems. Japan, the United States, and members of the European Union have advanced policies to include learners with disabilities in regular classrooms, guided by legal conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006). The Philippines has also aligned with this global movement, showing commitment through policies and programs that promote inclusivity.

### *The Philippine Education System*

The Philippine education system is managed by a number of key agencies including the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). The DepEd oversees basic education, which includes kindergarten through senior high school, while CHED regulates higher education and TESDA focuses on technical-vocational education (DepEd, 2019). The Philippine education system operates under the K to 12 Basic Education Program, which encompasses kindergarten, elementary (Grades 1–6), junior high school (Grades 7–10), and senior high school (Grades 11–12). Senior high school offers specialized tracks such as academic, technical-vocational-livelihood, sports, and arts and design, providing opportunities for students to address skills needed for their future careers.

In the Philippines, inclusive education has progressed notably through national policies such as the *Inclusive Education Act of 2022* (Republic Act No. 11650), aimed at securing educational rights for all learners, especially those with disabilities. The

Inclusive Education Act states that all schools in the Philippines should institutionalize inclusive education to provide equitable access to quality education for learners with disabilities. The Act requires the creation of Inclusive Learning Resource Centers in every district, city, and municipality to provide assessment, support services, and assistive devices. The law also emphasizes teacher training, flexible curricula, and individualized interventions to ensure that students with disabilities can thrive in regular classrooms alongside their peers.

Despite these advancements in the education system, challenges persist in implementing inclusive education. These challenges include overcrowded classrooms, resource limitations, and insufficient teacher training in special education (Sumayang et al., 2022). Students who are unable to access a regular classroom may attend special education (SPED) programs. These programs often face barriers such as a lack of facilities, limited professional development for teachers, and a lack of community awareness about the need to support students with disabilities (Beltran et al., 2025; Sumayang et al., 2022).

For inclusive education in the Philippines to see improvement in its implementation, greater investment in special education resources within regular classrooms is essential, such as providing assistive technologies, accessible learning materials, and resource rooms to support diverse learners. Teacher training in differentiated instruction must be sustained with more workshops, mentoring, and continuous professional development that equips educators with practical classroom strategies. Nationwide awareness campaigns through community programs, media, and school-based initiatives are important to reduce stigma and strengthen collaboration among families, schools, and local governments. Taken together, these measures would help build an education system that genuinely serves all learners, fostering equality and a more inclusive environment for students with disabilities (Beltran et al., 2025; DepEd, 2019).

### *Japan's Education System*

Japan's education system is managed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT). The system is structured into kindergarten (ages 3–5), elementary school (Grades 1–6), lower secondary school (Grades 7–9), upper secondary school (Grades 10–12), and higher education, which includes universities and specialized colleges

(MEXT, 2025). The average class size in Japan's elementary schools is 26.7 students, with a strong emphasis on group learning and moral education (OECD, 2025).

Japan's approach to inclusive education requires that students with disabilities be integrated into general education classrooms whenever possible. Special Needs Schools, Special Classes within regular schools, and resource rooms provide tailored support to students with disabilities who are not able to access regular education classes (Muta et al., 2016). Muta et al. (2016) stated that Japan has made significant strides in promoting inclusive education, particularly since ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006) in 2014.

Despite these advances, there are ongoing challenges in the implementation of inclusive practices across all schools. Many schools experience societal attitudes which favor segregated education (Notomi, 2020). These attitudes are often shaped by long-standing traditions of placing students with disabilities in special schools, along with concerns from parents and educators that mainstream classrooms may lack the resources or expertise to adequately meet diverse learning needs. There is a need for more widespread implementation of inclusive education strategies, particularly in rural areas, where schools often struggle with shortages of trained special education teachers, insufficient government funding and limited access to assistive technologies. Geographic isolation also makes it harder to provide continuous teacher training or specialist support services, while community attitudes in rural areas may lean more strongly toward traditional or segregated approaches due to limited exposure to inclusive practices (Kanzaki et al., 2023).

To overcome these challenges, Japan could focus on enhancing nationwide policies for inclusive education and expanding teacher education programs to include comprehensive training on inclusivity. It could also continue to challenge societal misconceptions regarding disability (Kanzaki et al., 2023; Muta et al., 2016). By addressing these challenges, Japan may further strengthen its commitment to inclusive education and ensure that students with disabilities receive equal opportunities to learn and succeed alongside their peers.

This systematic review examines reported inclusive education practices in Japanese public elementary schools, with the aim of identifying strat-

egies which may be applicable to the Philippines, specifically within the Calabanga District of Camarines Sur. It is hypothesized that practices utilized by Japanese regular classroom teachers can be modified or adapted to support teachers' work in the Philippines.

## Research Questions

The objectives of this review are guided by the following research questions:

1. What practices do Japanese teachers use to support students with special educational needs in regular elementary classrooms?
2. What strategies identified in Japanese education to support students with special educational needs would be transferable to a Filipino context?

## Methods

### *Search Procedures*

This systematic literature review follows the PRISMA guidelines to maintain a clear, organized and systematic approach (PRISMA, 2025). The review focuses on identifying the practices used in Japan's public elementary schools to support inclusive education for students with special needs. A thorough search was conducted across academic databases consisting of CiNii, Web of Science, Scopus, ERIC, Google Scholar and other databases. Search terms that were used were "Inclusive Education Practices" AND Japan, and "Inclusive Education" AND Practices AND Japan. The search was limited to articles published from 2015 to 2025 to ensure the inclusion of the most up-to-date studies. Only peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and relevant reports were selected. The search terms aimed to identify studies which focused on inclusive education practices in Japan, especially in public elementary schools.

### *Search Strategy*

The first step of the review was to develop a search strategy to identify manuscripts related to inclusive education practices in Japan. The inclusion criteria were used to identify manuscripts according to their use of inclusive practices in public elementary classrooms. Manuscripts were included if a) they addressed practices such as differentiated instruction, co-teaching, assistive technology use, curriculum flexibility, or teacher training in relation to inclusive education, b) they were Japan focused, c) they were situated in elementary settings, and d) they were

published between 2015 and 2025. Manuscripts were excluded if a) the topic was unrelated to inclusive education (e.g., higher education policies, general educational reforms without reference to inclusion, or studies outside Japan), b) the studies were in ECE, secondary or tertiary education settings, and c) the studies did not describe practices around inclusive education.

The information for data extraction included the year of publication, authors' names, title, journal name, abstract, research focus, inclusive practices identified and reported challenges. The search yielded 86 manuscripts across CiNii, Web of Science, Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar databases. No automation tools were used. Once duplicate files (n = 9) and other files (n=4) were removed, 68 manuscripts remained for review. Two reviewers independently identified manuscripts for inclusion based on the

document type and relevance criteria established in the protocol, which resulted in 6 manuscripts and 5 reports to be analyzed (see Figure 1 PRISMA Flowchart). Each of these documents is described in Table 1. In cases of disagreement, consensus was reached through discussion.

### Results

A total of six journal articles and five reports met the inclusion criteria and were selected for analysis (see Table 1). The findings provide insights into inclusive education practices in Japan that may potentially be relevant for adaptation in the Philippine context, particularly in public SPED schools in Calabanga District, Camarines Sur. The key findings from the analysis include: defining inclusive education; teachers as a central factor in inclusion; instructional practices in the inclusive

Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart

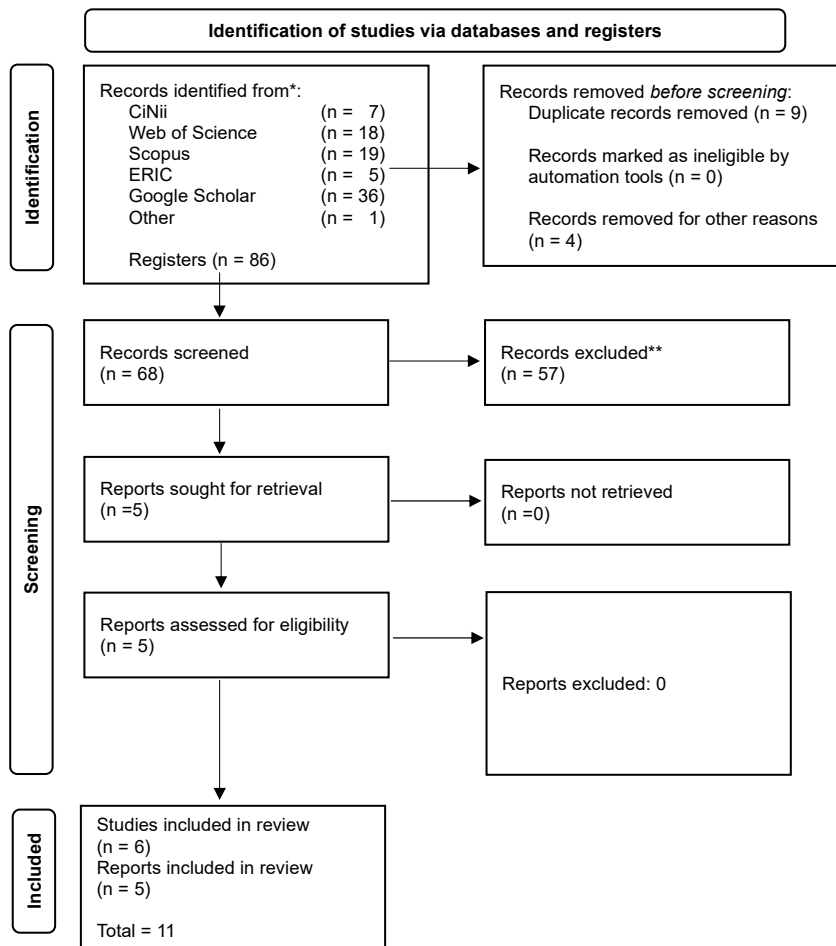


Table 1. *Papers Addressing Inclusive Practices in Japan*

Authors	Title	Source	Research Approach	Inclusive Practices Identified
Abe, H. (PI) (2021)	Inclusive Education Practice Curriculum Concept in Collaboration with Medical Professionals	Report	Qualitative	Interdisciplinary collaboration with medical professionals
Forlin, C., Kawai, N., & Higuchi, S. (2015)	Educational reform in Japan towards inclusion: Are we training teachers for success?	Others	Quantitative	Collaboration between special and regular teachers, provision of reasonable accommodation and modifications, coteaching models, and comprehensive teacher training.
Kanzaki, M., Kato, H., & Sato, T. (2023)	A case study of transductive resolution: Analyzing the practice of inclusive education for a girl with down's syndrome at an elementary school in Japan	CiNii	Qualitative	Teachers used differentiated instructions.
Notomi, K. (PI) (2020)	Development of a training model for class improvement by UDL (Universal Design for Learning) Guideline	Report	Qualitative	Reasonable accommodation.
Ohashi, S. (PI) (2021)	Development of a Physical Expression Play Program to Support School Attendance for Children with Developmental Disabilities	Report	Qualitative	Group dance and physical expressive play programs; relationship building; group experiences
Tamamura, K. (PI) (2017)	Comparative Educational Methodological Study on the Construction of School Education Based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Reasonable Accommodation	Report	Qualitative	Reasonable accommodation, individual support measures and collaborative teaching
Toyokawa, Y., Horikoshi, I., Majumdar, R., & Ogata, H. (2023)	Challenges and opportunities of AI in inclusive education: A case study of data-enhanced active reading in Japan	CiNii	Qualitative	Resource room and specialized supports, BookRoll e-books, learning-analytics dashboards and AI tools; teacher and parent collaboration; targeted feedback and individualized reading support
Yada, A., & Alnahdi, G. H. (2024)	A comparative study on Saudi and Japanese in-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education and self-efficacy in inclusive practices	Web of Science	Quantitative	Professional development needs.
Yada, A., & Savolainen, H. (2019)	Japanese and Finnish teachers' perceptions and self-efficacy in inclusive education	Scopus	Quantitative	Professional development needs, resource room and specialized support
Yanagimoto, Y. (PI) (2017)	Inclusive Education in Branch & Unit of Special Schools in Regular Schools in Japan	Report	Qualitative	Branch schools and special-needs units within regular schools and collaborative teaching
Young, D. (2024)	Identifying inclusive training needs with the Inclusive Practices in English Language Teaching Observation Scale	Web of Science	Mixed methods	Accessible classroom arrangements, safe learning environments, use of technology and multisensory materials, scaffolding, extra time and adjusted tasks, collaborative teaching, clear expectations, varied assessments and accommodations, positive feedback, and differentiated materials, collaboration with colleagues and other specialists

classroom; resource rooms and specialized support; and teacher training and capacity building. Each of these key findings will be described in depth.

### *Defining Inclusive Education*

Inclusive education in Japan emphasizes the importance of students, regardless of disability, learning together in the same educational setting (Kanzaki et al., 2023). This approach not only aims to facilitate access to the standard curriculum for students with disabilities but also promotes their active participation and independence in society (MEXT, 2012). As described by Kanzaki et al. (2023), inclusive education goes beyond simply sharing space; it involves finding commonalities between students while recognizing and respecting their differences. The concept is further supported by MEXT (2012), which outlines that the goal is to ensure learners with disabilities can contribute to society inclusively. Bryant et al. (2019) define inclusive education as an environment where students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum alongside their peers. This system, as noted by Forlin et al. (2015), involves the integration of both students with and without disabilities within the same general education classrooms in their local communities.

Japanese scholarship also connects inclusive education to the legal framework of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006). The education clause, Article 24, requires that schools provide ‘reasonable accommodation’ and ‘individual support measures for full inclusion’, meaning that teaching methods, assessment, and support services must be adjusted to ensure every child’s right to education. Tamamura (2017) notes that realizing high-quality inclusive education demands not just legal recognition but the “clarification of the principle of ‘reasonable accommodation’ in the school education system and its embodiment in educational methods and practices” (p. 2). He suggests that inclusive education is achieved through systematic changes rather than temporary, one-time solutions. Taken together, these findings portray inclusive education as an ever-evolving commitment: schools must re-design curricula, provide ongoing support, and institutionalize reasonable accommodations so that all students, regardless of ability, can participate fully in learning.

### *Teachers as the Central Factor in Inclusion*

Teachers are key players in the development and success of inclusive education (Kanzaki et al., 2023). They not only fulfill their professional responsibilities but also shape the culture of the Japanese school system, influencing the learning environment for all students. Kanzaki et al. (2023) stated that teachers’ mindsets and approaches towards inclusive education play a crucial role in fostering a classroom culture where every student, regardless of ability, can participate and succeed. In addition to their professional roles, teachers are responsible for encouraging students to reflect on their learning, which deepens their understanding. Teachers may engage in reflective practices themselves, reviewing students’ learning and making informed decisions about the next steps in their teaching strategies (Toyokawa et al., 2023). This cycle of reflection ensures that teaching methods evolve based on students’ needs, which is fundamental to inclusive practices.

According to Yada and Savolainen (2019), studies have consistently shown that teachers’ perceptions and practices are central to the success of inclusive education initiatives. Emphasis is on the need for continued professional development to ensure teachers have the skills and knowledge necessary to support all learners effectively (Yada & Alnahdi, 2024; Yada & Savolainen, 2019). Moreover, teachers’ capacity to modify their teaching strategies and engage in collaborative efforts with specialists is crucial in fostering inclusive classrooms that address the individual learning needs of all students, particularly those with disabilities (Toyokawa et al., 2023; Yada & Savolainen, 2019).

### *Resource Rooms and Specialized Supports*

Resource rooms and specialized supports are crucial components of inclusive education, particularly in Japan, where they are used to provide tailored assistance to students with disabilities in a safe space (Toyokawa et al., 2023; Yada & Savolainen, 2019). These settings are designed to give students individualized attention and support outside of the regular classroom environment. As Toyokawa et al. (2023) note, “resource rooms are intended to provide tailored support for learners with mild disabilities” (p. 4), yet these researchers also highlight the staffing challenges that limit the effectiveness of resource rooms. Furthermore, Japan has integrated group dance and physical expression activities into their special education practices. These activities have been

found to improve motor skills, body awareness, communication, and social skills. According to Ohashi (2021), such programs are highly effective in supporting children with developmental disabilities, helping them engage more actively in school life. Incorporating these programs into resource rooms could provide holistic support for students with disabilities, addressing both their academic and social-emotional needs.

The concept of reasonable accommodation is also central to ensuring that students with disabilities receive the support they need within resource rooms, where teachers adjust teaching methods and materials. Tamamura (2017) highlights the importance of reasonable accommodations, noting that they are “tailored specifically to individual learners, ensuring equal access to education” (p. 3). Kanzaki et al. (2023) describe specialized support in resource rooms as critical, as these spaces allow students to receive additional educational support and provide an environment where they can focus on specific areas of need without the pressure of the larger classroom setting. However, the success of resource rooms relies heavily on collaborative efforts among teachers, special education professionals, and medical staff to ensure that all students receive the support they need to succeed in an inclusive educational system.

### *Teacher Training and Capacity Building*

Teacher preparation has repeatedly been identified as a priority throughout the literature. Ongoing in-service training is crucial for improving teacher readiness and ensuring they are equipped to address the varied needs of students with disabilities, emphasizing the critical role of continuous professional development in fostering teacher self-efficacy and improving inclusive practices (Forlin et al., 2015; Tamamura, 2017). A recent comparative study between Saudi and Japanese teachers further underscores this need. The study found that while teachers in both countries shared a common goal of inclusion, Saudi teachers expressed a particular need for training in managing student behavior and enhancing collaboration with other professionals (Yada & Alnahdi, 2024). Suggested training areas include differentiated instruction, social-emotional learning (SEL), collaborative teaching, co-teaching, and behavioral strategies. These areas of focus highlight the need for targeted professional development programs to ensure that educators can effectively

implement inclusive education strategies in their classrooms.

Through differentiated instruction training, teachers will gain the skills to tailor their teaching strategies to accommodate the diverse needs of their students. They can acquire the ability to modify content, adjust the pace of instruction, and provide various ways for students to engage with the material and demonstrate their learning (Kanzaki et al., 2023). Teachers can also develop the knowledge to assess student progress in a way that accounts for individual strengths and areas for improvement, ensuring that all students, regardless of their ability level, can access the curriculum and succeed. As Forlin et al. (2015) note, “teachers with higher self-efficacy are better equipped to implement differentiated instruction that addresses the diverse needs of students in their classrooms” (p. 315).

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) training enables teachers to support students’ social and emotional development, which is necessary for their well-being and academic success in inclusive classrooms (Forlin et al., 2015). Educators can be taught how to integrate SEL strategies into their lessons, helping students build self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and decision-making skills. By promoting these skills, teachers create a classroom environment that encourages positive relationships and personal growth (Toyokawa et al., 2023). SEL training can contribute to the success of all learners. Toyokawa et al. (2023) note that “integrating social-emotional learning strategies into inclusive classrooms can improve both academic and social outcomes for students” (p. 7).

Teachers participating in co-teaching and behavioral strategy training gain experience with different co-teaching models, such as team teaching and parallel teaching, which allow for shared responsibility in instruction (Tamamura, 2017). Forlin et al. (2015) emphasize that “high levels of teacher collaboration increase the likelihood of implementing inclusive practices effectively” (p. 315). Teachers can build proficiency in implementing behavioral strategies, such as classroom management techniques and positive reinforcement, to support students’ social and emotional development and create a more inclusive and supportive classroom environment.

### *Instructional Practices in Inclusive Classrooms*

Japanese classrooms employ a range of instructional practices (Forlin et al., 2015; Muta et al., 2016; Toyokawa et al., 2023). Practices include: differenti-

ated instruction; collaborative teaching; co-teaching; reasonable accommodation; and interdisciplinary collaboration. Differentiated instruction involves adapting lessons to meet the diverse needs of students by modifying the content, process, and product of lessons, offering a variety of ways for students to access learning, engage with curriculum content, and demonstrate understanding (Kanzaki et al., 2023). Differentiated instruction might include providing scaffolded instruction, adjusting timeframes, or balancing individual and group work. Scaffolded instruction refers to the support teachers provide to help students reach higher levels of understanding, which is gradually removed as students become more competent (Forlin et al., 2015). Scaffolding might involve breaking down complex tasks, providing prompts, or modeling tasks before students attempt them independently.

Adjusting timeframes is another key strategy, where teachers modify the time allocated for tasks based on individual student needs, ensuring that students who need more time to grasp concepts or complete assignments are supported, while others can move ahead at a faster pace (Tamamura, 2017). Balancing individual and group work allows students to engage both independently and collaboratively, helping them process information on their own and learn from peers (Forlin et al., 2015). Teachers plan a mix of both types of activities to ensure that students can reflect and apply their learning individually, as well as engage in shared problem-solving or discussions in groups. Kanzaki et al. (2023) provide an example of this strategy by noting how “writing hiragana alongside kanji to support reading comprehension benefits not only Naomi, but everyone in the class” (p. 9), illustrating how differentiating instruction can be beneficial for all students, not just those with specific learning needs. These strategies are essential in constructing an inclusive classroom environment where all students can be successful, regardless of their abilities.

Similar to differentiated instruction, and often part of it, reasonable accommodation refers to adjustments made in the educational environment to ensure students with disabilities have equal access to learning opportunities (Notomi, 2020). Teachers tailor their methods, materials, and classroom organization to meet the specific needs of individual learners, providing additional support as needed. Tamamura (2017) underscores the importance of reasonable accommodation, stating that it is essential

for ensuring “students with disabilities can fully participate in the educational process” (p. 3). These accommodations may include modified assignments, assistive technology, or changes in classroom routines. Modified assignments adjust the content or format of tasks to suit individual needs (Kanzaki et al., 2023), while assistive technology provides tools like text-to-speech or speech-to-text software to support students with disabilities (Muta et al., 2016). Changes in classroom routines, such as providing flexible seating or additional breaks, help create a more inclusive learning environment (Forlin et al., 2015).

Collaborative teaching involves regular and special education teachers working together to deliver lessons and support students with diverse learning needs (Forlin et al., 2015; Yanagimoto, 2017; Young, 2024). Co-teaching allows teachers to share their expertise, plan lessons together, and support students more effectively. Tamamura (2017) highlights the importance of teacher collaboration, emphasizing that “open communication between colleagues is seen as meaningful and essential to teaching students with disabilities” (p. 315). This strategy is often complemented by stakeholder engagement, such as parent-teacher meetings, to ensure continuous communication and understanding of students’ progress (Forlin et al., 2015; Tamamura, 2017).

Interdisciplinary collaboration involves working together with medical professionals and other specialists to design inclusive curricula that address both educational and therapeutic needs (Abe, 2021). Teachers collaborate with professionals to ensure that the academic curriculum meets the physical, emotional, and cognitive needs of students with disabilities (Young, 2024). Ohashi (2021) highlights that integrating physical expression and dance programs into this collaborative approach can significantly enhance students’ communication, social skills, and overall engagement in school life. This collaboration ensures that students receive holistic support, fostering an inclusive educational experience. All strategies described reflect a strong emphasis on adaptability, collaboration, and individualized support to create inclusive and effective learning environments for all students.

## Discussion

This systematic literature review focused on inclusive education practices in Japan, exploring their relevance and applicability to the Philippine educational context. The review identified the

implementation of inclusive practices such as differentiated instruction, collaborative teaching, co-teaching, reasonable accommodation, and interdisciplinary collaboration in Japan (Figure 2). These practices, along with their challenges and opportunities, offer valuable insights into how the Philippines can adopt or adapt these strategies to improve inclusive education for all learners, especially those with disabilities.

**Figure 2.** *Inclusive Practices Identified in Japan to Consider for the Philippines*



### ***Inclusive Education Model in Japan and Its Applicability to the Philippines***

Japan's inclusive education model focuses not only on the physical placement of students with disabilities into regular classrooms but also on constructing a learning environment where all students can actively participate, regardless of their abilities (MEXT, 2012). This model promotes equity by ensuring that all students, including those with disabilities, can access the general curriculum while also receiving the necessary accommodations and support to succeed. The adoption of this model in Japan is supported by policies such as the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (United Nations, 2006), national reforms emphasizing reasonable accommodations for students with special educational needs (SEND), the *Act on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities* (2016), and the *Basic Act on Education* (2006), which ensure the promotion of equal opportunities and accessibility for students with disabilities.

In the Philippines, the *Inclusive Education Act of 2022* outlines a similar vision, advocating for equal educational access for learners with disabilities. However, the implementation remains a challenge due to several systemic barriers, such as limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, and the lack of adequate teacher training in inclusive education. Thus, while the conception of inclusive education is aligned with global norms, the practical implementation in the Philippines requires targeted efforts to overcome these challenges.

### ***Instructional Practices in Inclusive Classrooms: Differentiated Instruction, Collaborative Teaching and Co-Teaching***

Differentiated Instruction is a key practice in Japan's inclusive classrooms, where teachers adapt lessons to meet the diverse needs of their students by modifying content, process, and assessment. In Japan, this strategy ensures that students with different abilities can engage with the material at their own pace, which promotes a more inclusive and supportive learning environment (Forlin et al., 2015). In the Philippines, adopting differentiated instruction could help address the significant variation in student abilities across classrooms, especially in overcrowded public schools. Teachers in the Philippines could use visual aids, group work, peer support, and flexible assessments (e.g., projects, oral presentations) to provide all students with opportunities to succeed. However, as noted in the literature, challenges such as the lack of resources and large class sizes could limit the full implementation of this practice (Beltran et al., 2025; Sumayang et al., 2022).

Collaborative teaching and co-teaching are widely used in Japan, where general education and special education teachers collaborate to support diverse learners within the same classroom (Forlin et al., 2015; Yanagimoto, 2017; Young, 2024). This model promotes shared responsibility for instruction and ensures that students with SEND receive appropriate support while learning alongside their peers. This teaching model could be highly beneficial in the Philippines, particularly in regular classrooms that include students with disabilities. Co-teaching can create more opportunities for collaboration, shared expertise, and effective classroom management. However, a shortage of special education teachers and the lack of professional development for general education teachers in inclusive strategies could hinder the widespread adoption of this model.

(Beltran et al., 2025). With DepEd support for further professional development, the use of co-teaching models has potential in the Philippine context.

### ***Resource Rooms and Specialized Support***

Resource rooms play a crucial role in Japan's inclusive education framework (Kanzaki et al., 2023; Toyokawa et al., 2023). These are designated spaces where students with mild disabilities receive individualized instruction or therapeutic support while still participating in regular classroom learning. As Toyokawa et al. (2023) noted, resource rooms are designed to provide personalized attention, targeted interventions, and a supportive environment that addresses students' unique needs, complementing their general classroom experience. Additionally, Ohashi (2021) highlights that integrating group dance and physical expression activities within these spaces can significantly enhance students' engagement, communication, and social skills, offering a more holistic approach to support. Establishing new rooms and strengthening existing resource rooms could greatly enhance the inclusivity of Philippine schools. These rooms can serve as centers for remedial instruction, behavioral support, and assistive technology for learners with disabilities. Implementing resource rooms aligns with the Philippine *Inclusive Education Act of 2022*, which mandates the creation of Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs) in every municipality. However, challenges such as insufficient funding, lack of trained personnel, and limited space in public schools can hinder their full realization. To make resource rooms effective, the Philippine Department of Education must ensure adequate budget allocation, teacher deployment, and interdisciplinary collaboration among educators, therapists, and specialists.

### ***Reasonable Accommodation***

Providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a core practice in Japan's inclusive classrooms. It involves adjusting teaching methods, classroom layouts, and assessment formats to ensure students with disabilities can engage with the curriculum and participate fully in classroom activities (Notomi, 2020; Tamamura, 2017; Toyokawa et al., 2023). This practice is rooted in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), which emphasizes the need for flexible accommodations to enable equal educational opportunities.

The concept and realization of reasonable accommodation are crucial for Philippine schools, especially for students with learning disabilities or physical impairments. In resource-constrained schools, reasonable accommodations can include adjusting lesson plans, providing extra time on tests, or using assistive technology like text-to-speech tools. These accommodations make the curriculum more accessible and equitable, ensuring that no student is left behind. However, the availability of resources, such as assistive technologies, and teacher training in these accommodations remain challenging in many parts of the Philippines (Beltran et al., 2025).

### ***Interdisciplinary Collaboration***

Interdisciplinary collaboration, where teachers work alongside medical professionals, specialists, and therapists to develop an inclusive curriculum, is another key component of Japan's inclusive education model (Abe, 2021). This collaboration helps ensure that students with disabilities receive comprehensive support that goes beyond academic instruction, addressing their emotional, physical, and social needs. It holds great promise for Philippine schools, particularly in rural areas, where access to medical professionals and specialized support services is often limited. Collaboration among teachers, healthcare providers, and community organizations could help provide students with the holistic support they need to succeed. This model would also foster awareness about inclusive education among parents and communities, helping to reduce stigma and improve student outcomes. It is essential for the Philippines to invest in partnerships between schools, local healthcare facilities, and community organizations to ensure that integrated services are available. Establishing regular workshops for teachers and families on how to access and utilize these resources, along with government support for rural schools, could create a more sustainable system for providing comprehensive support to students with disabilities.

### ***Teacher Training and Professional Development***

Teacher preparation is one of the central factors influencing the success of inclusive education. Japan's system places a strong emphasis on ongoing professional development, ensuring that teachers are equipped to implement inclusive practices effectively (Kanzaki et al., 2023). Training in collaborative teaching, methods to differentiate instruction, and the use of assistive technologies helps teachers

become more competent and confident in addressing the needs of all students.

Teacher training is a critical area for improvement in the Philippines. Many teachers, especially in public schools, report feeling unprepared to teach students with disabilities (Beltran et al., 2025). Therefore, investing in professional development programs focused on inclusive education and differentiated teaching strategies is essential to ensure that Filipino teachers can create inclusive classrooms. Additionally, mentorship programs, workshops, and peer learning communities could help improve teachers' understanding of inclusive practices and build a collaborative culture in schools (Young, 2024).

### *Collaboration with Families and Communities*

In Japan, the success of inclusive education is also attributed to the active involvement of parents, communities, and specialists (Abe, 2021; Toyokawa et al., 2023). Teachers, parents, and other stakeholders work together to ensure that students with disabilities are supported both inside and outside the classroom. This collaborative approach strengthens the inclusivity of the educational environment and reduces stigma around disability. A similar collaborative approach is essential for the Philippines. According to Beltran et al., (2025), community engagement and family involvement can play a pivotal role in reducing stigma and promoting acceptance of students with disabilities. Schools can work with parents, local governments, and community organizations to develop a network of support that ensures students with SEND have the resources they need to succeed. Awareness programs, training for parents, and local partnerships can help create a more inclusive school culture in the Philippines (Beltran et al., 2025).

### **Conclusion**

The inclusive practices observed in Japan, such as differentiated instruction, reasonable accommodation, collaborative teaching, co-teaching, and interdisciplinary collaboration, offer valuable practices and models that could be successfully adapted to the Philippine educational context. While challenges such as lack of resources, limited teacher training, and insufficient infrastructure exist, the adoption of some or all of these inclusive practices holds significant potential for improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities in the Philippines.

To realize the full potential of inclusive education in the Philippines, there must be a concerted

effort to invest in teacher professional development, provide adequate resources, and encourage collaboration among teachers, communities, and other stakeholders. With these elements implemented, the Philippine education system can move closer to providing an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students, fostering both academic success and social integration for students with special educational needs.

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## A Systematic Literature Review of Inclusive Practices in Japan: A PRISMA Approach

Gloricel Hernandez FLORES  
Hiroshima University, Japan

Dianne CHAMBERS  
Edith Cowan University, Australia

本システマティック・レビューは、日本で実施されているインクルーシブ教育の実践を検証し、フィリピン教育環境への関連性と適応可能性を探った。Scopus、Web of Science、ERICなどのデータベースから収集した2015年から2025年までに発表された11の研究をPRISMAガイドラインに従い分析した。本レビューでは、差別化指導、協働指導、合理的配慮、共同指導、教科横断的連携の5つの核心的実践を特定した。分析結果から、日本のインクルーシブ教育モデルは積極的な参加を促進し、障害のある生徒が一般カリキュラムに公平にアクセスできることを保証していることが明らかになった。フィリピンでは、教員研修の不足、過密な教室環境、資源不足といった課題に対処することで、これらの実践を取り入れることが教育の包括性を大幅に向上させる可能性がある。本研究は、対象を絞った教員育成、資源配分、家族・地域社会の関与促進といった障壁を克服するための主要な戦略を提言して結論とした。

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