

## Challenges in the Implementation of the Bachelor of Special Needs Education Curriculum

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**Abstract.** This study investigated the challenges in implementing the Bachelor of Special Needs Education curriculum at the College of Education, Sumacab Campus. It aimed to describe the students' profile, assess the challenges in curriculum content, instructional strategies, and learning resources, and propose an action plan for improvement. A quantitative descriptive–correlational design was employed, involving 115 students selected through stratified random sampling. Data were gathered using a validated and reliable survey questionnaire and analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. Results showed that most respondents were 20 years old, predominantly female, and academically high-performing. Challenges in curriculum content and instructional strategies were generally rated as slightly challenging, while learning resources were viewed as slightly to moderately challenging, particularly in relation to limited digital materials, assistive tools, and updated references. The study concludes that strengthening curriculum organization, adopting innovative teaching practices, and improving access to resources are essential to prepare future educators for the diverse needs of learners with disabilities.

**Keywords:** Curriculum Content, Instructional Strategy, Learning Resource, Quantitative Research, Special Needs Education, Student Challenge, Undergraduate Program

### 1 Introduction

The Bachelor of Special Needs Education (BSNEd) is a specialized undergraduate program designed to prepare future educators with the competencies required to support learners with diverse needs. The program equips graduates with skills to teach both in inclusive classrooms and specialized education centers, offering instruction in the basic education curriculum or alternative programs tailored to learners' unique requirements. At the elementary level, BSNEd students are trained across multiple subject areas, while at the secondary level, they develop expertise in providing targeted support for students with special needs. Graduates are expected to pass the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) and to contribute effectively in both regular and special education settings.

The increasing demand for teachers who can address the diverse needs of learners highlights the importance of preparing students in the BSNEd program. However, as the first batch of BSNEd students progresses through the curriculum, they encounter unique challenges. Many of them enter the program with limited experience in special needs education, making the transition into coursework and practicum requirements particularly demanding. They are expected to acquire complex skills such as sign language, individualized instruction, and the development of

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) within a short period, often without consistent opportunities for hands-on practice. Limited parental consent for observations or interviews further reduces exposure to children with special needs, adding to the gap between theoretical learning and practical application.

Although the program aims to produce competent and compassionate educators, BSNEd students often feel overwhelmed by the rigorous academic requirements, emotional demands, and high expectations placed upon them. Literature suggests that the effective preparation of special education teachers requires not only technical knowledge and pedagogical training but also adequate support systems, accessible resources, and structured opportunities for field engagement (Camsa, 2021). Yet, little is known about the lived experiences, specific challenges of BSNEd students, particularly in the context of being the pioneer cohort. This gap warrants a closer examination of the realities they face to inform curriculum improvement and student support initiatives.

### **Statement of the Problem:**

This study explored the challenges in implementing the Bachelor of Special Needs Education Curriculum at the College of Education, Sumacab Campus.

Specifically it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How may the profile of the BSNEd student- respondents be described in terms of:
  - 1.1. Age;
  - 1.2 Sex; and
  - 1.3 GWA?
  
2. How may the challenges in the implementation of BSNEd curriculum be described in terms of:
  - 2.1. curriculum content;
  - 2.2. instructional strategies; and
  - 2.3. learning resources/materials
3. What action plan may be proposed to address the identified challenges and enhance the implementation of the BSNEd curriculum

## **2 Methodology**

### **2.1 Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative research approach, specifically a descriptive–correlational design. Quantitative research involves the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, test relationships, and generalize findings to larger populations. According to Bhandari (2022), it can be used to identify trends, formulate hypotheses, and examine causal and correlational relationships. Similarly, Copeland (2022) explains that descriptive–correlational research is appropriate for examining the relationship between variables without manipulating them.

A descriptive–correlational design was deemed suitable for this study because it allowed the researchers to examine and analyze the challenges experienced by BSNEd students in the implementation of the BSNEd curriculum. No variables were manipulated; rather, the focus was on observing and measuring existing conditions.

## 2.2 Respondents

The respondents of this study were 115 students enrolled in the Bachelor of Special Needs Education program at the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST)–College of Education, Sumacab Campus during the academic year 2024–2025. This group was selected to provide a comprehensive perspective on the challenges in relation to the implementation of the BSNEd curriculum. The sample was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure that students from different year levels were proportionately represented. Stratified sampling is a probability sampling technique that divides a population into subgroups, or strata, to ensure representation across key categories (Parsons, 2017). In this study, the strata were based on year level.

**Table 1** *Distribution of Respondents According to Year Level*

Year/ Level	Students Respondents
	Population
First Year	35
Second Year	36
Third Year	44
<b>Total</b>	115

## 2.3 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire designed to gather information on the respondents' demographic profile and challenges encountered in the implementation of the BSNEd curriculum. The instrument consisted of two parts :

- **Part I:** Demographic profile of the respondents (age, sex, and GWA).
- **Part II:** Challenges encountered in curriculum implementation, including curriculum content, instructional strategies and learning resources.

The questionnaire used close-ended questions measured on a 4-point Likert scale to capture frequency and degree of challenges. The questionnaire underwent a multi-stage validation process to ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness. Initial drafts were reviewed by the research adviser and faculty experts in education, who provided feedback on wording and content alignment with the study objectives. Further validation was conducted by experts in Special Needs Education, who assessed the questionnaire's applicability to the BSNEd context. Subsequently, the revised instrument was reviewed by the subject adviser for additional technical guidance. It was also evaluated by a panel of validators.

Pilot testing was conducted with BSNEd students not included in the final study to assess clarity, answerability, and appropriateness. Feedback from this process guided the final revisions.. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha revealed excellent internal consistency: .954 for the "Challenges" scale. The result exceeded the .70 benchmark for acceptable reliability (Field, 2015), confirming the instrument's consistency in measuring the intended constructs.

***Data*** ***Gathering*** ***Procedure***

Formal permission to conduct the study was secured from the College of Education. After approval, the validated questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, who were assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation. Completed questionnaires were retrieved, checked for completeness, and organized for analysis.

***Data*** ***Analysis*** ***Technique***

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

- To address **Problem 1** (respondents' profile), frequency counts and percentages were computed.
- To address **Problem 2** (challenges in implementation), mean scores with corresponding verbal descriptions were used. The Likert scale interpretation is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 Verbal Description and Interpretation of the Challenges in the Implementatation of BSNEd Curriculum**

Mean interval	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
3.26 - 4.00	Highly Challenging	This indicates that the task is perceived as very difficult, requiring

2.51 - 3.25	Moderately Challenging	significant effort, skill, or resources to accomplish. This suggests that the task presents a moderate level of difficulty, demanding a fair amount of effort or skill but is generally manageable.
1.16 - 2.50	Sometimes Challenging	This implies that the task is occasionally difficult, with some aspects posing challenges while others are straightforward.
1.00 - 1.75	Not Challenging	This indicates that the task is perceived as easy, requiring minimal effort or skill to complete.

### 3 Results

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of data gathered through the study. It examines student profiles (age, sex, and first-semester GWA), the challenges encountered in implementing the BSNEED curriculum. Areas such as curriculum content, instructional strategies, learning resources are discussed. The findings serve as the basis for proposing an action plan.

#### 3.1. Profile of the Respondents

The age distribution showed that the majority of respondents were 20 years old (36.52%), followed by 21 years old (34.78%), and 19 years old (28.70%). Of the 115 respondents, 94 (81.74%) were female, while 21 (18.26%) were male. The majority of respondents achieved a GWA between 1.00 and 2.25. Specifically, 40.87% had a GWA of 1.00–1.25, 39.13% had 2.00–2.25, while 20.00% recorded 2.50–2.75.

#### 3.2. Challenges Encountered

**Table 3** *Challenges in the Implementation of the BSNEED Curriculum as to Curriculum Content*

2.1 Curriculum Content	Mean	Verbal Description
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1. The topics covered are not well-organized and do not follow a clear sequence.	2.18	Slightly Challenging
2. There is limited discussion on different types of disabilities and their specific educational needs.	2.39	Slightly Challenging
3. There are not enough subjects that develop specialized teaching strategies for learners with disabilities.	2.28	Slightly Challenging
4. There is insufficient exposure to various teaching approaches used in special education.	2.41	Slightly Challenging
5. There are limited prescribed subjects that focus on communication tools like sign language and Braille.	2.46	Slightly Challenging
6. The lessons do not align with the latest trends and developments in special education.	2.12	Slightly Challenging
7. The students have limited time in observation/field study programs, and fieldwork provides hands-on learning experiences.	2.51	Moderately Challenging
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>2.34</b>	<b>Slightly Challenging</b>

Student-respondents rated the BSNEC curriculum content as *slightly challenging* ( $M = 2.34$ ). The most pressing issue was the limited time for observation and field study ( $M = 2.51$ , *moderately challenging*), while other concerns included limited exposure to teaching approaches, insufficient subjects on communication tools such as sign language and Braille, minimal discussion of disabilities, and poorly organized topics.

**Table 4 Challenges in the Implementation of the BSNEC Curriculum as to Instructional Strategies**

<b>2.2 Instructional Strategies</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Description</b>
1. Inadequate use of differentiated instruction to cater to diverse learning needs.	2.46	Slightly Challenging
2. Limited incorporation of technology-enhanced learning strategies.	2.48	Slightly Challenging
3. Insufficient emphasis on active learning and student engagement.	2.38	Slightly Challenging
4. Overreliance on traditional teaching methods, hindering innovation.	2.34	Slightly Challenging

5. Ineffective assessment and feedback mechanisms to gauge student progress.	2.33	Slightly Challenging
6. Lack of culturally responsive teaching practices, neglecting students' diverse backgrounds.	2.23	Slightly Challenging
7. Inadequate integration of real-world applications and problem-based learning.	2.29	Slightly Challenging
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>2.36</b>	<b>Slightly Challenging</b>

Student- respondents rated instructional strategies in the BSNEC curriculum as slightly challenging ( $M = 2.36$ ). The main concerns were limited use of technology-enhanced learning ( $M = 2.48$ ) and inadequate differentiated instruction ( $M = 2.46$ ). Other issues included insufficient active learning, overreliance on traditional teaching, weak assessment and feedback, minimal integration of real-world applications, and lack of culturally responsive practices.

**Table 5 Challenges in the Implementation of the BSNEC Curriculum as to Learning Resources/ Materials**

<b>2.3 Learning Resources/Materials</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Description</b>
1. There are not enough textbooks and reference books related to special education.	2.52	Moderately Challenging
2. The available digital learning materials, such as e-books and online modules are limited.	2.63	Moderately Challenging
3. Some learning materials, such as printed hand-outs and manuals, are out-dated and lack updated information.	2.31	Slightly Challenging
4. Assistive learning tools, such as Braille books and tactile graphics, are not readily available.	2.58	Moderately Challenging
5. There are insufficient multimedia resources, such as educational videos and interactive software, for learning special education concepts.	2.43	Slightly Challenging
6. The availability of sign language learning materials, such as illustrated guides and video tutorials is limited.	2.42	Slightly Challenging
7. There are not enough manipulative and hands-on materials, such as pegs, educational toys and adapted teaching aids, to support practical learning.	2.60	Moderately Challenging
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>Slightly Challenging</b>

Learning resources were considered slightly to moderately challenging ( $M = 2.50$ ). The most pressing concerns were limited digital learning materials ( $M = 2.63$ ), a shortage of manipulative/hands-on materials ( $M = 2.60$ ), and insufficient textbooks ( $M = 2.52$ ). Outdated printed handouts ( $M = 2.31$ ) and lack of sign language materials ( $M = 2.42$ ) were identified as slightly challenging.

### 3.3. Proposed Action Plan

**Table 6 Proposed Action Plan to Enhance the Implementation of the BSNEd Curriculum**

Objectives	Strategies	Materials	Expected Outcome	Timeframe	Persons Involved	Verifiable Indicators
Improve Curriculum Content	Review and update curriculum; incorporate diverse learning styles and needs; align with national standards	Updated textbooks, online resources, curriculum guides	Enhanced student understanding and achievement	1 year	Curriculum Committee, Faculty, Subject Matter Experts	Increased assessment scores; positive curriculum feedback
Enhance Instructional Strategies	Implement active learning; integrate technology; provide faculty training	Technology equipment, training workshops, development materials	Higher student engagement and improved outcomes	1 year	Faculty, Instructional Designers, Tech Support	Increased participation; improved performance; teacher feedback
Increase Learning Resources/Materials	Secure funding; develop/adapt materials; create digital resources	Funding proposals, digital platforms, adapted materials	Sufficient and accessible resources for all students	2 years	Department Head, Faculty, Librarians	Increased availability; positive student feedback

The action plan outlined in Table 6 was developed to address the challenges identified in the implementation of the BSNEd curriculum. The objectives focus on enhancing curriculum content, instructional strategies and learning resources. Each strategy is aligned with specific outcomes and supported by measurable indicators to ensure accountability and effectiveness.

By systematically addressing these areas, the plan seeks to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. It emphasizes the importance of updated resources, and innovative teaching methods, all of which contribute to improving student engagement, achievement, and preparedness for professional practice.

#### 4 Discussion

The profile of the respondents revealed that most students were within the typical undergraduate age range of 19 to 21 years, consistent with Wingo, Ivankova, and Moss (2017), who noted that higher education populations often fall between 18 and 24 years. A notable gender imbalance was also observed, with female students significantly outnumbering their male counterparts, reflecting CHED (2016) data on the dominance of women in teacher education programs. In terms of academic standing, the majority of students achieved high GWAs ranging from 1.00 to 2.25, which is comparable to the findings of Isabela State University (2025). These results suggest that BSNEd students are generally high-performing, but the predominance of female respondents may limit the wider applicability of the study to all BSNEd populations.

In terms of curriculum implementation, challenges emerged primarily in curriculum content, instructional strategies, and learning resources. While the BSNEd curriculum framework was considered comprehensive, students expressed the need for greater exposure to fieldwork, stronger integration of technology, and the inclusion of culturally responsive practices. These concerns align with the views of Villanueva (2018), Boyle and Kennedy (2019), and Lisdiana et al. (2019), who emphasized that meaningful learning requires experiential and inclusive content. Instructional strategies were viewed as manageable but in need of improvement, particularly in fostering interactive, engaging, and differentiated approaches that respond to diverse learner needs. Limited training in modern teaching methodologies and inconsistent application of active learning strategies were also noted, underscoring the necessity of continuous professional development for faculty.

Learning resources and materials presented a more significant challenge, as students reported limited access to digital platforms, assistive technologies, and specialized instructional tools essential for inclusive education. These constraints resonate with the observations of Farley et al. (2020) and Dikusar (2018), who argued that inadequate learning resources negatively affect the quality of teaching and learning, particularly for students with disabilities. Such gaps highlight the urgent need for resource development and institutional support to maximize the potential of the BSNEd curriculum.

In response to these challenges, a proposed action plan was developed to strengthen curriculum content, enhance instructional strategies, and expand learning resources. The plan emphasizes the integration of more field-based experiences and technology-driven, culturally responsive practices to ensure the curriculum remains relevant and inclusive. It also recommends continuous training and workshops for faculty to advance their skills in differentiated instruction, active learning, and inclusive pedagogy. Furthermore, the plan underscores the importance of investing in digital and assistive technologies, expanding instructional materials, and strengthening partnerships with stakeholders to secure external support for resource development.

## 5 Conclusions

The study revealed that most BSNEd students were around 20 years old, predominantly female, and maintained good academic standing, indicating a high-performing but gender-imbalanced student population. This profile suggests that while students possess strong academic potential, the

predominance of female voices may shape the way curriculum challenges are experienced and addressed.

In terms of implementation, challenges were most evident in curriculum content, instructional strategies, and learning resources. Although the curriculum framework and teaching methods were generally applied, gaps emerged in the areas of fieldwork exposure, technology integration, and differentiated instruction. Learning resources posed the greatest concern, with limited access to updated materials, digital platforms, and assistive technologies necessary for inclusive teaching and learning. These issues highlight the need for stronger institutional support to ensure the program's alignment with the diverse needs of future educators. To address these gaps, a proposed action plan emphasizes curriculum enrichment through experiential and technology-driven learning, faculty development to advance inclusive and learner-centered teaching strategies, and investment in learning resources and assistive tools. Strengthening partnerships and resource-sharing initiatives is also vital in sustaining improvements.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Regularly review and update the BSNEd curriculum to include diverse disabilities, specialized strategies, sign language and Braille, and ensure alignment with current trends.
2. Provide extended opportunities for field study and experiential learning.
3. Promote differentiated, active, and culturally responsive teaching approaches.
4. Conduct continuous faculty training to support innovative and inclusive pedagogy.
5. Improve access to updated learning resources, digital materials, and assistive tools to support inclusive education.
6. Provide sufficient hands-on instructional resources and foster partnerships and funding initiatives to sustain resource development.
7. Future researchers are encouraged to replicate this study in other colleges or universities offering the BSNEd program to compare results across different educational contexts.

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