What teaching strategies do post-primary teachers employ to effectively support students with diverse learning needs in Business Studies and Accounting classrooms in post-primary schools

HIBERNIA COLLEGE

What teaching strategies do post-primary teachers employ to effectively support students with diverse learning needs in Business Studies and Accounting classrooms in post-primary schools

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Abstract

The following study investigates inclusive teaching strategies in Business Studies and Accounting classrooms in post-primary schools within the Republic of Ireland (RoI). Using a qualitative approach, data was collected through semi-structured interviews with five teachers within a DEIS school. Through thematic analysis, findings highlighted the use of differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to address diverse student needs. The results of the study presented challenges such as large class sizes and limited resources. The results also emphasised the positive impact the DEIS initiative has had. This study closes with recommendations which include enhancing teacher professional development and increasing resource allocation to support inclusive practices effectively.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Department of Education and Skills (DES)

Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)

British Educational Research Association (BERA)

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Republic of Ireland (RoI)

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Origin of the Dissertation

The origin of this dissertation stems from a profound interest in inclusive education, which has been shaped by my practical experiences and observations in various school settings. During my limited journey as an educator, I have witnessed the significance of providing equitable educational opportunities and support to students with diverse learning needs. Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), discuss this significance in regards the concept of inclusive pedagogy and its application in educational settings, including the challenges and opportunities it presents. The idea of this research project was ignited by the recognition of the specific challenges and opportunities that arise in the context of Business Studies and Accounting classrooms (Loreman et al., 2005). As a reflective practitioner, I have encountered students with varying learning profiles and abilities, and I am driven to explore how teachers can effectively cater to their unique requirements. Avramidis and Norwich (2002), review of literature on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion provided me with valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by educators. I aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice that will empower educators to create inclusive learning environments that foster positive outcomes for all students.

1.2 Background to the Project

The research on promoting inclusive education in Business Studies and Accounting within post-primary schools is firmly grounded in the broader landscape of educational policies and existing research literature on inclusive practices. Within the realm of inclusive education, policymakers and researchers have recognised the significance of providing equitable educational opportunities and support to all learners (UNESCO, 2019). These policies and initiatives aim to create inclusive learning environments that cater to diverse learning needs, emphasising the importance of access and participation for every student (Ainscow et al., 2019). Furthermore, a rich body of scholarly articles has delved into inclusive education practices. These studies have explored various strategies for addressing the diverse learning needs of students, the challenges faced by teachers, and the impact of inclusive practices on student outcomes (Friend and Bursuck, 2012). By contextualising this research within the existing knowledge base, we aim to build upon previous insights and contribute to the

development of practical recommendations for educators, fostering a positive and supportive learning environment for all students.

1.3 Rationale

This research holds paramount importance as it addresses the critical need for inclusive education in the fields of Business Studies and Accounting. Inclusive education plays a pivotal role in providing equal access to quality education for all learners, regardless of their diverse learning needs (UNESCO, 2019). However, within the specific context of Business Studies and Accounting classrooms, there is a pressing requirement to understand and implement effective strategies that cater to the unique requirements of students with varying learning profiles (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). This research aims to identify and investigate strategies that can enhance instructional practices, curriculum design, and assessment methods to support students with diverse learning needs effectively (Tomlinson, 2001). By exploring the impact of inclusive strategies on student outcomes, we seek to create a positive and supportive learning environment that promotes engagement and achievement for all learners in these subjects.

1.4 Dissertation Layout

This dissertation is structured into six chapters, each addressing different aspects of the research on promoting inclusive education in Business Studies and Accounting within post-primary schools. The layout of the dissertation is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the dissertation, outlining the origin of the research, background, rationale, and structure of the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the existing literature on inclusive education, focusing on policies, strategies, and outcomes related to inclusive practices in Business Studies and Accounting. It explores theoretical frameworks and previous research findings to establish a foundation for the study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter details the research design and methodology used in the study. It includes a description of the research approach, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the data collected. It includes an analysis of the data in relation to the research questions and identifies key themes and patterns that emerged from the research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter discusses the implications of the findings in relation to the existing literature and theoretical frameworks. It critically analyses the findings and explores their significance for inclusive education practices in Business Studies and Accounting.

Chapter 6: Recommendations and Conclusion

This chapter provides recommendations for educators, policymakers, and future researchers based on the findings of the study. It also concludes the dissertation by summarising the key points and reflecting on the overall contributions of the research.

1.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this introduction chapter lays a strong foundation for the research project on promoting inclusive education in Business Studies and Accounting within post-primary schools. The chapter highlights the origins of the dissertation, drawing from practical experiences as an educator and the recognition of the unique challenges and opportunities in these subjects. The importance of this research is emphasised by contextualising it within the broader landscape of educational policies and existing research literature on inclusive practices. With a clear rationale, the research aims to investigate effective strategies for supporting students with diverse learning needs, fostering inclusive learning environments, and empowering educators to meet the unique requirements of their learners. As we transition to Chapter 2, the "Literature Review," we will delve further into scholarly articles,

theoretical frameworks, and existing research that explore inclusive education practices in Business Studies and Accounting.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the literature pertinent to the realm of inclusive education in the RoI context, with a particular focus on the teaching strategies employed within post-primary Business Studies and Accounting subjects. More specifically, this chapter will look at the various inclusive teaching methodologies that have been identified in existing research, the principles of UDL, and the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing these strategies in diverse classrooms. By examining these elements, the chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of inclusive education practices and their effectiveness in supporting students with diverse learning needs in Business Studies and Accounting.

2.2 Tackling Education Disadvantage in RoI

Uncovering effective teaching strategies for inclusive education in business and accounting is of paramount importance as it has the potential to foster an inclusive learning environment that caters to the diverse learning needs of students. This is particularly significant in the context of Ireland, where the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) initiative prime objective is to ameliorate educational barriers stemming from socio-economic adversities that hinder students from reaping the full benefits of the educational system (Government of Ireland, 1998). A critical fulcrum of this review emanates from an in-depth examination of DEIS in Ireland, scrutinising its effectiveness, purpose, and impact on inclusion, student retention, and completion rates. The DEIS programme as reported by Gilleece et al., (2020) has made strides in improving literacy and numeracy among students from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds. There are currently 884 schools included in the DEIS programme in Ireland, benefiting over 180,000 students (Department of Education, 2022) and it is clear that the imprint of DEIS schools on the Irish Educational domain is permanent. Furthermore, the discourse on inclusive education transcends the boundaries of Ireland, resonating with global educational challenges pertaining to diversity and equity (Ainscow, 2016). The DEIS initiative is representative of a broader global endeavour to foster inclusivity and ensure that access of quality education is available for all students regardless of their socio-economic background. The ensuing sections look more closely into the policy and

practice background, the paradigm of accommodating diversity and inclusion, the framework of UDL, and an exploration of teaching strategies pivotal for inclusive education in Business Studies and Accounting. This literature review aims to provide a solid foundation upon which the empirical segments of this research will be constructed, ensuring a coherent and informed inquiry into the realms of inclusive education in Ireland.

2.3 Policy & Practice Background: DEIS IN Context

This segment of the literature review delves into the intricate policy and practice frameworks that shape inclusive education in post-primary settings, acknowledging the complex socio-economic factors that contribute to educational disadvantage. The educational landscape in in RoI has witnessed a progression of policies and reforms aimed at fostering inclusive education. Central to these reforms is the DEIS initiative, which has provided a structured framework to combat educational disadvantage and promote inclusive practices in Irish schools (Fleming & Harford, 2023; Weir & Kavanagh, 2018).

Gilleece et al. (2020) highlight the role of the DEIS plan within Irish post-primary education. This initiative aligns with global movements towards inclusivity, as marked by the United Nations' "Education for All" and the Incheon Declaration (Ainscow, 2016). Furthermore, The Salamanca Statement has been a milestone in advocating for inclusive education, emphasising the necessity of dynamic teaching strategies to accommodate the diverse learning needs of students (Ainscow, Slee, & Best, 2019). This global commitment to inclusive education reverberates in the Irish context, where policies such as DEIS have been tailored to align with these inclusive ideals. Carroll (2022) offers a comprehensive review of educational disadvantage in Ireland, charting a history from 1965 to 2020, and exposing how economic and social barriers have traditionally hindered education engagement and outcomes for certain groups. Carroll further analyses the strategies deployed by the Department of Education, such as the milestone of free post-primary education introduced in 1967, assess their impact on educational participation and attainment and their correlation with Ireland's economic growth. Continuing with the theme of Ireland's economic growth, despite advancements in digital technology and equality-focused initiatives, a digital divide remains, particularly highlighted during the shift to online education prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic (Carroll, 2022). While education is a crucial mechanism for personal development,

it is embedded within a socio-economic context that requires a comprehensive governmental approach to truly address ingrained inequalities (Carroll, 2022). While the DEIS programme stands as a pivotal policy initiative in Ireland, the critical analysis by Fleming and Harford (2023) unveils the stark realities and inadequacies of this policy endeavour. Fleming & Harford's (2023) review reveals not only the insufficiency of resources provided under DEIS but also highlights systemic mechanisms within government funding that continue to perpetuate, rather than alleviate, educational disadvantage.

"Educational disadvantage is a deep-seated and multi-faceted problem which is not amenable to easy and in-expensive solutions. While marginal progress has been made since the introduction of the DEIS scheme in 2005, educational disadvantage continues to be viewed as a school-based issue, with a lack of recognition and response at a policy level of its fundamental, deep-seated relationship with wide economic inequalities across Irish society." (Fleming and Harford, 2023, p,395).

The transition towards inclusive education has inevitably impacted the teaching of Business Studies and Accounting. The embracement of UDL principles, for instance, represents a rigorous effort to devise teaching strategies that are inclusive and effective for all learners (Katz, 2013). The application of UDL principles in the teaching of Business Studies and Accounting has facilitated a more flexible and accessible learning environment, aligning instructional strategies with diverse needs and abilities of students. In the realm of curriculum change, the Junior Cycle reforms embody a paradigm shift towards a more learner-centred and inclusive educational experience. These reforms underpin the importance of diverse teaching strategies to cater to the various learning needs inherent in Business Studies and Accounting classrooms.

Furthermore, the discourse on inclusive education has been enriched by cross-national insights, as observed in the shift from special to inclusive policies in Austria, which provides valuable lessons on the potential challenges and benefits of inclusive education policies (Buchner & Proyer, 2020). In essence, the nexus of policy, practice and curriculum reforms has played a pivotal role in shaping the inclusive educational landscape in Ireland, significantly impacting the teaching and learning processes in Business Studies and Accounting and other

subjects at the post-primary level.

2.4 Accommodating Diversity & Inclusion in RoI Post-Primary

In the quest for educational equity, the accommodation of diversity and inclusion in post-primary settings is paramount. Florian, Black-Hawkins, and Rouse (2016) explored the intricate relationship between academic achievement and inclusive practices, emphasising the crucial role of inclusive strategies in enhancing academic achievement across the student body. The DEIS initiative has been somewhat effective in carving a pathway towards a more inclusive educational environment in Ireland, especially in Business Studies and Accounting domains (Fleming & Harford, 2023; Weir & Kavanagh, 2018). The DEIS plan stands as a robust initiative to confront and alleviate educational disparities, thereby fostering inclusivity (Smyth, McCoy, & Kingston, 2015). It is important to note, the narrative of fostering inclusivity transcends geographical boundaries as asserted by Forlin (2010), who highlights the global endeavour towards creating inclusive classrooms.

Educators in the realms of Business Studies and Accounting are increasingly employing a variety of teaching strategies to cater to the diverse learning needs of students. The essence of inclusive pedagogy, as explored by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), underscores a shift from a 'one-size-fits-all' methodology to a more differentiated and personalised teaching approach. Similarly, Onyesom and Igberaharha (2021), outline the inclusive values and pedagogies essential for effective inclusive education in Business Studies, highlighting the relationship of teacher competencies and instructional strategies.

In the realm of global education, striving for equity amidst diversity presents a formidable challenge, as asserted by Ainscow (2016). The journey towards inclusive education is laden with challenges and opportunities. The dichotomy of adhering to the curriculum requisites while ensuring inclusivity poses a significant challenge. The required professional development and resources to smoothly handle the diverse learning needs are often seen as hurdles to achieving the inclusivity goal. On the other hand, the embracing of UDL principles showcases the potential for creating a more conducive learning environment, thereby transcending the traditional barriers to inclusion (Katz, 2013).

In essence, the narrative of diversity and inclusion in post-primary Business Studies and Accounting classrooms is a dynamic one. The nuanced understanding of how educators navigate these waters to foster inclusivity provides a rich context for delving deeper into the specific teaching strategies that resonate with the ideals if inclusive education and UDL.

2.5 Universal Design for Learning: A Framework for Inclusive Teaching and Learning in the Post-Primary Context

The framework of UDL stands at the forefront of educational innovation, aiming to craft a learning environment that accommodates the diverse spectrum of student needs, particularly in post-primary education (Katz, 2013). UDL can be defined as:

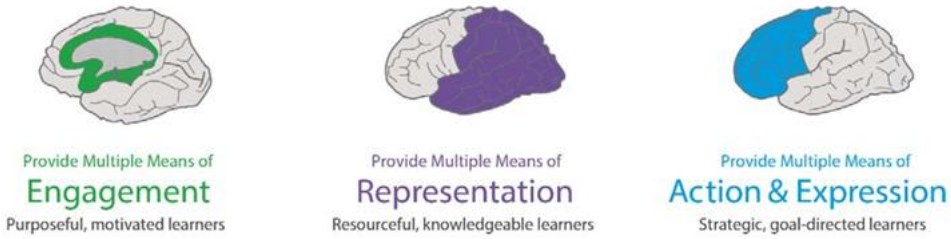

Figure 2: The principles of UDL

Rooted in the principles of flexibility, inclusivity, and individualised learning, UDL extends a scaffold for educators to tailor the teaching and learning experiences in a manner that caters to the diverse needs of students (Katz, 2013). Katz's (2013) work on the Three Block Model of UDL illuminates the potential for enhancing student engagement across a wide range of educational levels and abilities. Katz's (2013) research, involving 631 students from 12 different grades underscores the efficacy of UDL in not only fostering academic and social engagement but also enhancing peer interaction, student autonomy, and inclusivity across a multifaceted student demographic. This model represents a significant stride in actualising the inclusive ethos that UDL promotes. Despite the evidence supporting the benefits of UDL, challenges persist, such as educator's varied interpretations and the need for explicit communication of UDL principles to ensure their effective implementation (Kennette & Wilson, 2019). Fornauf and Erickson (2020) offer a critical examination of UDL's trajectory. Their exploration illuminates the existing ambiguity in UDL's application as either an intervention or a framework, which significantly impacts its potential in promoting inclusive

pedagogy. Capp (2017) highlighted the potential of UDL principles in fostering an inclusive and engaging learning environment, albeit pointing out the necessity for more empirical evidence.

The application of UDL principles (Representation, Expression and Engagement) in the realms of Business Studies and Accounting illuminates the potential to evade the traditional barriers to learning, thereby fostering a more inclusive classroom environment. The UDL framework facilitates a medium for devising instructional strategies that are cognizant of the diverse learning needs. For instance, employing various teaching methodologies such as visual, auditory, and interactive methods can be instrumental in ensuring that the learning material is accessible to all students. The global endeavour to foster inclusive educational environments finds a distinct reflection in the Irish context, as explored by Flood and Banks (2021). In their scrutiny of recent curriculum developments, they unveil a subtle yet discernible shift towards embracing UDL as a scaffolding framework. The paper highlights the threading of UDL principles across curriculum frameworks.

Furthermore, the synergy between UDL and inclusive pedagogical practices underscore a holistic approach towards accommodating diversity in post-primary education. The alignment of teaching strategies with UDL principles not only increases the learning experience but also cultivates a culture of inclusivity and equity within the classroom. The exploration of UDL with the post-primary education in Ireland, especially in Business Studies and Accounting, provides a rich tapestry of insights into how educational practices can evolve to meet the diverse learning needs of students. By embedding UDL principles within the instructional design and delivery of lessons, educators are better positioned to created a more inclusive and conducive learning environment that resonates with the ethos of inclusive education.

2.6 Teaching Strategies for Inclusive Education in Business & Accounting

The intricate tapestry of teaching strategies for inclusive education is increasingly being recognised for its impact on student engagement and learning outcomes. For example, Ellery (2019) emphasised the importance of nurturing positive student-teacher relationships. Ellery (2019) offers a nuanced perspective on the concept of belonging within post-primary schools, highlighting the transformative role of resource teachers in supporting inclusive practices.

Ellery (2019) reported that student's desire for a learning environment characterised by warmth, respectful relationships and an understanding for their individual needs. Ellery (2019) emphasises the necessity of welcoming practices, fostering positive relationships, and providing tailored learning support, underpinning the critical role of resource teachers in creating an inclusive learning environment.

A myriad of teaching strategies have been identified in the literature, which are instrumental in catering to students with diverse learning needs. Singh and Pallai (2023) categorised inclusive teaching into five practices, classroom management, individualised learning, use of ICT, modifying the curriculum, and collaboration. Additionally, differentiated instruction emerges as a robust strategy, where educators tailor the teaching process to accommodate diverse learning profiles of students (Tomlinson, 2001). Furthermore, the ethos of inclusive pedagogy echoes through strategies such as cooperative learning, where students collaborate in small groups, thereby fostering a cooperative and inclusive learning environment (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). Messiou et al. (2016) and Smets, De Neve, and Struyven (2022) further enriched the discourse on inclusive teaching strategies, shedding light on the dynamic nature of effective instructional design.

In the realm of Business Studies and Accounting, the employment of real-world examples, interactive discussions, and ICT integrated instruction are often highlighted as effective strategies in supporting students with diverse learning needs. The alignment of these teaching strategies with the principles of UDL further supplements their effectiveness. For instance, the use of multimedia resources in interpreting complex business concepts embodies the UDL principles of multiple means of representation. By aligning teaching strategies with the principles of UDL, educators are better poised to foster a conducive and inclusive learning environment that is instrumental in promoting academic success and equity.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter looked briefly at the examination of educational policies and practices, aimed at ameliorating educational disadvantage and prompting inclusivity in the RoI context, and in particular the DEIS programme. Focusing on Business Studies and Accounting, this chapter also reveals a myriad of themes central to understanding the landscape of inclusive education

at the post-primary level. Central to this discourse is the exploration of teaching strategies that foster inclusivity and their alignment with the principles of UDL.

The literature review furnishes invaluable insights that resonate with the research questions, and which will be explored in the empirical aspect of the study. More specifically, in addition to the strides made in promoting inclusive education, the literature suggests gaps in understanding how teaching strategies a the post-primary level align, or do not align, with UDL principles. This inquiry will aspire to bridge the gap by further investigating the lived experiences of educators in the following chapter.

The ensuing chapter will outline the research methodology, a qualitative paradigm, envisaged to garner rich, in-depth insights into post-primary educators. Through a blend of interviews and observations, the study will seek to unravel the tapestry of teaching strategies employed in Business Studies and Accounting Classrooms.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to examine the methods post-primary educators use to assist students with a range of learning needs in Business Studies and Accounting classes, and to evaluate how well these methods fit the UDL framework. This study addresses two fundamental research questions:

1. What teaching strategies do post-primary teachers employ to effectively support students with diverse learning needs in Business Studies and Accounting subjects?
2. To what extent do these teaching strategies reflect the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in the post-primary school setting?

This study is important as it attempts to close existing gaps in the literature about inclusive teaching strategies that work well when teaching business studies and accounting, especially in an Irish classroom. The literature study indicated that more research is necessary because there aren't enough thorough studies examining the use of UDL concepts in various fields (Fleming & Harford, 2023; Onyesom & Igberaharha, 2021). The DEIS project in Ireland emphasises the significance of comprehending and putting inclusive teaching practices into practice. It focuses on alleviating educational disadvantage (Department of Education, 2022).

3.1.1 Methodology

For this study, a qualitative methodology was selected because it is well-suited to investigating the intricacies of educational practices and obtaining the complicated experiences and viewpoints of educators (Creswell, 2013). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative methods are especially useful for exploring the subjective experiences of teachers, which enables a greater understanding of how they apply inclusive practices in the classroom.

3.1.2 Research Site

A DEIS school in the south of Ireland was chosen for the research because of its dedication to inclusive education and diverse student body. With about 25 full-time employees and 140

pupils, the school offers a rich backdrop for analysing inclusive teaching strategies at both the junior and senior levels. This environment makes it possible to investigate in-depth how educators modify their methods to suit the requirements of all students, but especially those from low-income families (Weir & Kavanagh, 2018).

3.2 Research Methods

Using semi-structured interviews, this study uses a qualitative research approach to collect detailed information about the methods post-primary teachers of accounting and business studies utilise to meet the needs of a wide range of students. Because semi-structured interviews are flexible and can yield rich, detailed data on participants' viewpoints and experiences, they were selected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher can go deeper into particular topics of interest when they come up throughout the interviews thanks to this method's deep investigation of the teachers' techniques (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).

Semi-structured interviews provide a conversational but focused contact between the researcher and participants. Participants are encouraged to provide in-depth, complex explanations of their teaching methods and the difficulties they encounter when putting inclusive tactics into practice. Additionally, it enables the interviewer to provide follow-up questions in response to the participants' answers, guaranteeing a thorough comprehension of the topic (Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin, 2009). This method's flexibility allows for the discovery of insights that may not be revealed by more rigorous data collection techniques, including surveys or organised interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

Semi-structured interviews were selected in accordance with the interpretivist paradigm that is driving this study. This paradigm places a strong emphasis on comprehending the individualised experiences and interpretations that people make of their interactions and behaviours (Creswell, 2013). Through semi-structured engagement with educators, the researcher integrates themselves into the study process, creating a safe space for participants to freely share their real-life experiences and reflections. This interaction is crucial for capturing the complexities and subtleties of teaching practices and their alignment with UDL principles.

Gaining knowledge of the research environment is crucial for efficiently designing and carrying out the investigation. This entails being aware of the particular circumstances surrounding the DEIS school that was chosen for the study, such as its demographic makeup, the educational obstacles it faces, and its current inclusive policies. The selected school is in the south of Ireland, has a staff of 25 full-time teachers, and serves about 140 kids. It offers a lively and diverse setting for learning about inclusive education practices. This awareness of the context guarantees that the research design is suitably customised to meet the special requirements and features of the school and its stakeholders (Flood & Banks, 2021).

3.3 Sample & Participants

To choose participants, purposeful sampling was used, which guarantees that the sample closely matches the goals of the study and yields rich, pertinent data. Choosing participants for purposeful sampling, sometimes referred to as judgmental sampling, entails considering particular traits and standards pertinent to the study questions (Palinkas et al., 2015). In qualitative research, this method is especially useful since it enables the intentional inclusion of participants who possess the most relevant expertise and experience pertaining to the study's subject, as opposed to random or convenience selection (Patton, 2002).

Teachers who have worked in a DEIS school for at least five years have been selected as study participants. By using this criterion, the Department of Education (2022) guarantees that the interviewers have significant expertise addressing the special possibilities and challenges that come with the DEIS program, which aims to address educational poverty in Ireland. Two-year heads are among the attendees; their leadership positions offer further perspectives on the application and effects of inclusive teaching practices at various school levels.

By guaranteeing that the data gathered is profoundly influenced by the experiences of educators who are actively involved in the practice of inclusive education, this purposive sample is in line with the objectives of the thesis. The research can provide a comprehensive view of the tactics used to serve varied learning requirements in Accounting and Business Studies by choosing experienced teachers and year leaders. This methodology guarantees that the study takes into account the unique dynamics and settings of DEIS schools while also improving the study's credibility and depth (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003).

3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, a technique best suited for finding, examining, and summarising patterns (themes) within qualitative data, was used to examine the data gathered from semi-structured interviews for this study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Nowell et al. (2017), thematic analysis is especially useful in qualitative research because it offers a flexible and thorough explanation of the data, enabling a thorough comprehension of the underlying themes connected to the research questions.

The first step in the thematic analysis approach was to get well-versed in the data by reading the interview transcripts several times. This allowed the researcher to grasp the topic thoroughly. Subsequently, key elements that seemed pertinent to the research topics were highlighted as the researcher methodically went through the data set to create the first codes. Organising the data into meaningful groupings and then reviewing and fine-tuning them to make sure they appropriately represented the data was the process of coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

After the coding process was finished, the codes were analysed to find recurring themes. In order to answer the research questions, themes were identified and explained according to their significance. Relevant codes were grouped into prospective themes, and these themes were then reviewed to make sure they told a clear and meaningful story about the data (Clarke & Braun, 2014).

Analysing each theme's contribution to addressing the study questions was necessary for theme interpretation. The contextualisation of this interpretation within the body of existing literature made it possible to compare the results with those of other investigations and theoretical viewpoints. The analysis offered a systematic and thorough knowledge of how inclusive teaching tactics are applied in Business Studies and Accounting, and how these practices match with UDL principles, by connecting the themes to the research questions.

3.5 Rigour

Using a variety of techniques to demonstrate the study's validity, credibility, and

dependability is necessary to ensure its rigor. Member checking is one such tactic; it entails sending the transcripts and initial results back to the participants for their assessment and input. By doing so, it is possible to verify that the data and interpretations are accurate and that the conclusions accurately represent the viewpoints of the participants (Birt et al., 2016). The inclusion of participant input lends further legitimacy and authenticity to the research.

The interviews were audio recorded, thorough field notes were taken, and interviews were transcribed verbatim. While field notes include contextual information and remarks that enhance the data, audio recordings guarantee that all verbal subtleties and details are accurately preserved (Creswell, 2013). In order to preserve the data's integrity and enable accurate analysis and thematic classification without running the danger of leaving out critical information, verbatim transcriptions are essential (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Another essential element in assuring the validity of any qualitative study is reflexivity. I intentionally participate in reflexive techniques as the researcher to reduce the risk for bias that is inherent in qualitative research. This entails keeping a reflective notebook the entire time I'm conducting the research in order to record my feelings, ideas, and any potential biases that might affect how the data is collected and analysed (Finlay, 2002). My goal is to improve the transparency and reliability of the study findings by identifying and mitigating these biases.

3.6 Limitations

This qualitative research design acknowledges a number of possible limitations. The subjective character of qualitative data, which mostly depends on the individual experiences, interpretations, and viewpoints of the participants, is one important drawback (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although this subjectivity offers deep and comprehensive insights, it can also inject bias and variability into the processes of gathering and analysing data.

Another limitation is the limited generalisability of the findings. Small, purposefully chosen samples are the main focus of qualitative research; these samples are not meant to be representative of the general population (Creswell, 2013). The experiences of teachers in one DEIS school in the south of Ireland may not be entirely transferable to other educational

contexts or settings, especially those that are not part of the DEIS framework or are located in different geographic areas, according to this study.

Another significant drawback is the impact of the researcher's viewpoints or bias. Given that the researchers is the main tool used to gather and analyse data, the research results may be influenced by the researchers biases and interpretations (Finlay, 2002). Reflexivity, or the act of examining and correcting one's own prejudices, is essential to reducing this impact. In order to deal with bias, I will practice reflective journaling and ongoing self-reflection in the hope of minimising the impact of my viewpoints on the study's conclusions.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted with full ethical approval from the relevant ethics committee at Hibernia College, ensuring that all research activities adhered to the highest ethical standards. The rights and welfare of the participants were carefully protected by carefully attending to a number of important ethical issues. Anonymity and confidentiality were of utmost importance; all participant identities were protected by removing any identifying information from the data and using pseudonyms (BERA, 2018). This made it possible for participants to speak openly about their experiences without worrying about being recognised or facing consequences.

Strict security protocols were used to handle data storage in order to adhere to GDPR and Hibernia College's data protection policies. The digital material was password-protected and encrypted, and the physical records were kept in a locked cabinet that the researcher alone could access. To guarantee informed consent, participants were fully informed about the study's objectives and methods and made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without incurring any penalties.

Throughout the research procedure, the British Educational Research Association (BERA) rules (2018) were followed, which offer a strong foundation for handling ethical issues. The right to withdraw, informed consent, and voluntary participation are all emphasised in these criteria, as they were essential to the study's ethical protocol. The study made sure that participants' autonomy and dignity were upheld and that their data was treated with the

highest care and integrity by adhering to these principles.

3.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this methodology chapter has described the thorough process used to examine the instructional strategies used by post-primary educators to accommodate a range of learning needs in accounting and business studies, and to evaluate how well these strategies align with the principles of UDL. The capacity of the qualitative research design—more especially, the use of semi-structured interviews—to offer comprehensive insights into the complex perspectives of educators led to its selection. The data acquired was made richer and more relevant by ensuring that participants had significant relevant experience through the use of purposeful sampling.

A structured comprehension of the instructional tactics and their efficacy was obtained by the systematic identification, coding, and interpretation of themes within the data through the application of thematic analysis. Extensive methods such as member verification, careful data entry, and reflexivity were used to guarantee the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the results. Reflexive approaches were used to identify and overcome potential constraints, such as the subjective character of qualitative data and limited generalisability.

Following Hibernia College and BERA norms, every effort was made to assure anonymity, confidentiality, and data protection, all while adhering to ethical issues. Overall, this chapter offers a thorough and systematic approach to investigating inclusive education practices, making a significant contribution to the area. In the next chapter, the findings from the data collected will be presented and analysed. This chapter will identify key themes and patterns that emerged from the interviews, illustrating the various teaching strategies employed by post-primary teachers in Business Studies and Accounting classrooms.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed and in-depth critical analysis of the findings from the qualitative study on the teaching strategies employed by post-primary teachers to support students with diverse learning needs in Business Studies and Accounting classrooms within DEIS schools. The data gathered from semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis are arranged into main themes and sub-themes and are supported by tables and figures to ensure readability and clarity.

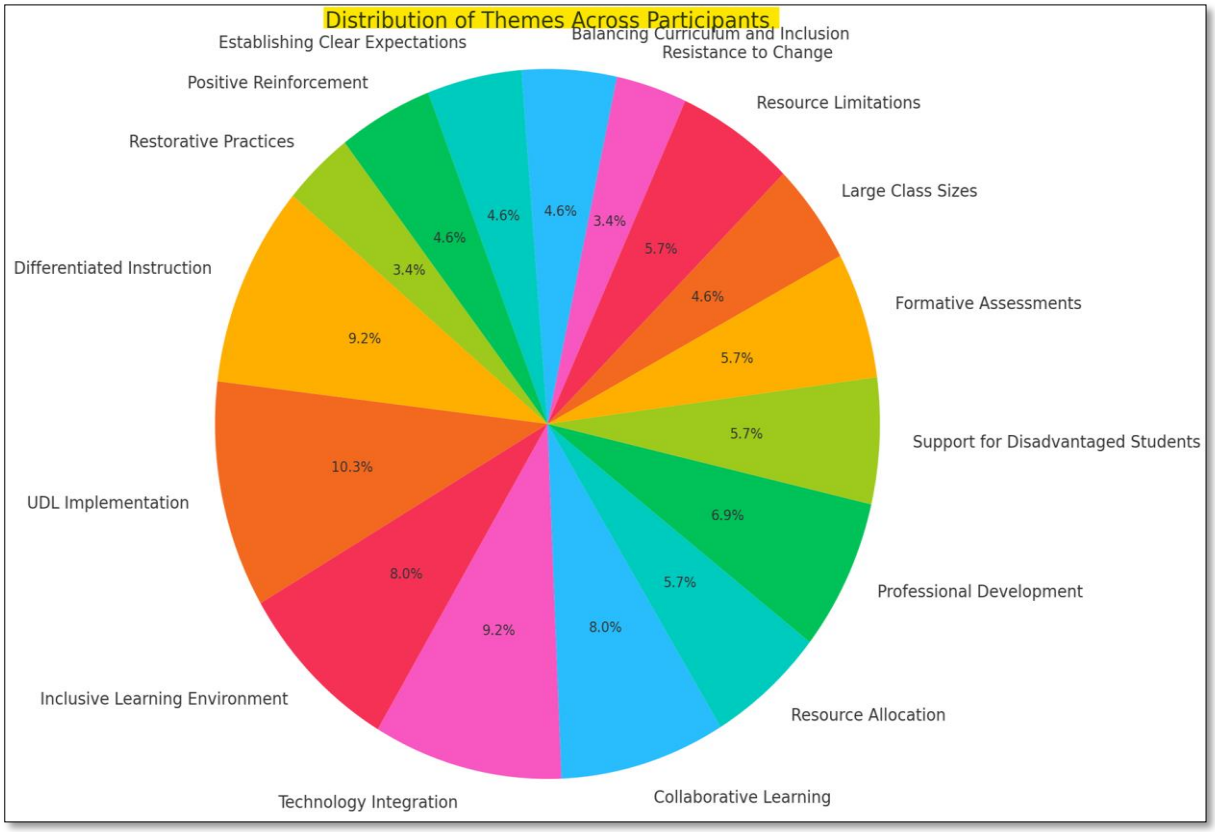

Figure 1: Distribution of Themes Across Participants

4.2 Differentiated Instruction

The significance of varied instruction in meeting the various learning requirements of students was underscored by the participants. To customise their instruction, teachers employ a range of strategies, such as technology integration, interactive exercises, and group projects.

Teacher	Strategy	Description
MS03	Differentiated Classroom	Group work, interactive activities, use of ICT to cater to different needs
MS02	Individualised Instruction	Mix of collaborative projects, technology integration, formative assessments
MS05	Differentiated Assignments and Assessments	Tailored assignments allowing students to work at their own pace

Table 1: Differentiated Instruction Strategies

MS03 mentioned the importance of a "differentiated classroom to cater for everyone's needs," highlighting the use of diverse activities to engage students. Similarly, MS02 employs "a mix of individualised instruction, collaborative projects, and technology integration" to address student needs, demonstrating a multifaceted approach. MS05 focuses on "differentiated assignments and assessments to ensure that each student can work at their own pace." By using this method, educators may cater to each student's unique requirements and make sure that every student has equitable access to and engagement with the curriculum. For instance, MS02 uses technology and formative assessments to monitor and assist student progress, whereas MS03 uses interactive activities and group work to address a variety of learning styles and requirements. Differentiated instruction also contributes to the development of a more inclusive classroom where all students are encouraged and challenged. Educators has the ability to recognise and address the distinct requirements of every pupil, cultivating a feeling of inclusion.

4.3 Universal Design for Learning Implementation

By offering a variety of platforms for representation, interaction, and expression, educators can integrate UDL principles. This guarantees that every student can access the content in a manner that best fits their preferred method of learning.

Teacher	Technique	Description
MS04	Multiple Means of Representation	Visual aids, hands-on activities, digital tools
MS03	Diverse Presentation Methods	Projector, visual aids, hands-on activities
MS01	Various Expression Methods	Written assignments, presentations, practical projects

Table 2: UDL Implementation Techniques

MS04 shared, "I provide multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression,"

reflecting a comprehensive application of UDL principles. MS03 uses "visual aids, hands-on activities, and digital tools like the projector to present information," illustrating the use of varied methods to cater to different learning styles. MS01 offers "various ways for students to express their understanding, such as written assignments, presentations, or practical projects," highlighting the flexibility in assessment methods. Because of UDL's adaptability, educators can use a variety of sensory modalities to engage students and offer them several opportunities to demonstrate their learning. For example, MS04 accommodates kinaesthetic and visual learners with its hands-on exercises and visual aids, while MS01 offers students a variety of assessment options so they can select the format that best fits their learning style. Instructors have seen enhanced learning outcomes and more student engagement as a result of applying UDL concepts. Teachers can better meet the different requirements of their students by providing a variety of access points and opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning.

4.4 Inclusive Learning Environment

The participants' core teaching philosophy is developing an inclusive learning environment. This entails establishing clear standards for behaviour, recognising diversity, and utilising resources and language that are inclusive.

Teacher	Strategy	Description
MS01	Respect and Diversity	Clear expectations, diverse materials, fostering community
MS04	Celebrating Diversity	Inclusive language, diverse backgrounds in materials
MS03	Inclusive Classroom Culture	Respectful behaviour, inclusive language, celebrating student diversity

Table 3: Strategies for Inclusive Learning Environment

MS01 emphasised, "Creating an inclusive learning environment is central to my teaching philosophy," underscoring the importance of fostering a supportive classroom atmosphere. MS04 highlighted the practice of celebrating diversity, stating, "I start by setting clear expectations for respectful behaviour and celebrating diversity in my classroom." MS03 added, "I use inclusive language and materials that reflect the diverse backgrounds of my students," reflecting a commitment to inclusivity in both language and content. Instructors use a variety of techniques to establish a friendly and inclusive learning atmosphere. For

example, MS04 sets clear expectations for respectful behaviour, which helps establish a positive classroom culture. Furthermore, MS03 makes use of resources that showcase the variety of student backgrounds, guaranteeing that every student feels included and appreciated. Student participation and a sense of belonging have risen as a result of these inclusive strategies. Instructors have found that when students feel valued and included, they are more willing to contribute and work together.

4.5 Technology Integration

Technology is used in the classroom to improve accessibility and engagement. To improve the learning process, educators make use of a range of digital resources, instructional software, and online simulations.

Teacher	Technique	Description
MS02	Interactive Software and Simulations	Use of technology like interactive software and online simulations
MS03	ICT Integration	Importance of bringing technology (ICT) into the classroom
MS05	Educational Tools	Incorporation of online simulations and interactive tools

Table 4: Technology Integration Techniques

MS02 remarked, "I use technology like interactive software and online simulations," demonstrating the integration of modern tools to enhance learning. MS03 noted, "I think it's so important to bring in technology (ICT) to the classroom as it plays a huge role in the lives of young people," highlighting the relevance of technology in today's educational context. MS05 explained, "I incorporate technology such as online simulations and interactive tools to make learning more engaging and accessible," showcasing the use of digital tools to support diverse learning needs. Teachers can design interactive and captivating learning experiences by utilising technology. For example, MS02 makes complicated subjects more approachable and interesting for students by using interactive software and simulations. Similar to this, MS05 supports different learning styles and preferences by including online simulations and teaching resources. Educators have noted that incorporating technology into their lessons offers several advantages. These include being able to accommodate various learning styles, improving comprehension of difficult subjects, and raising student engagement. Technology can also give students the chance to learn at their own pace and get immediate feedback,

which will help them grow academically.

4.6 Collaborative Learning

Different learning styles are supported and peer learning is encouraged through collaborative learning. Peer-to-peer tutoring and group projects are popular ways for students to learn from one another and hone their critical thinking and collaboration abilities.

Teacher	Technique	Description
MS05	Group Projects	Students work in teams to solve business case studies
MS02	Peer-to-Peer Tutoring	Collaborative learning through group projects and peer tutoring
MS03	Interactive Activities	Group work, interactive class activities

Table 5: Collaborative Learning Techniques

MS05 stated, "Collaborative projects and group work are a staple in my classroom," illustrating the emphasis on teamwork. MS02 shared, "I incorporate collaborative learning through group projects and peer-to-peer tutoring," highlighting the benefits of peer learning. MS03 noted, "Group work and interactive activities are key strategies I use," emphasising the importance of interactive and collaborative methods. With the use of collaborative learning methodologies, students can improve their critical thinking and cooperation abilities. For instance, MS05 uses group projects to promote problem-solving and peer learning. While MS02's peer-to-peer tutoring approach promotes a collaborative classroom atmosphere by enabling students to assist one another's learning. Instructors who have used collaborative learning methodologies have claimed success. Among these include increased social skills, increased student involvement, and the growth of a feeling of community in the classroom. Collaborating with peers increases the likelihood that students will take responsibility for their learning.

4.7 Impact of the DEIS Initiative

The provision of additional resources and supports by the DEIS initiative has had a substantial impact on instructional practices. With the use of these materials, educators are now able to provide students from disadvantaged backgrounds with more individualised attention and interventions.

Teacher	Impact	Description
MS04	Funding and Smaller Class Sizes	Learning aids, technology, personalised attention
MS05	Additional Resources and Supports	Tailored interventions, smaller class sizes
MS03	Focus on Fair Access	Emphasis on equitable education and additional support

Table 6: Impact of DEIS Initiative

MS04 mentioned, "We've received funding for learning aids and technology," illustrating the tangible benefits of the initiative. MS05 stated, "The additional resources and supports provided by DEIS have enabled us to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment," highlighting the positive impact on teaching conditions. MS03 said, "The DEIS has influenced my approach by encouraging a focus on fair access to education," reflecting the initiative's role in promoting equity. Essential materials are made available by the DEIS initiative to assist educators in meeting the varied requirements of their students. For instance, MS04 makes use of the funds to purchase technology and instructional aids that improve every student's educational experience. MS03 concentrates on fair access to education, whereas MS05's smaller class sizes enable more individualised attention. Instructors have reported that they have been able to adopt more successful inclusive methods because to the DEIS initiative. All students, especially those from disadvantaged families, can now benefit from individualised interventions and a more encouraging learning environment thanks to the initiative's increased resources and assistance. The improved student achievements and enhanced teaching methods are clear results of the DEIS effort. Instructors have seen that by having more resources at their disposal, they are better able to assist students who need more assistance, which guarantees that every student has the chance to succeed. For example, MS04 stated, "The funding has enabled us to purchase essential learning aids and technology, making it easier to engage students and cater to their individual needs."

4.8 Challenges and Barriers

Teachers encounter several obstacles while attempting to incorporate inclusive practices, even with the benefits of the DEIS project. Large class numbers, a lack of resources, resistance to change, and striking a balance between curriculum requirements and individualised support are a few of these.

Challenge	Description
Large Class Sizes	Difficulty in providing individualised attention
Limited Resources	Insufficient planning and material resources
Resistance to Change	Hesitation from students and staff towards new teaching methods
Balancing Curriculum and Inclusion	Challenge in covering curriculum while providing personalised support

Table 7: Challenges and Barriers

MS03 remarked, "Large classes can come across as a challenge," highlighting the difficulty of providing individualised attention in a crowded classroom. MS05 noted, "One of the challenges is the size of the classes making it difficult to give individual attention," which emphasises the need for more manageable class sizes to support inclusive education. MS04 stated, "Balancing personalised instruction with large class sizes is a significant challenge," reflecting the struggle to meet individual needs within a standardised curriculum framework. Another major obstacle is a lack of resources. The problem of providing individualised support, which necessitates extra preparation and materials, highlights the need for sufficient resources to adopt effective inclusive practices. Due to resource constraints, teachers find it challenging to provide every student with the support they need. Participants identified resistance to change as another difficulty. It is clear that changing long-standing pedagogical practices and mindsets is challenging, which highlights the significance of encouraging an adaptive and ever-improving school culture.

Among the difficulties teachers encounter is finding a way to balance the demands of the curriculum with the requirement to offer individualised support. The constant battle to include inclusive practices within the limitations of a demanding curriculum is highlighted by the conflict between reaching standardised educational goals and attending to the needs of individual students. Despite these obstacles, educators are dedicated to coming up with solutions and putting inclusive practices into place in order to help their students. Many have devised inventive approaches to overcome these obstacles, like using technology to provide customised educational opportunities or cooperating with peers to pool resources. Working together with colleagues has been really helpful in exchanging tactics and resources to provide students with better support.

4.9 Conclusion

The results of this study shed light on the variety of approaches teachers use to promote inclusive education in classes teaching accounting and business studies. To meet the diverse learning requirements of students, technological integration, individualised instruction, and UDL principles are essential. While the DEIS initiative offers valuable tools, obstacles still need to be overcome in order to effectively implement inclusive education. The knowledge gained from this chapter lays the groundwork for more conversations about improving instructional strategies to promote inclusive learning environments. In the next chapter, the results of the findings will be critically discussed in relation to the existing literature. This chapter will evaluate the significance of the findings, address the research questions, and explore their broader implications for inclusive education practices.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The study's findings are critically discussed in this chapter in light of the research questions and the current literature. It seeks to evaluate the significance of the findings in light of prior research, acknowledge the limits of the study, and make recommendations for further research.

5.2 Research Questions and Key Findings

Research Questions	**Key Findings**
1. What teaching strategies do post-primary teachers employ to effectively support students with diverse learning needs in Business Studies and Accounting subjects?	Teachers use a variety of methodologies, including differentiated instruction, UDL principles, and collaborative learning, but face persistent barriers such as large class sizes and limited resources.
2. To what extent do these teaching strategies reflect the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in the post-primary school setting?	The participants apply key UDL principles in their teaching for representation, interaction, and expression.

Table 8: Research Questions and Key Findings

In the context of inclusive teaching in Business Studies and Accounting classes within DEIS schools, the study found a number of important themes. These themes include differentiated instruction, UDL implementation, inclusive learning environment, technology integration, collaborative learning, the impact of the DEIS initiative, and challenges and barriers.

5.2.1 Differentiated Instruction

The results emphasise how crucial varied instruction is for meeting a range of learning requirements. To customise their instruction, teachers use a variety of strategies such as group work, interactive exercises, and technological integration. Engaging students with varying learning styles and capacities requires the use of these strategies. A more inclusive learning environment is made possible by differentiated instruction, which supports equity

and equal access for all students. Tomlinson (2001), who highlights the necessity for adaptable teaching strategies to address varied student requirements, is in favour of this approach. However, time restrictions and the requirement for adequate training can make the implementation of differentiated instruction difficult (Smets, De Neve & Struyven, 2022).

Teachers noted that peer learning activities and group projects were successful. For instance, MS03 highlighted, "Group projects encourage peer learning and accommodate different learning styles." This is consistent with Gillies's (2004) findings that student engagement and academic achievement are greatly increased by cooperative learning practices. These strategies must be able to meet a wide range of demands, particularly in mixed-ability classrooms where students' skills can differ greatly (Friend & Cook, 2010).

5.2.2 Universal Design for Learning Implementation

Creating inclusive classrooms requires putting UDL ideas into practice. Instructors offer a variety of platforms for representation, interaction, and expression so that every student can access the curriculum in a way that best fits their preferred method of learning. This strategy is in line with UDL's tenets, which promote flexibility and inclusivity in teaching methods (Rose & Meyer, 2002). Existing research has provided ample evidence of UDL's beneficial effects on learning outcomes and student engagement (Flood & Banks, 2021). However, obstacles including a lack of professional development opportunities and scarce resources can make it difficult to apply UDL effectively (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010).

Instructors discussed how to provide material using digital tools, interactive exercises, and visual aids. MS02 stated, "I use visual aids, hands-on activities, and digital tools to present information in various formats," emphasising the importance of diverse teaching methods to cater to different learning preferences. The flexibility offered by UDL allows for a more dynamic and responsive teaching approach, which can significantly benefit students with varying needs (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

5.2.3 Inclusive Learning Environment

By establishing clear expectations for behaviour, embracing diversity, and utilising inclusive language and resources, educators foster an inclusive learning environment. These methods

promote a supportive and welcoming learning environment in the classroom, which motivates student involvement. The literature supports the importance of an inclusive environment by highlighting its role in fostering students' academic achievement and well-being (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). Students' heightened sense of belonging and improved academic achievement are clear benefits of an inclusive learning environment (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). However, teachers and school leaders must work together to sustain this kind of atmosphere on a regular basis (Friend & Cook, 2010).

MS04 described how they "celebrate diversity and use inclusive language and materials," which is essential for creating a classroom environment where all students feel valued and included. This approach not only supports academic achievement but also promotes social and emotional well-being, which is crucial for holistic student development (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010).

5.2.4 Technology Integration

Technology integration is employed to improve accessibility and student engagement in the classroom. Online simulations, instructional software, and digital tools assist a variety of learning styles and simplify difficult subjects. Documented in educational studies, the advantages of technology integration include enhanced learning outcomes and higher student engagement (Selwyn, 2016). Numerous studies have shown that as digital learning environments have grown in popularity, the importance of technology in education has become even more crucial (Higgins, Xiao, & Katsipataki, 2012). Despite these benefits, challenges such as limited access to technology and the need for teacher training must be addressed to fully realise the potential of technology integration (Selwyn, 2016).

MS01 noted, "Technology such as educational software and online simulations helps make the content more accessible and engaging," reflecting the widespread positive impact of technology integration on student learning. The use of technology can also facilitate differentiated instruction by providing various tools and resources to meet individual student needs (Selwyn, 2016).

5.2.5 Collaborative Learning

Group projects and peer-to-peer tutoring are examples of collaborative learning practices that support peer learning and take into account a variety of learning preferences. The critical thinking and collaborative abilities that these techniques foster in students are vital to their academic and personal development. According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), there is evidence in the literature that shows how well collaborative learning works to build a sense of community and increase student engagement. Higher academic achievement and enhanced social skills are further benefits of collaborative learning (Gillies, 2004). However, effective implementation requires careful planning and management to ensure all students are actively involved (Gillies, 2004).

MS05 highlighted, "Collaborative projects and group work are a staple in my classroom because they encourage peer learning and accommodate different learning styles." The social interaction and peer support inherent in collaborative learning are vital for building a cohesive classroom community (Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

5.2.6 Impact of the DEIS Initiative

The provision of additional resources and supports by the DEIS initiative has had a substantial impact on teaching strategies. With the use of these materials, educators can provide students from disadvantaged backgrounds with more individualised attention and customised interventions. The Department of Education and Skills (2017) states that the DEIS initiative has had a beneficial impact on teaching methods and student outcomes, which are in line with the objectives of inclusive education policies. Reducing educational gaps has been made possible by the initiative's emphasis on equity and access (Smyth, 2016). However, in order to meet new demands and challenges, the programme must be continuously evaluated and adjusted (Department of Education and Skills, 2017).

MS03 shared, "The DEIS initiative provides crucial resources that support inclusive education," illustrating the significant role of DEIS in enhancing educational equity and support. A more inclusive learning environment is promoted by the resource allocation made possible by DEIS, which enables focused interventions that cater to the individual needs of students (Smyth, 2016).

5.2.7 Challenges and Barriers

Teachers encounter several obstacles while attempting to incorporate inclusive practices, even with the benefits of the DEIS project. Large class numbers, a lack of resources, opposition to change, and striking a balance between curriculum requirements and individualised support are a few of these. Addressing these challenges requires continuous effort and support from educational stakeholders. According to Blatchford et al. (2003), large class sizes make it difficult to provide individualised attention, while Ainscow & Sandill (2010) point out that resource constraints make it challenging to implement effective inclusive practices. Adopting new teaching techniques is made more difficult by staff and student resistance to change (Fullan, 2001). These difficulties demonstrate the necessity of continual institutional support and professional development in order to facilitate effective inclusion (Buchner & Proyer, 2020).

MS01 and MS02 both noted that "large classes and limited resources" are significant barriers to providing individualised support. These issues are consistent with broader educational challenges identified in the literature, which stress the importance of adequate funding and resources for successful inclusive education (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010).

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of differentiated instruction, UDL implementation, inclusive learning environments, technology integration, collaborative learning, and the positive impact of the DEIS initiative in promoting inclusive education. Despite the challenges faced by teachers, the findings underscore the potential for creating supportive and engaging learning environments for all students. Continued efforts and support from educators and policymakers are essential to advancing inclusive education practices. By addressing the identified challenges and building on the strengths highlighted in this study, it is possible to move towards a more inclusive and equitable education system. In the final chapter, the main conclusions of the study will be drawn together, summarising the key insights and contributions of the research. The chapter will also discuss the study's limitations and provide practical and policy-based recommendations based on the findings.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, the main conclusions from the findings and discussions of the previous chapters are drawn together. The aim is to consolidate the insights gained from the research, critically analyse the study's limitations, and provide practical and policy-based recommendations.

6.2 Main Conclusions

The findings of this study highlight the importance of employing inclusive teaching strategies in Business Studies and Accounting classrooms within DEIS schools. The strategies identified include differentiated instruction, UDL principles, technology integration, and collaborative learning. These strategies align with the existing literature on inclusive education and have been shown to foster a supportive learning environment for students with diverse learning needs. For instance, the emphasis on differentiated instruction aligns with Tomlinson's (2001) advocacy for tailoring teaching to meet diverse student needs. Similarly, the principles of UDL implementation echo the recommendations of Rose and Meyer (2002) for creating flexible and inclusive learning environments. The challenges identified in the study, such as large class sizes and limited resources, are also widely acknowledged in the literature. Ainscow & Sandill (2010) discuss the impact of these barriers on the effectiveness of inclusive education practices. Moreover, the positive influence of the DEIS initiative aligns with previous research highlighting the importance of targeted interventions and resources for disadvantaged students (Fleming & Harford, 2023).

6.3 Implications for Practice

The findings have several practical implications for educators and policymakers. Teachers should continue to employ differentiated instruction and UDL principles to cater to diverse learning needs. The integration of technology should be enhanced to support interactive and accessible learning experiences. Collaborative learning strategies should be promoted to foster critical thinking and teamwork skills. Policymakers should consider addressing the challenges faced by teachers, such as large class sizes and limited resources, to support the effective implementation of inclusive education practices. The positive impact of the DEIS

initiative highlights the need for sustained investment in targeted interventions for disadvantaged students. Additionally, professional development programs should be established to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to implement inclusive practices effectively (Forlin, 2010).

6.4 Limitations

The study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The sample size was limited to a specific group of teachers, which may not be representative of the broader population. The study relied on self-reported data from interviews, which may be subject to bias. Future research should consider using larger, more diverse samples and incorporating multiple data sources to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. Moreover, the study was conducted within the specific context of DEIS schools, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other educational settings. Another limitation is the potential for social desirability bias, where participants may provide responses they believe are expected rather than their true experiences and opinions. Finally, there is a potential limitation in regards researcher bias. As a male educator with a practical background in business and accounting, my perspective may have influenced the interpretation of the data.

6.5 Recommendations

Future research should explore the long-term impact of inclusive education practices on student outcomes. Studies could investigate the effectiveness of specific teaching strategies in different educational contexts. Additionally, research should examine the impact of policy changes and resource allocation on the implementation of inclusive education practices. Further studies could also focus on the role of continuous professional development in enhancing teachers' ability to implement inclusive practices effectively. Investigating the perspectives of students and parents on inclusive education could provide a more comprehensive understanding of its impact. Finally, exploring the use of technology and digital tools in supporting inclusive education practices in various educational settings could yield valuable insights.

6.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of inclusive education practices in Business Studies and Accounting within DEIS schools. By employing differentiated instruction, UDL principles, technology integration, and collaborative learning, educators can create supportive and engaging learning environments for all students. Despite the challenges faced, the findings highlight the potential for significant improvements in inclusive education with continued effort and support from educators and policymakers. Addressing the identified challenges and building on the strengths highlighted in this study can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable education system.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Principal Letter

As part of my Professional Masters in Post-Primary Education with Hibernia College, I am investigating strategies that can enhance instructional practices, curriculum design, and assessment methods to support students with diverse learning needs effectively. The title of the research project is "What teaching strategies do post-primary teachers employ to effectively support students with diverse learning needs in Business Studies and Accounting classrooms in post-primary schools?".

This letter aims to provide you with an introduction to the research project and to seek consent from you for the project to move forward in order to inform my future professional practice as a teacher.

With your permission, I would like to interview four classroom teachers and yourself. The staff will be asked to partake in semi-structured interviews to gain an insight into the aims of the project. Please find enclosed for your perusal, a copy of the information and consent forms. Only those respondents who return a signed copy of the consent form will be purposely selected to take part in the study. Any data gathering will strictly be underpinned by the school's ethical code of conduct. No students will be interviewed.

Information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity. The school's name will not appear on any research findings. Interviews will be recorded, and the data will be securely held under Hibernia College Research Ethics guidelines. Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time. The results from this research study will be reported in my research project and may be disseminated through professional publication.

I would appreciate your cooperation in providing access to the staff at the school over the coming weeks.

If you have any queries or require further information on the research study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Researcher: Danny Healy
Mobile: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]

This research study has received Ethics approval from Hibernia College Dublin. If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent you may contact: School of Education, Hibernia College Dublin.Tel (01) 6610168

Danny Healy
Researcher's Signature: Healy
Date: 04 December 2023

Principal's Signature
Date:

Appendix B – Consent Form

Consent Form

Researcher's name:

Organisation:

Title of study: See Below

Title : "What teaching strategies do post-primary teachers employ to effectively support students with diverse learning needs in Business Studies and Accounting classrooms in post-primary schools?"

Consent (to be completed by the participant)

Have you been fully informed/read the information sheet about this study? Yes/No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? Yes/No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? Yes/No

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason for withdrawing and without your withdrawal having an adverse effect for you? Yes/No

Do you agree to take part in this study, the results of which are likely to be published or presented at a conference? Yes/No

Have you been informed that a copy of this consent form will be kept by the researcher? Yes/No

Are you satisfied that any information you give to the researcher will be kept confidential? Your name and the name of the school will not appear in the research report. Yes/No

Participant's name (printed)

(signature) **Date:**

Researcher's signature **Date:**

Appendix C – Research Information Sheet

Research Information Sheet Exemplar

Researcher:

Organisation (name and contact details):

Title of study: "What teaching strategies do post-primary teachers employ to effectively support students with diverse learning needs in Business Studies and Accounting classrooms in post-primary schools?"

Outline of research study:

The proposed research project aims to investigate and identify effective strategies for promoting inclusive education in the subjects of Business Studies and Accounting within post-primary schools. It seeks to address the diverse learning needs of students in these subjects and explore how teachers can adapt their instructional practices, curriculum design, and assessment methods to create an inclusive learning environment. By delving into the specific context of Business Studies and Accounting, this research project aims to provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with inclusive education in these disciplines.

Objectives of the project:

This research aims to explore the teaching strategies employed by post-primary teachers to effectively support students with diverse learning needs in Business Studies and Accounting. It also seeks to understand the extent to which these strategies reflect the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in the post-primary school setting.

What would I need you to do?

Your participation in this research project is greatly appreciated. This research project has received ethical approval from Hibernia College Dublin. If you agree to participate, you will participate in a in a 20-30 minute interview discussing your teaching experiences, strategies and perspectives on UDL. Any information you provide about your own identity or that of the school will be anonymous and confidential. Quotes from the interview may be used and may also be published in the research however your name and the name of the school willnot published. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed, and a copy of the transcript will be made available to you on request. This research will be used in a publication of a thesis for Hibernia College Dublin. It may also be used in conference proceedings or used in academic articles. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of the research is to complete small-scale study which forms part of the final year of the Professional Masters of Education (Post - Primary) with Hibernia College Dublin.

Appendix D – Interview Schedule

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Main Question Schedule

1. DEIS Initiative: How has the DEIS initiative influenced your approach to teaching Business Studies and Accounting?
2. Specific Teaching Strategies: What specific teaching strategies do you employ in Business Studies and Accounting to support students with diverse learning needs?
3. UDL Application: Are you familiar with UDL and if so, how do you incorporate the principles of Universal Design for Learning in your teaching practice, particularly in Business Studies and Accounting?
4. Inclusive Learning Environment: Can you describe how you foster an inclusive learning environment in your Business Studies and Accounting classes?
5. Inclusive Education Transition: How have you adapted your teaching methods to align with the transition towards inclusive education in your subject area?
6. Accommodating Diversity: What approaches do you take to accommodate diversity and inclusion in your classroom, specifically in the context of Business Studies and Accounting?
7. Educational Disparities: How do you confront and alleviate educational disparities among students in your Business Studies and Accounting classes?
8. Classroom Management: Can you share your classroom management strategies that support an inclusive learning environment?
9. Individualised Learning: How do you implement individualised learning approaches in Business Studies and Accounting?
10. What are the barriers or challenges to implementing a more inclusive teaching and learning practice in this setting?

Supplementary Questions

1. Use of ICT: What role does Information and Communication Technology (ICT) play in your teaching, especially for students with diverse learning needs?
2. Curriculum Modification: How do you modify the curriculum of Business Studies and Accounting to cater to the diverse needs of your students?
3. Collaborative Approaches: Can you provide examples of how collaboration among staff supports inclusive education in your subject area?
4. Teaching Experiences: Can you describe a particularly impactful teaching experience you've had in the past five years?
5. Educational Changes: How have you observed the education field evolving during your career, and how have these changes impacted your teaching methods?
6. Challenges in Teaching: What are the most significant challenges you currently face in the classroom, and how do you address them?
7. Student Engagement: How do you foster student engagement and motivation in your classroom?
8. Technology Integration: Can you discuss how you have integrated technology into your teaching, and its impact on student learning?
9. Curriculum Development: How do you approach curriculum planning and adapt it to meet diverse student needs?
10. Professional Development: What role has professional development played in your teaching practice?
11. Assessment Strategies: How do you assess student learning, and how do these assessments inform your teaching?

Appendix E – Excel Coding Example

	MS01 LK	MS02 JF	MS03 SM	MS04 DH	MS05 LP
Gender, Age	F, 39	M , 34	F, 31	M, 44	F, 31
Years Experience	15	9	8	20	8
Position	T	T	T	YH	YH
1: Impact of the DEIS Initiative					
1.1: Resource Allocation					
Additional resources for disadvantaged students	**05-10**	**01-04**	**07-12**	**02-05**	**07-09**
Smaller class sizes	05-10	01-04		02-05	10
1.2: Professional Development					
Training opportunities for inclusive education	11-16	05-09	13-17	06-09	
1.3: Targeted Support					
Individualised attention and support for students	**17-22**	**10-14**	**18-22**	**10-13**	**11-13**
Integrating practical examples and financial literacy		04		23	
2: Teaching Strategies					
2.1: Differentiated Instruction					
Tailoring lessons to student needs	**23-28**	**15-20**	**23-28**	**18-21**	**20-22**
Use of tiered assignments	29-33	21-25		21	24-26
Importance of Formatice Assessments			16		
2.2: Technology Integration					
Use of ICT tools like interactive software, simulations, and digital platforms	**34-39**	**26-30**	**29-33**	**26-29**	**22-24**
2.3: Collaborative Learning					
Group projects and peer learning activities	40-45	31-35		31-34	25-27
Peer-assisted learning	46-50	36-40		35	
3: Universal Design for Learning (UDL)					
3.1: Multiple Means of Representation					
Visual aids, hands-on activities, and digital tools	**51-55**	**41-45**	**34-38**	**41-44**	**35-36**
3.2: Multiple Means of Engagement					
Interactive activities and practical examples	56-60	46-50		46-49	
Impact of Pandemic on Teaching	57				25
3.3: Multiple Means of Expression					
Various formats for students to demonstrate understanding	**61-65**	**51-55**	**39-43**	**51-54**	37
Using dialogue and creating a community		63			
4: Inclusive Learning Environment					
4.1: Classroom Culture					
Respect and diversity	**66-70**	**56-60**	**44-48**	**56-59**	**44-45**
Encouraging student perspectives and experiences	71-75	61-65		61-64	
Efforts to accommodate Ukrainian Students	77				
4.2: Accessibility					
Making materials accessible in multiple formats	**76-80**	**66-70**	**49-53**	**66-69**	47
4.3: Community Building					
Creating a sense of belonging and community within the classroom	81-85	71-75		71-74	44-45
5: Addressing Educational Disparities					
Sub-theme 5.1: Targeted Interventions					
Additional tutoring and support programs	**86-90**	**76-80**	**54-58**	**76-79**	**83-85**
Sub-theme 5.2: Formative Assessments					
Regular assessments to identify and address gaps	91-95	81-85		81-84	
Sub-theme 5.3: Family Engagement					
Establishing communication with families		86-90		86-89	88-89

Appendix D – Thematic Analysis Example

Main Theme: Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learning Needs

Chapter Contents & Themes	Participants Observations	Sub-Themes & Topics
Differentiated Instruction	MS03: "I like to have a differentiated classroom to cater for everyone's needs in the class." MS02: "I employ a mix of individualised instruction, collaborative projects, and technology integration." MS05: "I use differentiated assignments and assessments to ensure that each student can work at their own pace."	Group work, interactive activities, technology integration
UDL Implementation	MS04: "I provide multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression." MS03: "I use visual aids, hands-on activities, and digital tools like the projector to present information." MS01: "I offer various ways for students to express their understanding, such as written assignments, presentations, or practical projects."	Use of visual aids, hands-on activities, digital tools
Inclusive Learning Environment	MS01: "Creating an inclusive learning environment is central to my teaching philosophy." MS04: "I start by setting clear expectations for respectful behaviour and celebrating diversity in my classroom." MS03: "I use inclusive language and materials that reflect the diverse backgrounds of my students."	Respect, diversity, collaboration, accessible materials
Technology Integration	MS02: "I use technology like interactive software and online simulations." MS03: "I think it's so important to bring in technology (ICT) to the classroom as it plays a huge role in the lives of young people." MS05: "I incorporate technology such as online simulations and interactive tools to make learning more engaging and accessible."	Educational software, online simulations, Teams/Zoom

Main Theme: Challenges and Barriers

Chapter Contents & Themes	Participants Observations	Sub-Themes & Topics
Large Class Sizes	MS03: "Large classes can come across as a challenge." MS05: "One of the challenges is the size of the classes, making it difficult to give individual attention." MS04: "Balancing personalised instruction with large class sizes is a significant challenge."	Time management, individualised attention, classroom dynamics
Resource Limitations	MS01: "Limited resources and time are a significant barrier." MS02: "Providing individualised support requires additional planning and materials, which are often limited." MS03: "Keeping up with ongoing professional development is crucial but can be hindered by resource limitations."	Need for additional planning, material shortages, balancing curriculum coverage
Resistance to Change	MS02: "There can be resistance to change from both students and staff." MS01: "Resistance to new teaching methods can be an obstacle."	Adaptation to new methods, traditional teaching methods, change management
Collaborative Learning	MS05: "Collaborative projects and group work are a staple in my classroom." MS02: "I incorporate collaborative learning through group projects and peer-to-peer tutoring." MS03: "Group work and interactive activities are key strategies I use."	Peer learning, teamwork, group discussions

Main Theme: Impact of DEIS Initiative

Chapter Contents & Themes	Participants Observations	Sub-Themes & Topics
Resource Allocation	MS04: "We've received funding for learning aids and technology." MS05: "The additional resources and supports provided by DEIS have enabled us to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment." MS03: "The DEIS has influenced my approach by encouraging a focus on fair access to education."	Smaller class sizes, professional development, tailored interventions
Professional Development	MS03: "I keep myself up to date with professional development on the IDA website." MS04: "The DEIS initiative has facilitated professional development opportunities, enhancing my ability to address the diverse needs of my students." MS01: "The professional development opportunities offered through DEIS have equipped me with new strategies to engage and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds."	Ongoing training, inclusive teaching strategies, professional growth
Support for Disadvantaged Students	MS01: "The DEIS initiative has provided additional resources and supports." MS02: "The DEIS initiative emphasises inclusivity and support for disadvantaged students, including differentiated instruction and additional resources."	Personalised instruction, additional learning support, extracurricular activities

Main Theme: Classroom Management Strategies

Chapter Contents & Themes	Participants Observations	Sub-Themes & Topics
Establishing Clear Expectations	MS05: "I establish clear expectations and routines from the beginning of the school year." MS02: "I establish clear rules and routines, ensuring that students know what to expect." MS04: "Setting clear expectations for respectful behaviour is a priority."	Rules, routines, stability, predictability
Positive Reinforcement	MS02: "Positive reinforcement is a significant part of my strategy." MS03: "I regularly acknowledge and reward positive behaviour." MS05: "Positive reinforcement and acknowledgment of achievements are key strategies."	Reward systems, acknowledgment of achievements, fostering positive behaviour
Restorative Practices	MS01: "I use restorative practices to address conflicts and promote a sense of community."	Conflict resolution, community building, mutual respect