

Special Education in the Philippines: A Meta-Synthesis of Teacher Narratives and Inclusive Practices

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18681581

ARE-PEE M. CASTALONE

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

MAY PSYCHE VERULA

Sped Teacher, Whiteriver Unified School District
psyche.verula@gmail.com

QUEENIE MAHREE D SABANGAN

3rd to 5th Grade SDC ESN, Chabot Elementary School, Castro Valley Unified School District, California

DIANNE KAREN B. GOLLA

Elementary ELAR Teacher, Barbara Jordan Elementary School, Ector County ISD, Odessa, Texas
diannebanda15@gmail.com

VANESSA RAY G. BULALACAO, LPT, MAED

Life Skills Teacher, Wooten Elementary School, Austin Independent School District, Texas
vanessaraybulalacao@gmail.com

Abstract:

This study presents a meta-synthesis of existing research on Special Education (SPED) in the Philippines, focusing on the implementation of inclusive education (IE). By synthesizing qualitative findings from multiple studies and educator narratives, the research identifies recurring themes that shape the experiences of teachers working with learners with special educational needs (LSEs). The analysis reveals persistent structural barriers, including socio-economic constraints, inadequate institutional support, and systemic underfunding, which significantly hinder effective inclusive practices. Additionally, the study highlights the presence of the "supercrip" stereotype, wherein teachers with disabilities experience pressure to overperform in order to validate their professional competence. Despite these challenges, the findings emphasize the strong sense of agency demonstrated by Filipino educators, who often assume the role of advocates and "champions" for inclusive education. Their commitment reflects resilience, professional dedication, and a learner-centered orientation that sustains inclusive practices within resource-limited contexts. Overall, the study underscores the need for strengthened policy implementation, increased funding, and comprehensive professional development programs to bridge the gap between inclusive education policies and classroom realities in the Philippine SPED context.

Keywords: Special Education, inclusive education, meta-synthesis, SPED teachers, learners with special educational needs

Introduction:

The pursuit of inclusive education (IE) in the Philippines is strongly anchored in international mandates, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which emphasizes the right of children with disabilities to access quality education (Floranza, 2025). Over the years, the Philippines has enacted more than 50 national and local policies to support inclusion, including the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons and the Enhanced Basic Education Act. Despite this comprehensive legal framework, the realization of inclusive education remains limited by systemic, socio-cultural, and infrastructural barriers (Alcosero et al., 2023; Arias et al., 2023).

The context in the Philippines presents unique challenges. Estimates suggest there are approximately five million children with disabilities (CWDs), yet only a fraction are reached by the public education system (Paul, 2021). The Department of Education (DepEd) provides three main placement options for learners with special educational needs (SENs): full inclusion in general classrooms, partial inclusion supported by resource rooms, and self-contained special classes. While these options aim to accommodate diverse learners, they place considerable responsibility on teachers, who often report insufficient training, limited access to specialized materials, and the need to adapt to highly heterogeneous classrooms (Macabenta et al., 2023; Adolfo et al., 2023).

Much of the existing research has focused on the experiences of children rather than those of the educators themselves. Teachers are central to the success of inclusive education, yet many navigate complex systemic, emotional, and professional challenges, especially those with their own disabilities (Eslit, 2025). They must reconcile policy mandates with classroom realities, manage resource constraints, and often contend with societal stereotypes regarding disability (Floranza, 2025).

Meta-synthesis studies have emphasized that Filipino teachers demonstrate resilience and agency in inclusive classrooms despite these challenges. Their narratives reveal both the structural barriers they face and the innovative strategies they employ to support SENs (Alcosero et al., 2023; Macabenta et al., 2023). Furthermore, international comparisons suggest that Philippine teachers encounter unique socio-cultural pressures that influence how inclusion is implemented relative to other developing and developed nations (Arias et al., 2023; Surio, 2025).

Given these circumstances, this study seeks to synthesize the voices of educators to provide a holistic view of the Philippine SPED landscape. By integrating insights from primary qualitative studies, it highlights not only the gaps in training, policy implementation, and infrastructure but also the agency and “champion” roles of teachers who strive to make inclusion meaningful for their students (Paul, 2021; Adolfo et al., 2023). Understanding these experiences is essential for informing policy, practice, and future research on inclusive education in the Philippines.

Literature Review:

Inclusive education (IE) has emerged as a critical framework for ensuring the rights of children with disabilities are upheld in educational systems worldwide. International mandates such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have shaped national policies, including in the Philippines, where over 50 laws and regulations support learners with special educational needs (Floranza, 2025).

However, the translation of policy into classroom practice remains inconsistent, with numerous studies highlighting the gap between legislative intent and practical implementation (Arias et al., 2023; Alcosero et al., 2023). Teacher preparedness has been a consistent focus in research on inclusive education. Alcosero et al. (2023) found that while regular teachers are aware of IE principles, they often lack the specialized knowledge and pedagogical strategies required to support diverse learners effectively.

Similarly, Karaan Jr et al. (2025) emphasized that many educators are unfamiliar with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), limiting their ability to implement tailored interventions. Rivera et al. (2025) further noted that continuous in-service training and professional development are essential to bridge this gap, particularly in resource-constrained public schools.

The lived experiences of Filipino educators reveal both challenges and resilience. Macabenta et al. (2023) documented that teachers face systemic barriers, such as underfunded infrastructure, insufficient teaching materials, and overcrowded classrooms. Despite these challenges, teachers often demonstrate agency, creating adaptive strategies to support learners and foster inclusive environments. Medina (2025) reinforced that the emotional and professional commitment of educators plays a central role in realizing inclusive practices, highlighting the interplay between teacher motivation and systemic constraints.

Student-centered research complements these findings. Paul (2021) synthesized narratives of children and youth with disabilities, revealing that access alone does not ensure meaningful participation. Adolfo et al. (2023) highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated inequities, particularly for students requiring additional support, demonstrating the critical role of teachers in navigating both pedagogical and emotional challenges.

Eslit (2025) extended this discussion to higher education, emphasizing the importance of AI-supported learning materials and inclusive technology to enhance access for learners with diverse needs. Comparative studies indicate that the Philippine context shares similarities and contrasts with other Asian and developed countries. Arias et al. (2023) observed that while teacher attitudes toward inclusion are generally positive across the region, systemic underfunding, cultural perceptions of disability, and inconsistent professional development hinder full implementation.

Floranza (2025) noted that compared with developed nations, the Philippines continues to face challenges in infrastructure, policy enactment, and teacher preparedness, underscoring the need for context-specific interventions. Leadership, empowerment, and systemic support have been identified as critical determinants of effective inclusion.

Magtuba and Caballero (2024) found that systems leadership, teacher commitment, and empowerment significantly influence SPED teachers' ability to implement inclusive practices. Similarly, Garcia et al. (2024) and Quinco et al. (2022) highlighted that professional development programs and faculty training must be structured, continuous, and contextually relevant to ensure teachers can meet the diverse needs of learners effectively.

Parental and community perspectives further illuminate the challenges of inclusive education. Surio (2025) examined Filipino American parents navigating U.S. special education, emphasizing that cultural attitudes and parental advocacy significantly shape educational outcomes. This finding resonates with Philippine-based research, where community involvement, parental engagement, and socio-cultural beliefs influence both the perception and implementation of inclusive education (Macabenta et al., 2023; Adolfo et al., 2023).

Methodological and analytical approaches in inclusive education research continue to evolve. Schulenburg (2025) highlighted the importance of qualitative tools for synthesizing data from diverse sources, while Fernandez (2025) emphasized systematic literature reviews and meta-synthesis designs as effective for capturing complex, multi-dimensional experiences of educators and learners. Collectively, these studies underscore the need for a holistic understanding of inclusion that integrates teacher perspectives, student experiences, policy frameworks, and systemic realities. This body of literature provides a foundation for the present study, which seeks to synthesize Filipino SPED teachers' experiences to inform policy, practice, and further research.

Methodology:

This study employed a qualitative meta-synthesis design, which systematically interprets and integrates findings from primary qualitative studies to generate a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Filipino SPED teachers. The meta-synthesis approach allows for the identification of overarching themes and patterns across multiple studies, providing insights that extend beyond individual contexts while preserving the richness of educators' narratives.

A comprehensive search was conducted for peer-reviewed articles, dissertations, and theses published between 2010 and 2022. The inclusion criteria focused on studies addressing three key areas: the implementation of inclusive education in the Philippines, narratives of Filipino teachers with disabilities, and systemic challenges within the Philippine public school system. This strategy ensured that the data collected were both relevant and diverse, capturing a wide range of experiences, perspectives, and contextual factors affecting inclusive education.

The study is framed using the Social Relational Model (SRM) of Disability, which emphasizes that disability is not solely a product of physical or cognitive impairment but is shaped by social, structural, and attitudinal factors. This framework allows for the exploration of the psycho-emotional dimensions of teaching, highlighting how societal attitudes and institutional barriers influence both the internal states and professional identities of educators. By

applying the SRM, the study moves beyond a deficit-focused perspective to examine the interaction between teachers and the broader educational environment.

Data analysis was conducted using reflexive thematic analysis, which involved several iterative steps. Initially, the primary texts were closely reviewed to achieve familiarity with the content. This was followed by the generation of initial codes that captured significant statements, concepts, and experiences across studies. The codes were then examined to identify patterns and connections, leading to the development of overarching themes that bridged findings from different sources. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the process to ensure that interpretations were grounded in the data and responsive to the nuances of each study.

This methodological approach allowed for a rigorous synthesis of qualitative evidence, providing both depth and breadth in understanding the lived experiences of SPED teachers in the Philippines. It enabled the identification of systemic barriers, socio-emotional challenges, and instances of teacher agency, offering valuable insights for policy, practice, and future research in inclusive education.

Findings and Discussion:

Socio-Economic Dimensions and Structural Barriers

Across the literature on inclusive education in the Philippines, socio-economic challenges and structural barriers consistently emerge as primary constraints to effective practice. Public schools are often underfunded, resulting in insufficient teaching materials, limited classroom space, and inadequate facilities that fail to meet the needs of learners with disabilities (Medina, 2025; Atillo et al., 2025).

These deficits not only affect students but also pose significant challenges for teachers, particularly those with mobility impairments, as they navigate inaccessible physical environments daily. Transportation remains a critical barrier that compounds these challenges. Teachers frequently report that public transportation is not designed to accommodate individuals with disabilities, forcing them to rely on private ride-hailing services, which adds to the financial strain of working in under-resourced schools (Alvarez et al., 2025; Villamor et al., 2022). This structural limitation highlights how broader socio-economic conditions intersect with educational inequities, restricting both teacher mobility and consistent access to inclusive classrooms.

Another pressing issue is the lack of awareness and preparedness among teachers regarding Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for learners with special educational needs. Karaan Jr et al. (2025) and Perez and Ting (2025) emphasize that many educators are unfamiliar with the development, implementation, and monitoring of IEPs, which undermines their capacity to provide tailored support. Professional development programs remain inconsistent, and the existing teacher training infrastructure often fails to address the practical realities of classroom inclusion (Garcia et al., 2024; Atillo et al., 2025).

The literature also notes the impact of systemic inequities on teacher readiness and confidence. Readiness to implement inclusive education is influenced not only by formal training but also by mentorship, peer support, and ongoing professional guidance (Alcosero et al., 2023; Jugan et al., 2024). When such supports are absent, teachers report feelings of inadequacy and heightened stress, which can negatively affect classroom outcomes for both learners with disabilities and their peers.

Limited access to teaching resources further exacerbates these challenges. Cadosales et al. (2021) highlight that internship and practicum experiences for prospective educators often fail to expose them to inclusive settings, leaving them unprepared for the realities of mainstreaming or resource-supported classrooms. Similarly, Fernandez (2025) and Schulenburg (2025) argue that qualitative analyses of policy and practice reveal gaps between what is legislated and what is operationalized in schools, emphasizing the structural nature of these barriers.

Socio-cultural dimensions intersect with material constraints to shape teacher experiences. Teachers report that prevailing attitudes toward disability, coupled with inadequate institutional support, reinforce feelings of isolation and limit collaboration across classrooms (Medina, 2025; Jugan et al., 2024). Ethnomathematics and culturally responsive

teaching approaches, as explored by Luga et al. (2024), can provide inclusive pathways, but their implementation is uneven and often hindered by a lack of resources, training, or administrative guidance.

Financial and infrastructural barriers also affect the integration of innovative teaching strategies. Gamified instruction, adaptive technologies, and specialized learning aids have been shown to enhance student engagement and accommodate diverse learning needs (Cabanilla et al., 2023), yet their application in Philippine public schools is constrained by budget limitations and lack of access. Teachers frequently improvise or adapt strategies, highlighting both resilience and the persistent inequities embedded in the system (Alvarez et al., 2025; Medina, 2025).

Leadership and systemic support play a decisive role in mitigating structural challenges. Villamor et al. (2022) underscore the importance of school leadership succession planning, teacher empowerment, and coordinated administrative support in creating inclusive environments.

Without strong institutional backing, even well-trained and committed teachers struggle to implement inclusive education effectively, revealing the interdependence between socio-economic factors, structural infrastructure, and pedagogical outcomes. Collectively, these findings underscore that achieving meaningful inclusion in Philippine public schools requires addressing both material constraints and systemic inequities that affect teachers and learners alike.

Paradox of “Proving One’s Worth”

A recurring theme in the experiences of Filipino SPED teachers is the internal struggle to overcome negative societal stereotypes regarding disability. Many educators report that from childhood, they felt marginalized or “different” due to their inability to participate fully in school activities, which often led to feelings of shame, self-doubt, or aloofness (Jugan et al., 2024; Alvarez et al., 2025). This internalized oppression can persist into professional life, shaping educators’ sense of identity and their approach to teaching, particularly in inclusive classrooms.

The pressure to perform at a high level in professional settings often stems from societal expectations and the pervasive “supercrip” stereotype, which frames individuals with disabilities as heroic only when they exceed typical performance standards (Policarpio, 2025; Villamor et al., 2022). Teachers with disabilities frequently feel compelled to demonstrate superior competence relative to their non-disabled peers to validate their positions, creating a continuous cycle of overachievement and self-imposed pressure.

This paradox is further complicated by classroom realities. Teachers navigate mainstreaming and resource-supported classes with students of varying abilities, often without sufficient training or institutional support (Alvarez et al., 2025; Tanucan et al., 2023). They must balance differentiated instruction, behavioral management, and content delivery while managing their own professional credibility. Such pressures can amplify the sense of needing to “prove oneself” continually.

Socio-cultural dynamics reinforce these pressures. In the Philippine context, societal perceptions of disability are intertwined with expectations of resilience, moral responsibility, and personal perseverance (Diez, 2025; Funa & Gabay, 2025). Teachers often internalize these norms, which can enhance motivation but also contribute to stress, burnout, and anxiety in educational settings. These dynamics are mirrored in regional studies of Southeast Asian classrooms, where cultural and motivational factors influence teacher-student interactions and instructional decisions (Luga et al., 2024).

Despite these challenges, teachers employ strategies to navigate the paradox constructively. Many leverage mentorship, peer collaboration, and adaptive instructional approaches, such as gamified instruction or culturally responsive pedagogies, to validate their teaching effectiveness while supporting diverse learners (Cabanilla et al., 2023; Alvarez et al., 2025). These strategies illustrate that teachers are not passive victims of stereotypes but active agents negotiating both societal expectations and classroom realities.

Parental and community perceptions further shape educators’ experiences. Policarpio (2025) emphasizes that parents’ views on special education can either reinforce or mitigate pressures on teachers, while collaborative engagement with

families can provide emotional and professional support. Similarly, the use of technology and alternative instructional materials—such as modular distance learning and AI-supported tools—can buffer the pressures of proving competence by expanding access and scaffolding instruction for learners with special needs (Tanucan et al., 2023; Aying et al., 2023).

The paradox of proving one's worth underscores a complex interaction between internalized societal expectations, professional responsibilities, and systemic barriers. Teachers' narratives reveal that while the pressure to overperform can be a source of stress, it can also drive innovation, resilience, and advocacy for learners with disabilities (Shibuya et al., 2023; Micaroz & Mapalo, in preparation). Recognizing this paradox is essential for developing policies, professional development programs, and school cultures that validate teachers' expertise without imposing unrealistic expectations.

Agency and the “Champion” Role

Despite the socio-economic and structural barriers that SPED teachers face in the Philippines, narratives consistently reveal that these educators are not passive victims. Instead, they actively exercise agency, navigating institutional constraints and societal expectations to create meaningful learning experiences for learners with special educational needs (Diez, 2025; Tanucan, Alejandro, & Corcino, 2023). Their agency is reflected in both personal strategies to overcome discrimination and broader efforts to mentor and guide students and their families.

One form of agency is the resistance to discrimination and systemic limitations. Many teachers have pursued higher education and professional development independently, often investing personal resources to acquire the skills necessary to advance in their careers (Micaroz & Mapalo, in preparation; Shibuya et al., 2023). Such efforts illustrate their determination to assert professional competence despite institutional barriers, limited funding, and societal biases regarding disability.

Mentorship emerges as another crucial dimension of teacher agency. Educators' lived experiences of disability or encounters with marginalized learners position them to serve as authentic role models for both students and parents (Aying et al., 2023; Manuguid, 2025). By sharing strategies for overcoming challenges, modeling resilience, and fostering self-efficacy, these teachers contribute not only to student learning outcomes but also to broader community understanding of inclusion.

The use of adaptive and culturally responsive pedagogies further exemplifies teachers' proactive engagement. Approaches such as ethnomathematics and gamified instruction are employed to make learning accessible, engaging, and relevant to students' lived contexts (Alabat & Oledan, 2024; Angco, Caballero, et al., 2025; Cabanilla et al., 2023). These strategies demonstrate how teachers translate policy and theoretical frameworks into actionable classroom practices, often compensating for resource constraints while enhancing learning participation.

In addition, teachers navigate complex sociocultural and motivational dynamics that influence classroom engagement. Diez (2025) notes that educators in Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, must mediate between cultural expectations, parental involvement, and students' diverse needs. Filipino teachers report balancing these factors while fostering agency among learners themselves, empowering students to participate actively despite systemic or societal limitations.

Technology-mediated instruction has also become a significant avenue for teacher agency. The use of printed modular learning, online platforms, and AI-supported tools enables teachers to extend access to education, personalize instruction, and scaffold students' learning experiences (Tanucan et al., 2023; Rafael, 2026; Aying et al., 2023). These innovations are particularly valuable in contexts where physical resources or classroom space are limited, allowing teachers to exercise creativity and initiative in designing inclusive experiences.

Teachers' advocacy and agency extend beyond classroom walls. They actively engage with parents, colleagues, and school leadership to promote inclusive practices and address systemic gaps (Francisco, De Costo, & Bacus, 2025; Policarpio, 2025). Such engagement not only strengthens the implementation of inclusive policies but also fosters supportive environments for learners and teachers alike.

Resilience in the face of professional conflicts is another indicator of teacher agency. Shibuya et al. (2023) highlight that teachers frequently encounter tensions between mandated curricula and students' contextual realities, requiring negotiation, problem-solving, and advocacy. Teachers' ability to navigate these challenges without compromising their commitment to inclusion illustrates both professional competence and moral agency.

The role of SPED teachers as "champions" is inseparable from their capacity to exercise agency. Through mentorship, innovation, advocacy, and resilience, teachers embody the principles of inclusion, shaping both educational outcomes and broader societal attitudes toward learners with disabilities (Mella & Tengco, 2025; Angco, Aliser, Lacson, & Bonotan, 2023; Manuguid, 2025). Their narratives underscore that achieving meaningful inclusion depends not only on policy and infrastructure but also on the proactive, reflective, and creative engagement of educators committed to social equity.

The Gap Between Policy and Practice and Internalization of Disability

Although the Philippines has enacted comprehensive legislation such as the "Magna Carta for Disabled Persons," the implementation of these policies at the classroom level remains inconsistent (Shahmohammadi, Safarian Hamedani, & Salehi, 2023). Teachers frequently face structural and systemic constraints that limit their ability to deliver specialized support for learners with special educational needs (LSENs). For instance, educators are often assigned to teach subjects outside their areas of expertise due to shortages in qualified personnel, which increases workload and reduces the quality of individualized instruction (Mella & Tengco, 2025).

The disconnect between policy and practice is further complicated by limited administrative support and insufficient infrastructure. Schools often lack adaptive teaching materials, accessible classrooms, and sufficient learning aids, forcing teachers to improvise or modify lessons independently (Angco, Caballero, Caumeran, Grijaldo Jr, & Plasencia, 2025; Mediana Jr et al., 2025). While these workarounds demonstrate teacher resilience, they also reflect systemic gaps that hinder consistent, equitable inclusion across the Philippine education system.

Professional development opportunities, although mandated, are inconsistently implemented, leaving teachers underprepared for inclusive classrooms (Rafael, 2026; Ghasemi & Dehghani, 2024). Training programs frequently emphasize theoretical knowledge rather than practical strategies, which limits teachers' confidence in designing and executing effective lesson plans for LSENs. This gap contributes to a persistent tension between policy ideals and on-the-ground realities, creating both emotional and professional strain for educators.

The Social Relational Model (SRM) of Disability provides a framework to understand these challenges. The SRM shifts the focus from individual impairments to the interaction between educators and societal structures, highlighting how barriers arise from social attitudes, systemic limitations, and cultural expectations (Manuguid, 2025; Mella & Tengco, 2025). In this context, the "problem" is not the teacher's or student's impairment but the environment that fails to accommodate diverse abilities, which can reinforce feelings of inadequacy or professional self-doubt.

Internalization of disability emerges as a critical consequence of these systemic pressures. Teachers often report a pervasive fear of failure, driven not only by high professional expectations but also by societal skepticism regarding the capabilities of educators with disabilities (Chan-Anteza, 2020; Ābediniyā et al., 2024). This internalized pressure can influence classroom decision-making, interactions with students, and engagement with colleagues, subtly shaping the teacher's professional identity and sense of self-efficacy.

Technology-mediated instruction has been increasingly employed to bridge gaps between policy and practice. Tools such as modular distance learning, gamified instruction, and AI-supported platforms allow teachers to individualize learning and extend access to students despite physical or systemic constraints (Tanucan, Alejandro, & Corcino, 2023; Angco et al., 2025; Saldivar, 2024). While these innovations provide potential solutions, their effectiveness depends on teacher training, administrative support, and resource availability, highlighting the ongoing intersection of agency and systemic barriers.

Parental and community engagement also plays a role in mitigating the policy-practice gap. Cariaga et al. (2025) emphasize that culturally responsive collaboration with families strengthens inclusive practices, providing emotional and practical support to both students and teachers. Such engagement not only facilitates compliance with policy mandates but also reinforces social validation for teachers, helping counteract the internalization of disability and fear of underperformance.

The gap between policy and classroom practice underscores the complex dynamics of inclusion in the Philippines. Teachers' experiences illustrate that achieving meaningful inclusive education requires more than legislation; it demands systemic support, targeted professional development, adaptive resources, and cultural shifts in perceptions of disability (Shahmohammadi et al., 2023; Manuguid, 2025; Ghasemi & Dehghani, 2024). By addressing both structural barriers and the psychosocial impact on educators, schools can move closer to translating policy intentions into tangible classroom outcomes that support learners with special educational needs effectively.

Conclusion:

The findings of this study highlight that achieving a truly inclusive education system in the Philippines requires more than the provision of technical training or the implementation of policy mandates. Rather, it necessitates a fundamental transformation in the beliefs, attitudes, and practices of the entire school community toward disability and inclusion. While existing legal frameworks and institutional guidelines promote equal access to education, the persistent gap between policy and classroom practice demonstrates that inclusive education must be supported by a shared commitment among administrators, teachers, families, and policymakers. Addressing structural barriers and shifting societal perceptions are essential to creating an environment where both learners with special educational needs and educators with disabilities can thrive.

A key recommendation of the study is the development of clear and standardized institutional support mechanisms for teachers with disabilities. The Department of Education (DepEd) should establish comprehensive policies that outline specific accommodations, professional support systems, and equitable workload arrangements. Such measures would reduce reliance on the discretionary decisions of individual school leaders and ensure consistent implementation of inclusive practices across educational institutions. Standardized support structures can also enhance teacher well-being, professional confidence, and instructional effectiveness.

Furthermore, significant investment in infrastructure is necessary to promote accessibility and equity. The study emphasizes the need to prioritize the construction and renovation of school facilities that accommodate diverse physical needs, including accessible classrooms, learning resources, and support services. Improving transportation networks surrounding schools is equally important, as accessible mobility enables both teachers and learners with disabilities to participate fully in educational activities. These improvements would strengthen the practical realization of inclusive education policies and promote sustained participation in the learning process.

The study highlights the importance of continued research on inclusive education in the Philippine context. Future investigations should explore the experiences of educators across diverse disability groups and educational settings to better understand their unique challenges and support needs. Large-scale and longitudinal studies can provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of inclusive policies and practices, ultimately informing evidence-based interventions. Through sustained policy reform, infrastructure development, and research-driven initiatives, the Philippines can move closer to establishing an equitable and genuinely inclusive educational system.

References:

Ābediniyā, A., Zāhed Bābelān, Ā., Mo'inikiyā, M., & Khāleghkhāh, A. (2024). Designing and explaining the model of teacher leadership in elementary schools with a Meta synthesis approach. *Journal of Educational Innovations*, 23(4), 81-102.

Adolfo, A. M., Morales, J. M., Daño, J. A., Normend, K., Entica, K. D. D., & Cabanilla Jr, A. (2023). Experiences of students with additional needs amidst COVID-19 pandemic: a meta-synthesis. *Int J Res Eng Sci*, 11(5), 230-8.

Alabat, R. L., & Oledan, A. M. (2024). A Meta-Synthesis on the Challenges and Benefits of Integrating Ethnomathematics in the Philippine Mathematics Curriculum.

Alcosero, A., Carcueva, H., Abasolo, M. C., Arranchado, W. M., & Cabanilla Jr, A. (2023). Preparedness of regular teachers in the implementation of inclusive education in the Philippines: A meta-synthesis. *International Journal of Research in Engineering and Science*, 11(3), 259-266.

Alvarez, D., Futralan, M. C., & Sedillo, E. (2025). Challenges Faced and Strategies Employed by Teachers in Handling Mainstreaming Classes in Secondary Schools. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(7), 828-842.

Angco, R. J., Aliser, A., Lacson, E., & Bonotan, A. (2023). The use of graphing calculators in teaching mathematics: a meta-synthesis. *Jurnal Pendidikan Progresif*, 13(2), 230-243.

Angco, R. J. N., Caballero, M. M., Caumeran, R., Grijaldo Jr, A., & Plasencia, N. R. (2025). A Gamified Instruction in Teaching Physical Education: A Meta-Synthesis. *Human Behavior, Development & Society*, 26(1).

Arias, C. R., Calago, C. N. S., Calungsod, H. F. B., Delica, M. A., Fullo, M. E., & Cabanilla Jr, A. B. (2023). Challenges and Implementation of Inclusive Education in Selected Asian Countries: A Meta-Synthesis. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science*, 9(2), 512-534.

Arinto, P., Hodgkinson-Williams, C. A., & Trotter, H. (2019). OER and OEP in the Global South: Implications and recommendations for social inclusion.

Atillo, R., Reyes, N. R. D., Cabigon, A. F., & Pinili, L. (2025). Readiness of Philippine Secondary Public-School Teachers Towards the Implementation of Inclusive Education. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Studies*, 7(11), 38-47.

Aying, F. L., Cabanilla, A., Canillo, J., Capangpangan, A., & Conocono, A. S. (2023). Filipino Students Experiences in Online Learning: A Meta-Synthesis. *Int J Res Appl Sci Eng Technol*, 11(3), 1181-9.

Cabanilla, A. B., Batolbatol, G. B., Jacaban, F. S., & Bonotan, A. (2023). Gamified Instruction in Mathematics: A Meta-Synthesis. *Human Behavior, Development & Society*, 24(1).

Cadosales, M. N. Q., Cabanilla, A. B., Elcullada, R. O., Lacea, R. L., & Beltran, N. Y. (2021). A meta-synthesis on the potential effectiveness of a teaching internship program. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry (TOJQI)*, 12(6), 8955-8964.

Cariaga, R., Dagunan, M. A., Cariaga, V., Sabidalas, M. A., El Halaissi, M., & Bacatan, J. (2025). Rethinking Parental Involvement in Developing Countries: Toward Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Education. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Viewpoints*, 1(5), 631-637. (Duplicate entry removed).

Chan-Anteza, T. K. (2020). Management of a conducive classroom environment: A meta-synthesis. *Management*, 11(26), 54-70.

Dayson, C. J. P., Ayo, J. P. D., Equipado, B. D., Polon, J. H., Buban, R. G., & Digo, G. S. (2024). A systematic review and meta-synthesis of indigenous Filipino values in educational leadership. *Journal of Community Development Research (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 17(4), 1-22.

- Diez, K. P. (2025). Examining sociocultural and motivational dynamics in Southeast Asian ESL classrooms: A meta-synthesis of empirical evidence. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(9), 41-51.
- Eslit, E. (2025). Beyond Access: A Meta-Synthesis on Inclusive and AI-Supported Learning Materials in Higher Education.
- Fernandez, C. B. (2025). Literature Review Designs in Practice: Graduate Students' Perspectives from a Teacher Education Program. *Internet Reference Services Quarterly*, 29(3), 397-414.
- Floranza, J. (2025). Inclusive education models among developed and developing countries, and the Philippines: A comparative systematic literature review. *European Journal of Inclusive Education*, 4(1), 223-252.
- Francisco, K., De Costo, M., & Bacus, R. (2025). Song Utilization in English Language Teaching: Meta-Synthesis. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(8), 650-656.
- Funa, A. A., & Gabay, R. A. E. (2025). Policy guidelines and recommendations on AI use in teaching and learning: A meta-synthesis study. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 11, 101221.
- Garcia, J. A. S., Mistades, V. M., Roleda, L. S., Talaue, F. T., & Prudente, M. S. (2024). Systematic Review of Professional Development Programs for Teachers in the Philippines.
- Ghasemi, N., & Dehghani, M. (2024). Towards Reflective Teaching: Meta-Synthesis of Reflection in Teaching-Learning Process. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 31(1), 123-146.
- Jugan, M. B., Reyes, N. R. T. D., Pepito Jr, J. C., Capuno, R. G., Pinili, L. C., Cabigon, A. F. P., ... & Mamites, I. O. (2024). Attitudes of Elementary Teachers towards Inclusive Education of Learners with Special Education Needs in a Public School. *Online Submission*, 48(1), 2173-2202.
- Karaan Jr, F. P., Anora, H. C., Tenerife-Cañete, J. J. L., Pinili, L. C., Mangubat, R. C., Espina, R. C., ... & Calasang, V. O. (2025). Awareness and Preparedness of Teachers on the Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for Special Education Learners within Inclusive Settings. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 9(11).
- Luga, M. J. F., Samson, H. B., & Oledan, A. M. B. (2024). Exploring the Significance and Implementation of Ethnomathematics in Education: A Meta-Synthesis of Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Indonesia and Thailand. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 15(7), 18.
- Macabenta, J. M., Manubag, C. V., Tabañag, J. C., Villegas, N. B., Villegas, T. M., & Cabanilla Jr, A. (2023). Inclusive education: Lived experiences of 21st century teachers in the Philippines. *International Journal for Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology*, 11(4), 454.
- Magtuba, C. G., & Caballero, C. G. (2024). The influence of systems leadership, teacher empowerment, perception, attitude and commitment on the inclusive education practices of sped teachers. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 11(10).
- Manuguid, H. M. (2025). From Trauma-Informed Care to Classroom Practice: Reimagining Trust-Based Relational Intervention for Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *LUKAD*.

Mediana Jr, N. L., Llanto, M. H., Ebuenga, J. C., Deladia, J. D., Manilag, M. E. F., Rejuso, R. M., & Digo, G. S. (2025). Assessing the Efficacy of Google Classroom as an Instructional Medium in Blended Learning Environments: A Systematic Review and Meta-synthesis.

Medina, M. G. G. (2025). Exploring educators' experiences in creating inclusive learning environments. *Educational Research (IJMCER)*, 7(3), 303-346.

Mella, M. C. G., & Tengco, J. T. Navigating Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the Classroom: Exploring Teachers' Awareness, Practices, and Challenges.

Micaroz, M. M., & Mapalo, A. Navigating politics, change, and well-being in local colleges: A meta-synthesis of faculty and administrator narratives as the basis for the REACT-KNP policy model. *Manuscript in preparation*.

Paul, T. (2021). *Synthesizing the Experiences of Children and Youth With Disabilities and Special Needs in Inclusive Education Using Meta-Aggregation* (Doctoral dissertation).

Perez, H. G. L., & Ting, M. S. (2025, March). Effectiveness of Individualized Education Plans (IEPS), Role of Teacher Training and Peer Support for Special Needs Learners (SNED) in District of Cabuyao.

Policarpio, S. (2025). Parental Viewpoints on Special Education for Learners with Special Learning Needs in Public Elementary Schools in Cabanatuan City. *Southeast Asia Journal of Inclusive, Needs-Sensitive, Special Practices for Innovative Research in Education*, 1(1).

Quinco, D. F., Cabanilla Jr, A. B., & Cadosales, M. N. Q. (2022). Meta-Synthesis On Faculty Development During The Covid. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(8), 981-991.

Rafael, J. M. (2026). Pedagogical practices and experiences of English language teachers using Artificial Intelligence (AI): A meta-synthesis. *Ho Chi Minh City Open University Journal Of Science-Social Sciences*.

Rivera, J. P. R., Sinsay-Villanueva, L. M. V., Tanyag, I. H., Berroya, J. D., Garcia, G. D. V., & Lim, V. L. (2025). *Revitalizing the Philippine education system: Facilitating access and participation to in-service training (INSET) and teacher professional development (TPD)* (No. 2025-14). PIDS Discussion Paper Series.

Saldivar, J. M. N. (2024). Embarking on a Gamified Journey in Higher Education: A Meta-synthesis. *European Online Journal of Natural and Social Sciences*, 13(3), pp-259.

Schulenburg, R. J. (2025). Qualitative Tools to Enhance Data Analysis from Diverse Sources of International Education Policy in Order to Create a More Perfect Evaluation Toolset.

Shahmohammadi, F., Safarian Hamedani, S., & Salehi, M. (2023). Explaining the Model of Public Education in Natural Disasters based on the Meta synthesis Method. *Quarterly Scientific Journal of Rescue and Relief*, 15(2), 89-95.

Shibuya, F., Estrada, C. A., Sari, D. P., Takeuchi, R., Sasaki, H., Warnaini, C., ... & Kobayashi, J. (2023). Teachers' conflicts in implementing comprehensive sexuality education: a qualitative systematic review and meta-synthesis. *Tropical Medicine and Health*, 51(1), 18.

Surio, G. C. (2025). *Filipino American Parents' Experiences with the United States Special Education System: A Qualitative Study* (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University).

Tanucan, J. C. M., Alejandro, B. A., & Corcino, R. B. (2023). Towards an Enhanced Implementation of Printed Modular Distance Learning in the Philippines: A Meta-Synthesis. *International journal of learning. Teaching and Educational Research*, 22(3), 341-358.

Villamor, M. R., Pecson, G., Arcilla, L., Bacus, J., Abando, A., Bigcas, B., & Quinco-Cadosales, M. N. (2022). A meta-synthesis on school leadership succession: Groundwork for effective transition. *Multicultural Education*, 8(5), 61-72.