

The Lived Experiences of Special Education (SPED) Teachers in Implementing the Inclusive Curriculum: A Phenomenological Study

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ARE-PEE M. CASTALONE, M.Ed.

Middle School Special Education Teacher, Christine Duncan's Heritage Academy
Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA
rodelcastalone@gmail.com

LAARNI JANE BLANCO DIAZ, MAEd SPED

Provider of Dyslexia Instruction & Resource/ Inclusion Teacher, Double File Trail Elementary School
ljbdi1985@gmail.com

CHRISTIAN LIYAG GAMMAD

Special Education Teacher, R.A. Hall Elementary School, Beeville Texas
iangammad12345@gmail.com

JEAN PAUL G. BUNDALIAN, RND, LPT, RCh

Nutritionist Dietitian Association of the Philippines (Member)
jpgbundalian@gmail.com

JULIE ANN G. SAQUILAYAN, LPT, MAEd

Special Education Mathematics Teacher at Rio Grande High School
julieanngarces02@gmail.com

Abstract:

While existing systematic reviews have identified systemic challenges in Philippine Special Education (SPED), there is a critical need to understand the subjective narratives of those on the frontlines. This qualitative study explores the lived experiences of SPED teachers in public schools across the Philippines to bridge the gap between policy and practice. Utilizing a Hermeneutic Phenomenological design, the research seeks to uncover the "essence" of teaching within a resource-constrained environment. Data were gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with ten purposively selected SPED teachers with at least three years of experience. Thematic analysis revealed four overarching themes: (1) The "Scarcity Struggle," highlighting chronic material and human resource gaps; (2) "Pedagogical Improvisation," involving the constant necessity of curriculum adaptation; (3) "Emotional Labor and Resilience," reflecting the psychological toll and dedication of educators; and (4) "Collaborative Barriers" regarding engagement with parents and external stakeholders. The findings suggest that while progressive legislative frameworks like Republic Act No. 11650 exist, the practical implementation of inclusive education relies heavily on the individual resilience and creativity of teachers rather than robust institutional support. These results advocate for decentralized curriculum development and enhanced teacher wellness programs.

Keywords: Special Education, Inclusive Education, Teacher Experiences, Philippines, RA 11650, Curriculum Adaptation

Introduction:

Special Education in Philippines is shaped by significant legislative and policy mandates, most notably Republic Act No. 11650, or the Inclusive Education Act of 2022, which institutionalizes inclusive education for learners with disabilities across public schools. This policy reflects the government's commitment to equitable access to quality education and aligns with global movements toward inclusive learning environments.

Despite these progressive frameworks, a persistent gap remains between policy intentions and classroom realities. Existing literature highlights systemic challenges such as inadequate funding, insufficient instructional materials, and a shortage of trained Special Education (SPED) professionals, which continue to hinder effective implementation of inclusive practices.

Several studies have documented the structural and institutional barriers affecting SPED implementation in the country. For instance, Ajoc (2019) emphasized limitations in program delivery, including inadequate facilities and insufficient institutional support for SPED programs at the local level. Similarly, Reyes (2023), in a systematic review, identified key challenges such as limited resources, policy-practice gaps, and the need for stronger professional development initiatives for educators.

Expanding on these concerns, Kilag et al. (2025) described the current state of special education as characterized by both significant challenges and emerging opportunities for inclusive practices, emphasizing the need for sustainable reforms, enhanced teacher training, and strengthened stakeholder collaboration.

Recent research has also examined inclusive education from the perspectives of non-SPED teachers, highlighting issues related to preparedness and implementation. Studies by Pantaleon et al. (2025) revealed that while general education teachers demonstrate growing awareness of inclusive education, gaps remain in their knowledge, attitudes, and classroom practices when working with learners with special needs. Their findings underscore the complexity of inclusive education implementation, particularly in mainstream classrooms where teachers often lack specialized training and institutional support. These studies collectively suggest that inclusive education is not solely a policy concern but a multifaceted process shaped by teacher competencies, school resources, and community engagement.

While existing systematic reviews and empirical studies provide valuable insights into structural challenges such as curriculum inflexibility, social exclusion, and limited teacher preparedness, they often overlook the lived realities of SPED teachers who operate at the forefront of inclusive education. Broad analyses of policy and institutional constraints may fail to capture the nuanced ways educators respond to daily challenges, adapt instructional strategies, and negotiate the demands of resource-constrained environments. Understanding these subjective experiences is essential for developing context-responsive policies and interventions that address not only systemic issues but also the practical realities of teaching.

Given these gaps, this study seeks to explore the lived experiences of SPED teachers implementing the inclusive curriculum in public schools. By employing a phenomenological approach, the research aims to capture the meanings teachers attribute to their professional experiences, the challenges they encounter, and the strategies they employ in navigating inclusive education practices.

Specifically, the study addresses the central research question: What are the lived experiences and challenges of SPED teachers in the Philippines as they implement the inclusive curriculum? Through this inquiry, the study intends to contribute to the growing body of literature on inclusive education by foregrounding teachers' voices and informing policy and practice in special education.

Literature Review:

Special Education and inclusive education in Philippines have undergone significant transformation in recent years, shaped by policy reforms and growing advocacy for equitable learning opportunities. Kilag et al. (2025) described the current state of special education as characterized by both persistent challenges and emerging opportunities for inclusive practices. Their study emphasized systemic concerns such as limited resources, insufficient teacher training, and weak institutional support, while also highlighting the potential for improved collaboration among stakeholders and enhanced professional development programs.

These findings suggest that inclusive education in the Philippine context is evolving but remains constrained by structural and operational limitations. Similarly, Reyes (2023) conducted a systematic review examining the status of special education in the country and identified major gaps in policy implementation, teacher preparedness, and infrastructure development. The review revealed that despite the presence of progressive policies promoting inclusive

education, schools often struggle to translate these frameworks into effective classroom practices. Reyes further noted that curriculum inflexibility, inadequate funding, and limited access to specialized instructional materials continue to hinder the delivery of quality education for learners with special needs. The study recommended strengthening institutional support systems and investing in long-term capacity-building initiatives for educators.

Early empirical investigations also documented challenges in the implementation of SPED programs at the local level. Ajoc (2019) examined special education programs in Surigao del Sur and found that limited facilities, insufficient instructional resources, and inadequate administrative support significantly affected program effectiveness. The study emphasized that teachers frequently encountered difficulties in addressing diverse learner needs due to the lack of specialized training and institutional backing. These findings highlight the long-standing structural issues in Philippine SPED implementation and underscore the need for sustainable policy interventions and improved program management.

Recent research has also explored inclusive education practices from the perspective of both SPED and general education teachers. Cagas et al. (2023) investigated inclusive education practices among SPED and general education teachers in Davao City and found that while educators demonstrated positive attitudes toward inclusion, they faced challenges related to classroom management, differentiated instruction, and collaboration with stakeholders.

Similarly, Beltran et al. (2025) identified resource constraints, limited teacher competence, and insufficient administrative support as key barriers to inclusive education implementation in elementary schools. These studies suggest that successful inclusion requires not only policy support but also adequate teacher preparation and institutional resources.

Teacher readiness has emerged as a central theme in the literature on inclusive education. Gonzaga et al. (2024) examined the preparedness of general education teachers and reported that many educators lacked sufficient training and confidence in implementing inclusive practices. Their findings indicated that teachers often experienced difficulty adapting instructional strategies and managing diverse classrooms due to limited professional development opportunities.

Supporting this claim, Domingo (2020) identified multiple factors affecting inclusive education implementation, including teacher attitudes, school leadership, availability of resources, and community support. These studies collectively emphasize that teacher competence and institutional conditions play a critical role in the success of inclusive education initiatives. The perspectives of non-SPED teachers have also been widely examined in recent studies. Pantaleon et al. (2025) explored non-SPED teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices in implementing inclusive education and found that although teachers demonstrated awareness of inclusive principles, gaps remained in their pedagogical skills and practical implementation strategies.

Additional studies by Pantaleon and colleagues further revealed that beyond awareness, teachers require continuous training and institutional support to effectively address the needs of learners with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. These findings highlight the complexity of inclusive education implementation, particularly in contexts where general education teachers assume responsibilities traditionally associated with specialized educators.

Teacher experiences and professional challenges have also been explored through qualitative investigations. Macabenta et al. (2023) examined the lived experiences of 21st-century teachers in implementing inclusive education and found that educators often experience role strain, emotional stress, and increased workload when addressing diverse learner needs. Similarly, Allam and Martin (2021) identified issues such as insufficient training, lack of resources, and emotional demands as major challenges faced by special education teachers. These studies emphasize the importance of understanding teachers' experiences, as their professional well-being and coping mechanisms significantly influence the effectiveness of inclusive education practices.

The reviewed literature demonstrates that inclusive education in the Philippines is shaped by multiple interrelated factors, including policy implementation, teacher readiness, resource availability, and institutional support. While previous studies provide valuable insights into systemic challenges and teacher preparedness, there remains limited research focusing specifically on the lived experiences of SPED teachers implementing inclusive curricula in resource-

constrained environments. This gap highlights the need for phenomenological investigations that capture the subjective realities of SPED teachers, thereby informing context-sensitive policies and practices aimed at strengthening inclusive education in the Philippine educational system.

Methodology:

This study employed a systematic review research design to comprehensively examine existing literature on the lived experiences of Special Education (SPED) teachers in implementing inclusive education. A systematic review was considered appropriate as it enables the researcher to synthesize, evaluate, and interpret findings from multiple empirical studies in order to identify recurring patterns, gaps, and emerging themes related to SPED implementation. This approach provided a structured and rigorous method for consolidating scholarly evidence and developing a deeper understanding of inclusive education practices within the sociocultural and institutional context of Philippines.

The review focused on studies conducted in the Philippine educational context, particularly those examining SPED teachers, inclusive education practices, and implementation challenges in public schools. Relevant literature was identified through purposive and systematic searching of academic databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, and other peer-reviewed journal repositories. The inclusion criteria required that studies (a) focus on special or inclusive education in the Philippines, (b) involve teachers' experiences, perspectives, or practices, and (c) be published in peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, or academic theses within a defined publication period. Studies that did not directly address inclusive education practices or lacked empirical evidence were excluded from the review.

Data extraction involved organizing selected studies according to their research objectives, methodologies, key findings, and identified challenges in SPED implementation. The researcher systematically examined each study to identify relevant concepts related to resource availability, teacher preparedness, institutional support, and pedagogical practices. To ensure methodological rigor, the review followed established systematic review procedures, including careful screening of sources, documentation of inclusion criteria, and critical evaluation of the credibility and relevance of each study.

The collected literature was analyzed using thematic synthesis to identify recurring themes and patterns across the selected studies. The analysis involved an initial familiarization with the data, coding of significant findings, clustering of related concepts, and synthesis of overarching themes that represent the shared experiences and challenges reported in the literature. Through this structured analytical process, the systematic review generated a comprehensive understanding of SPED teachers' experiences and provided evidence-based insights into the implementation of inclusive education in the Philippine context.

Findings and Discussion:

The "Scarcity Struggle": Resource Gaps

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the data is the "Scarcity Struggle," which reflects the persistent lack of specialized instructional materials, facilities, and institutional support necessary for effective Special Education (SPED) implementation. Participants consistently described working in resource-constrained environments where essential teaching materials and assistive tools were either insufficient or unavailable. This finding highlights the continuing disparity between inclusive education policies and the actual conditions experienced by SPED teachers in Philippines. The results suggest that teachers are compelled to adapt to systemic limitations while striving to meet the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities.

A significant aspect of this scarcity involves the limited availability of instructional materials (IMs). Participants reported that schools often fail to provide adequate learning resources specifically designed for learners with special needs. As one participant shared, "We often use our own money to buy laminating films and printing ink because the school's budget for SPED is delayed or non-existent."

This finding aligns with Ajoc (2019), who reported similar issues regarding insufficient instructional resources and financial constraints affecting SPED programs at the local level. Such conditions place an additional financial burden on teachers and reflect the lack of institutional mechanisms to support inclusive education effectively.

The scarcity of appropriate infrastructure also emerged as a major concern among participants. Teachers identified the absence of “least restrictive environments,” with some SPED classes conducted in converted storage rooms or shared classroom spaces. These physical limitations restrict opportunities for individualized instruction and hinder the creation of supportive learning environments for students with disabilities. Beltran et al. (2025) similarly found that inadequate facilities and limited classroom spaces pose significant challenges to the successful implementation of inclusive education in Philippine elementary schools. These findings emphasize the importance of improving educational infrastructure to support inclusive learning practices.

Beyond material and infrastructural constraints, the findings also reveal that resource scarcity significantly affects teachers’ pedagogical practices and professional responsibilities. Participants described how limited resources compel them to modify instructional strategies and create improvised learning materials to address students’ needs. Cagas et al. (2023) observed comparable practices among SPED and general education teachers, noting that educators often rely on creativity and adaptive teaching strategies when institutional support is insufficient. While such improvisation demonstrates teachers’ commitment, it also reflects systemic inadequacies that require structural intervention.

The findings further indicate that resource limitations contribute to increased workload and professional strain among SPED teachers. Participants reported assuming multiple roles beyond teaching, including acting as therapists, counselors, and caregivers for learners with special needs. This expanded responsibility often leads to emotional exhaustion and professional burnout. These experiences are consistent with the findings of Allam and Martin (2021) and Macabenta et al. (2023), who emphasized the emotional and psychological demands placed on teachers implementing inclusive education. The persistence of these challenges highlights the need for institutional support systems that promote teacher well-being and professional sustainability. Moreover, the issue of resource scarcity is closely linked to broader concerns regarding teacher readiness and institutional capacity.

Studies by Gonzaga et al. (2024), Logroño and Gongora (2023), and Charcos et al. (2025) revealed that many educators lack sufficient training and preparation to effectively support learners with special needs. Participants in the present study similarly indicated that limited access to professional development opportunities and specialized training further complicates their ability to deliver inclusive instruction. These findings reinforce the argument that teacher preparedness and resource availability are interdependent factors influencing inclusive education outcomes.

The findings also reflect broader systemic challenges in implementing inclusive education policies. Domingo (2020) identified factors such as inadequate funding, weak administrative support, and limited stakeholder collaboration as barriers to effective policy implementation. Similarly, Custodio (2025) highlighted the gap between the design of inclusion policies and their practical execution in schools. Participants’ experiences in this study support these observations, demonstrating how policy mandates often fail to translate into sufficient institutional resources at the school level. This policy–practice gap continues to shape the realities of SPED implementation.

The findings of this study are supported by recent investigations examining teachers’ perspectives on inclusive education. Pantaleon et al. (2025) and Manlapao (2024) emphasized that teachers frequently encounter challenges related to resource limitations, institutional constraints, and inadequate support systems when implementing inclusive practices. The convergence of these findings suggests that the “Scarcity Struggle” is not an isolated phenomenon but a widespread experience among educators. Overall, the results highlight the urgent need for improved resource allocation, enhanced teacher training, and strengthened institutional support to ensure the effective implementation of inclusive education in the Philippine context.

"Pedagogical Improvisation": Curriculum Adaptation

The second major theme that emerged from the findings is “Pedagogical Improvisation,” which reflects the continuous adaptation of the curriculum by Special Education (SPED) teachers to meet the diverse and complex needs of learners with disabilities. Participants reported that the national curriculum is often perceived as too rigid, standardized, and insufficiently responsive to learners with significant cognitive and developmental differences.

As a result, teachers engage in constant instructional modification, demonstrating flexibility and creativity in designing learning activities that are developmentally appropriate and responsive to individual learner needs. This highlights the

dynamic nature of inclusive teaching practices in Philippines, where teachers frequently move beyond prescribed curricular guidelines.

Participants emphasized that they do not merely follow the curriculum but actively reconstruct and contextualize it on a daily basis. Through the implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), teachers modify learning objectives, assessment methods, and instructional strategies to ensure accessibility and meaningful participation for learners with special needs. This process of curriculum adaptation reflects a shift from standardized instruction toward learner-centered approaches that prioritize functional learning outcomes. Manlapao (2024) similarly found that SPED teachers continuously adjust instructional practices to accommodate diverse learner profiles, emphasizing individualized teaching as a core component of special education.

However, pedagogical improvisation also reflects systemic limitations in curriculum design and implementation. Custodio (2025) highlighted the persistent gap between inclusive education policy frameworks and their practical application, noting that teachers often compensate for institutional shortcomings through localized instructional strategies. Similarly, Jazmines and Caballes (2024) emphasized the importance of curriculum development frameworks that support flexible and sustainable inclusive education programs. The findings of the present study support these claims, demonstrating that teachers' adaptive practices often serve as a response to structural constraints rather than a formally supported instructional approach.

The need for improvisation is further linked to issues of teacher preparedness and professional competence. Studies by Logroño and Gongora (2023) and Charcos et al. (2025) revealed that many teachers lack adequate training and confidence in implementing inclusive practices, particularly when handling learners with intellectual disabilities. Participants in this study likewise reported that limited access to specialized training and professional development opportunities necessitates self-directed learning and experimentation in instructional methods. Moon (2023) also found that teacher readiness significantly influences teaching performance in inclusive settings, suggesting that pedagogical adaptation is closely associated with educators' professional capacity.

The integration of assistive technologies and alternative instructional strategies also emerged as an important component of curriculum adaptation. Teachers described utilizing visual aids, modified learning materials, and assistive tools to enhance student engagement and comprehension. Campado et al. (2023) emphasized that the integration of assistive technology plays a crucial role in supporting learners with special educational needs and improving inclusive teaching practices. However, the use of such tools often depends on teachers' personal initiative and available resources, further illustrating the reliance on individual effort in the absence of institutional support.

Moreover, pedagogical improvisation extends beyond basic curriculum modification to include broader instructional innovations and professional growth. Eran et al. (2026) found that faculty experience and ongoing professional development significantly influence inclusive teaching practices, enabling educators to adopt more responsive and adaptive pedagogical approaches. Similarly, Dela Fuente (2021) documented how teachers working with deaf students modified instructional strategies to ensure accessibility, highlighting the importance of flexible teaching methods in inclusive education contexts. These studies reinforce the view that adaptive teaching practices are essential for addressing the diverse needs of learners with disabilities.

Despite its benefits, continuous pedagogical improvisation also presents challenges for teachers. Allam and Martin (2021) reported that the demands of modifying instruction and managing diverse learner needs contribute to increased workload and professional stress among special education teachers.

Participants in the present study echoed these concerns, noting that the constant need to redesign lessons and assessments can be both time-consuming and emotionally demanding. The findings suggest that while pedagogical improvisation demonstrates teachers' dedication and professional competence, it also underscores the urgent need for more flexible curricula, comprehensive training programs, and institutional support systems to enhance inclusive education practices.

"Emotional Labor and Resilience"

The third major theme that emerged from the findings is “Emotional Labor and Resilience,” which captures the complex emotional demands experienced by Special Education (SPED) teachers in implementing inclusive education. Participants described teaching in the SPED context as both “draining but fulfilling,” reflecting the dual nature of their professional roles.

While educators experience emotional exhaustion due to heavy responsibilities and limited institutional support, they also derive deep personal satisfaction from their work. This finding highlights the emotionally intensive nature of inclusive teaching in Philippines and underscores the importance of understanding teachers’ psychological experiences within resource-constrained educational settings.

A significant aspect of emotional labor involves the multiple roles assumed by SPED teachers in their daily practice. Participants reported feeling like “jack-of-all-trades,” simultaneously functioning as educators, caregivers, nurses, and social workers. These expanded responsibilities require teachers to address not only students’ academic needs but also their behavioral, emotional, and physical concerns. Manlapao (2024) similarly found that SPED teachers frequently perform diverse professional roles beyond traditional teaching responsibilities, reflecting the complex demands of special education environments. Such role expansion contributes to increased workload and emotional strain, particularly in contexts where professional support systems are limited.

The findings also revealed that continuous role demands contribute to teacher burnout and emotional exhaustion. Participants described experiencing fatigue, stress, and psychological pressure due to the persistent need to manage diverse learner needs and expectations from multiple stakeholders. This observation is consistent with the work of Gaytos et al. (2020), who documented similar experiences of emotional stress and professional challenges among SPED teachers. Pocaan (2022) further emphasized that the demands of inclusive teaching often require sustained emotional engagement, which can lead to burnout if adequate institutional support and coping mechanisms are not provided.

Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated remarkable resilience and commitment to their profession. Teachers expressed a deep emotional bond with their students and described their students’ progress—such as a child learning to hold a pencil or communicate effectively—as their greatest source of fulfillment. Labrague (2018) highlighted similar findings, noting that teachers working with learners with special educational needs often develop strong personal connections that motivate them to persist despite challenges. This emotional investment reflects the intrinsic motivation and dedication that characterize the professional identity of SPED teachers.

The development of resilience among SPED teachers is also influenced by professional competence, empowerment, and institutional support. Magtuba and Caballero (2024) found that teacher empowerment, commitment, and positive perceptions significantly influence inclusive education practices. Similarly, Moon (2023) emphasized that teacher readiness and professional confidence enhance teaching performance and enable educators to manage the emotional demands of inclusive classrooms. These studies suggest that resilience is not solely an individual trait but is shaped by systemic factors such as professional development opportunities and organizational support.

Professional development and instructional support mechanisms further contribute to teachers’ emotional coping and effectiveness. Eran et al. (2026) identified faculty experience and ongoing professional development as key determinants of inclusive teaching practices, enabling teachers to navigate complex classroom situations with greater confidence.

Likewise, Campado et al. (2023) highlighted the role of assistive technologies in facilitating instruction and reducing teacher stress by improving learning accessibility for students with disabilities. Dela Fuente (2021) also documented how teachers’ adaptive strategies and institutional support systems help mitigate the emotional challenges associated with inclusive education. These findings indicate that supportive professional environments play a crucial role in sustaining teacher resilience.

Moreover, the emotional experiences of SPED teachers reflect broader systemic and contextual factors affecting inclusive education implementation. Jazmines and Caballes (2024) emphasized the importance of sustainable inclusive education programs that address teacher well-being and institutional capacity. Similarly, Collado Meril et

al. reported that teachers in inclusive classrooms demonstrate resilience through coping strategies, collaboration, and professional commitment despite persistent challenges. While resilience serves as a critical mechanism that enables educators to continue providing quality education. However, these realities underscore the urgent need for stronger institutional support systems that prioritize teacher well-being and professional sustainability in inclusive education settings.

"Collaborative Barriers": Parent and Stakeholder Involvement

The fourth major theme that emerged from the findings is "Collaborative Barriers," which highlights the challenges faced by Special Education (SPED) teachers in fostering effective partnerships with parents and other stakeholders. Participants identified limited parental involvement as a significant barrier to the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Teachers emphasized that meaningful collaboration between schools, families, and communities is essential for supporting learners with special needs; however, such collaboration remains difficult to achieve in many contexts. This finding underscores the complex realities of inclusive education implementation in Philippines, where social, economic, and institutional factors influence stakeholder engagement.

A key concern raised by participants involves the socioeconomic constraints experienced by many families of learners with disabilities. Teachers reported that parents in low-income communities often struggle to balance their child's educational and therapeutic needs with their economic responsibilities. As a result, students frequently experience irregular attendance and limited participation in school activities. This finding aligns with Labrague (2018), who observed that financial difficulties and limited access to support services affect parental involvement in special education programs. Such conditions create barriers to consistent intervention and hinder the continuity of learning for students with special needs.

The findings also suggest that limited parental engagement affects the implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and other intervention programs. Teachers noted that effective IEP development requires active collaboration between educators and families to ensure that learning goals align with students' needs and home environments. Concepcion et al. (2025) emphasized that parental participation is critical in developing and monitoring individualized learning plans, as it strengthens the effectiveness of educational interventions.

However, when parents are unable to participate due to work demands or limited awareness, the quality and sustainability of inclusive practices may be compromised. Beyond parental involvement, participants also identified broader challenges in stakeholder collaboration, including limited coordination with school administrators, community members, and support professionals. Magtuba and Caballero (2024) highlighted the role of systems leadership and teacher empowerment in promoting inclusive education practices, emphasizing that strong institutional support enhances collaboration among stakeholders. Similarly, Pocaan (2022) noted that holistic special education programs require coordinated efforts among teachers, families, and school leaders. The findings of the present study indicate that the absence of structured collaboration mechanisms often leaves teachers to manage these responsibilities independently.

Teachers further reported that limited stakeholder engagement contributes to increased professional challenges and emotional strain. Gaytos et al. (2020) documented similar experiences among SPED teachers who struggled to secure consistent parental support, resulting in additional workload and stress. Damalerio et al. (2024) also found that special education teachers frequently extend their responsibilities beyond classroom instruction by engaging in community outreach and family coordination. These expanded roles highlight the additional demands placed on educators when collaborative systems are weak or underdeveloped.

The findings also reveal that collaborative barriers are more pronounced in rural and underserved areas, where access to specialized services and community support networks is limited. Magallanes et al. (2025) reported that SPED teachers in rural settings encounter significant challenges in engaging parents due to geographic isolation, limited awareness of special education services, and socioeconomic constraints. Similarly, Collado Meril et al. emphasized that teachers in inclusive classrooms often rely on personal initiative and resilience to maintain communication with

families despite structural limitations. These studies reinforce the need for context-sensitive strategies to strengthen stakeholder involvement in diverse educational settings.

Despite these challenges, teachers continue to demonstrate commitment to fostering partnerships with parents and stakeholders. Cahapay (2022) emphasized that teachers' efficacy and intervention practices play a crucial role in supporting inclusive education, particularly when collaboration with families is achieved. Manalaysay (2021) likewise highlighted the importance of community involvement in promoting meaningful learning experiences for students with special needs. Overall, the findings suggest that while collaborative barriers persist, strengthening stakeholder engagement through awareness programs, institutional support, and community-based initiatives remains essential for improving inclusive education outcomes.

Conclusion:

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of the Special Education (SPED) curriculum in Philippines is largely characterized by a prevailing "culture of improvisation." While the country has enacted progressive legislative frameworks that promote inclusive education, the realities at the ground level remain shaped by persistent resource limitations, institutional gaps, and high levels of teacher burnout. The study demonstrates that the effective delivery of inclusive education often depends more on the personal resilience, commitment, and creativity of SPED teachers than on systematic institutional support. Consequently, the success of inclusive education initiatives continues to rely heavily on individual efforts rather than the strength and responsiveness of the educational system.

The findings highlight a significant gap between policy intentions and actual implementation. Despite the presence of inclusive education mandates, schools frequently lack specialized instructional materials, adequate facilities, and structured support systems necessary for effective SPED instruction. Teachers are compelled to adapt curricula, assume multiple professional roles, and manage collaborative challenges with minimal institutional assistance. These conditions underscore the need for more responsive policies and sustainable support mechanisms to ensure that inclusive education practices are effectively realized across diverse educational contexts.

To address these challenges, several policy and practice recommendations are proposed. First, the Department of Education (Philippines) should prioritize the fast-tracked establishment of Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs) to centralize specialized instructional materials, assistive technologies, and professional services for learners with special needs. These centers would help reduce resource disparities among schools and provide structured support for both teachers and students, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of inclusive education programs.

Second, there is a need to strengthen teacher preparation through contextualized professional development programs. Training initiatives should be grounded in the realities of local school environments, equipping educators with practical strategies that reflect available resources and specific learner needs. Such professional development opportunities can enhance teacher competence, improve instructional practices, and promote sustainable inclusive education.

Third, institutional support systems should prioritize the mental health and well-being of SPED teachers. The implementation of wellness programs, counseling services, and workload management strategies can help mitigate burnout and support teachers' emotional resilience. Ensuring teacher well-being is essential for maintaining quality instruction and long-term professional commitment.

Finally, strengthening community engagement remains crucial. Grassroots awareness campaigns and community-based initiatives should be implemented to increase parental involvement, reduce social stigma surrounding disability, and promote collaborative partnerships between schools and families, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Overall, addressing these systemic concerns is vital to ensuring that inclusive education in the Philippines evolves from a culture of improvisation toward a sustainable and institutionally supported practice.

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