

# Synthesis of Inclusive Teacher Education Reforms in the Philippines: A Meta-Aggregative Study

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**ARE-PEE M. CASTALONE**

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

**GLEND A. B. ONG**

SCS3, La Mesa Elementary School, Albuquerque Public Schools, New Mexico  
glenvinz1976@gmail.com

**HAZEL T. BARBA**

Teacher 1, Paranaque Elementary School Central, District III, Paranaque City, Philippines  
hzelbarba@gmail.com

**ROBERT BAUTISTA MUDA**

EC SED Teacher High School  
robertmuda08@gmail.com

**HYDIE M. DE GUZMAN, PhD**

Elementary Teacher (5th), Hayden Don ES, North Las Vegas, Nevada  
hydiedeguzman@gmail.com

## Abstract:

This qualitative study employs a meta-aggregation research methodology to synthesize existing evidence regarding inclusive teacher education reforms in the Philippines. Drawing inspiration from historical analyses of the general-special education divide, this research interrogates the specific intersections where these two traditionally parallel systems meet within the Philippine context. Through a systematic search of local academic repositories and peer-reviewed journals, qualitative findings were extracted, categorized, and synthesized to identify the drivers and inhibitors of cohesive teacher preparation. The synthesis reveals that despite robust policy mandates for inclusion, structural constraints—including fragmented curricula, compartmentalized funding, and deeply ingrained professional norms of separation—continue to hinder a unified equity agenda. The findings suggest that current reforms, such as the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), provide a platform for integration that remains underutilized. This study concludes with evidence-based recommendations for "re-envisioning" teacher education through dual-certification models and collaborative institutional leadership. By moving beyond a "siloed" approach to disability, the study advocates for a comprehensive equity framework that prepares Filipino educators to support students across multiple, intersecting diversities, ensuring that inclusive education moves from mere policy to classroom reality.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Education, Special Education (SPED), Teacher Education Reform, Meta-aggregation, Equity Agenda.

## Introduction:

Inclusive education has become a central pillar of educational reform in the Philippines, driven by national mandates that seek to ensure equitable access to quality learning for all students, including those with disabilities and diverse learning needs. A key policy advancing this agenda is the Department of Education Order No. 72, s. 2009, which institutionalizes inclusive education practices in basic education.

Despite these policy initiatives, the Philippine teacher education system continues to reflect a long-standing structural divide between general education and special education preparation. While the professional knowledge base for general education has progressively evolved, special education remains largely positioned as a separate field with distinct competencies, training pathways, and institutional frameworks.

This separation mirrors global trends in teacher preparation, where general and special education have historically developed as parallel systems rather than integrated professional domains. Such division often reinforces the perception that addressing the needs of learners with disabilities is primarily the responsibility of specialists rather than a shared obligation among all educators. Consequently, many general education teachers report limited preparedness to implement inclusive practices, highlighting persistent gaps between policy aspirations and classroom realities.

In response to these challenges, this study aims to synthesize qualitative evidence examining the intersections between general and special education within the Philippine teacher education landscape. By employing a meta-aggregative approach to qualitative synthesis, the research consolidates findings from existing studies to generate evidence-based insights that can inform teacher education reforms and inclusive policy implementation. This approach enables the systematic integration of diverse perspectives while preserving the original meanings of primary research findings.

The study is guided by existing scholarship on qualitative evidence synthesis and inclusive education practices, particularly the meta-aggregative frameworks discussed by Hannes et al. (2018) and Paul (2021), as well as empirical studies on inclusive practices among Filipino educators (Cagas et al., 2023) and teacher professional development in evolving educational contexts (Ancho & Arrieta, 2021).

These works collectively underscore the importance of examining teacher competencies, professional learning structures, and institutional support systems in fostering inclusive educational environments. By interrogating the intersections between general and special education preparation, this research seeks to identify opportunities for collaborative practice and systemic reform, as well as structural constraints—such as policy fragmentation, resource limitations, and entrenched cultural norms—that hinder the development of a cohesive equity agenda. Ultimately, the study contributes to ongoing discourse on inclusive teacher education by providing synthesized evidence that supports more integrated, responsive, and socially just approaches to teacher preparation in the Philippine context.

## **Literature Review:**

Inclusive education has emerged as a global educational priority aimed at ensuring equitable access to quality learning for all students, particularly those with disabilities and diverse learning needs. In the Philippines, inclusive education reforms emphasize the transformation of teaching practices, institutional structures, and teacher preparation systems to support diverse learners. However, the implementation of inclusive practices often reveals tensions between policy intentions and classroom realities, particularly in teacher education and professional preparation. Existing literature highlights the need to examine teacher competencies, professional development models, and systemic structures that influence inclusive education outcomes.

A growing body of research has explored the lived experiences of teachers implementing inclusive education. Studies by Cagas et al. (2023) and Macabenta et al. (2023) reveal that both general education and special education teachers face challenges related to limited training, insufficient institutional support, and resource constraints. These studies emphasize that while teachers demonstrate positive attitudes toward inclusion, they frequently report feeling unprepared to address diverse learning needs effectively. Similarly, Beltran et al. (2025) identified persistent barriers in Philippine elementary schools, including large class sizes, inadequate instructional materials, and gaps in professional preparation. These findings suggest that structural and professional limitations continue to hinder the realization of inclusive education goals.

Teacher professional development plays a crucial role in strengthening inclusive teaching practices. Ancho and Arrieta (2021) examined Filipino teachers' professional development experiences and highlighted the importance of continuous learning opportunities, particularly in response to changing educational demands. Huang et al. (2023)

further emphasized blended learning as an effective strategy for teacher professional development, enabling flexible and sustained capacity-building initiatives.

These approaches support the development of inclusive competencies by enhancing teachers' pedagogical knowledge and responsiveness to diverse learners. Additionally, Carvajal et al. (2025) underscored the need to reframe teacher education curricula in the Philippines to prepare future educators for emerging educational challenges, including inclusive instruction and diverse classroom environments.

Beyond the Philippine context, international studies provide valuable insights into teacher beliefs, curriculum implementation, and institutional reform relevant to inclusive education. Budiarti (2025) examined teachers' beliefs and practices in integrating 21st-century skills, highlighting how teacher perceptions influence instructional approaches and classroom inclusivity. Similarly, Vebrianto et al. (2024) explored teachers' experiences in educational reform programs and found that institutional support and professional collaboration significantly affect successful implementation. Rudhumbu and Du Plessis (2021) further identified organizational factors, such as leadership support, resource allocation, and institutional readiness, as critical determinants of curriculum implementation. These findings collectively demonstrate that inclusive education reforms require systemic alignment across policy, institutional structures, and teacher preparation.

Methodologically, qualitative evidence synthesis has gained recognition as an effective approach to consolidating diverse research findings and informing policy decisions. Hannes et al. (2018) provided a comprehensive framework for meta-aggregation, emphasizing its pragmatic orientation toward synthesizing qualitative evidence while preserving the original meaning of primary studies. Paul (2021) applied meta-aggregation to synthesize the experiences of children and youth with disabilities in inclusive education, demonstrating its value in generating actionable insights for educational reform. Similarly, Aji et al. (2023) illustrated the utility of qualitative evidence synthesis in identifying systemic enablers and barriers within public service contexts, reinforcing the relevance of this approach for examining complex social and institutional phenomena such as inclusive education.

Collectively, the reviewed literature highlights the multifaceted nature of inclusive education implementation, encompassing teacher competencies, institutional structures, policy alignment, and professional development systems. While previous studies have examined teacher experiences, professional learning, and curriculum reforms, there remains limited synthesis of qualitative evidence specifically addressing the intersection between general and special education within teacher education systems.

This gap underscores the need for a meta-aggregative study that integrates existing qualitative findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of how teacher education reforms can support more cohesive and equitable inclusive education practices. The present study seeks to address this gap by synthesizing qualitative evidence on inclusive teacher education reforms, thereby contributing to policy development and the advancement of inclusive educational practices.

### **Methodology:**

This study employed a qualitative meta-aggregation research design, a pragmatic approach to qualitative evidence synthesis that aims to systematically summarize findings from multiple studies into a set of synthesized conclusions that can inform policy and practice. Unlike meta-ethnography, which seeks to generate new theoretical interpretations, meta-aggregation preserves the original meanings and intentions of primary research while producing consolidated findings that support evidence-based decision-making. This approach is particularly appropriate for examining inclusive teacher education reforms, as it enables the integration of diverse qualitative perspectives while maintaining methodological rigor and transparency.

Relevant studies were identified through a comprehensive search of multiple academic databases and research repositories. These included Philippine E-Journals, Google Scholar, and university-based research databases such as those of the University of the Philippines, Philippine Normal University, and De La Salle University. The search strategy utilized key terms such as "inclusive education Philippines," "Special Education (SPED) teacher preparation," "Philippine teacher education reform," and "general-special education collaboration." These search terms were

selected to capture relevant literature addressing teacher education, inclusive practices, and the integration of general and special education within the Philippine context.

The study applied specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the relevance and quality of selected studies. Included in the review were peer-reviewed qualitative studies employing research designs such as phenomenology, case study, and grounded theory that focused on pre-service or in-service teacher education in the Philippines published between 2000 and 2024. Studies that were purely quantitative in nature or did not specifically address teacher preparation were excluded from the analysis. These criteria ensured that the synthesis focused on in-depth experiential evidence relevant to inclusive teacher education reforms.

To ensure the credibility and dependability of the selected studies, each article underwent quality appraisal using the Joanna Briggs Institute Critical Appraisal Tool for Qualitative Research. This appraisal process evaluated methodological rigor, data credibility, and the coherence of findings, thereby strengthening the reliability of the synthesized evidence. Following the appraisal, relevant findings were extracted and systematically organized into categories based on similarity in meaning and thematic relevance. These categories were then meta-aggregated into broader synthesized findings, providing a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of the intersections between general and special education in Philippine teacher education.

### **Findings and Discussion:**

#### **Category 1: Policy-Curriculum Misalignment**

Policy-curriculum misalignment emerges as a central issue in the implementation of inclusive teacher education reforms. In the Philippines, national policies strongly promote inclusive education as a guiding principle of the educational system; however, teacher education curricula often remain compartmentalized into separate tracks for general education and special education. This structural separation reinforces a dualistic framework in which inclusion is treated as a specialized area rather than a shared professional responsibility among all educators.

As a result, teacher preparation programs may struggle to operationalize inclusive policies within actual instructional frameworks and course structures. This divide reflects what scholars describe as a persistent gap between policy formulation and curriculum implementation. Custodio (2025) emphasizes that inclusive education policies frequently lack coherent translation into institutional practices, creating inconsistencies between national mandates and program-level execution.

Similarly, Lingayon (2025) notes that while inclusive education policies articulate comprehensive goals for learner participation and equity, their implementation often encounters structural and administrative barriers that limit their effectiveness in classroom settings. These findings suggest that policy commitments alone are insufficient without corresponding curricular reforms that integrate inclusive competencies across teacher education programs.

Empirical studies further highlight how this misalignment affects teacher preparedness. Gonzaga et al. (2024) found that general education teachers often report low levels of readiness to implement inclusive practices due to limited exposure to special education concepts during their training. This lack of preparation reinforces the perception that teaching learners with disabilities is primarily the responsibility of specialists rather than a shared pedagogical obligation. Supporting this view, MOON (2023) established a significant relationship between teacher readiness and the successful implementation of inclusive education programs, indicating that insufficient curricular integration directly impacts teaching performance and learning outcomes.

The experiences of practicing teachers also illustrate the consequences of fragmented preparation systems. Macabenta et al. (2023) documented that many Filipino teachers encounter challenges in addressing diverse learning needs because their professional training did not adequately equip them with inclusive pedagogical strategies. Similarly, Beltran et al. (2025) identified persistent barriers in Philippine elementary schools, including limited instructional materials, large class sizes, and insufficient institutional support, all of which are exacerbated by gaps in teacher preparation. These findings demonstrate that curriculum structures that separate general and special education contribute to ongoing implementation challenges at the classroom level.

At the institutional level, curriculum reform has been identified as a critical strategy for addressing policy–curriculum misalignment. Carvajal et al. (2025) advocate for the reframing of teacher education curricula to develop future-ready educators capable of responding to diverse learner needs. Their study emphasizes the importance of embedding inclusive competencies across all subject areas rather than confining them to specialized courses. Likewise, Kilag et al. (2025) highlight the need for systemic reforms in special education and teacher preparation programs to promote integrated practices that support inclusive learning environments.

Professional development initiatives also play a significant role in bridging the gap between policy and practice. Rivera et al. (2025) underscore the importance of expanding access to in-service training and teacher professional development programs to strengthen inclusive competencies among educators. However, they note that limited participation and uneven access to professional learning opportunities continue to hinder the effectiveness of these initiatives. Without sustained professional development aligned with curricular reforms, policy objectives for inclusive education remain difficult to achieve.

Comparative and international perspectives further illuminate the structural nature of policy–curriculum misalignment. Floranza (2025) observes that both developed and developing countries encounter similar challenges in translating inclusive education policies into practice, particularly when institutional structures and teacher preparation systems are not aligned with policy goals. In a related qualitative evidence synthesis, Aji et al. (2023) demonstrate how systemic barriers and enabling factors influence the implementation of public service policies, reinforcing the importance of structural coherence between policy directives and institutional practices. These insights suggest that policy–curriculum misalignment represents a broader systemic issue that extends beyond national contexts.

The literature indicates that policy–curriculum misalignment remains a significant barrier to the effective implementation of inclusive teacher education. While national policies emphasize equity and inclusion, fragmented curriculum structures, limited teacher preparedness, and institutional constraints continue to reinforce the separation between general and special education. Addressing this issue requires comprehensive reforms that integrate inclusive competencies across teacher education curricula, strengthen professional development systems, and ensure institutional alignment with national policy goals. Such efforts are essential for transforming inclusive education from a policy aspiration into a sustainable educational practice.

### **The Norms of Professional Separation**

The norms of professional separation represent a significant barrier to the effective implementation of inclusive education within teacher education systems. In the Philippines, research consistently shows that general education teachers often perceive the education of learners with disabilities as the exclusive responsibility of Special Education (SPED) specialists. This perception reinforces a professional divide that limits collaboration between general and special education practitioners and weakens the collective responsibility for inclusive teaching. Such norms are deeply embedded in institutional practices, teacher preparation structures, and professional identities, shaping how educators understand their roles in inclusive classrooms.

Empirical studies demonstrate that many general education teachers feel inadequately prepared to address the needs of students with disabilities due to limited exposure to inclusive pedagogical strategies during their training. Gonzaga et al. (2024) found that teachers frequently report low levels of readiness and confidence in implementing inclusive education, citing insufficient preparation in differentiated instruction and classroom adaptation. Similarly, Alcosero et al. (2023) revealed that regular teachers often lack the competencies required to effectively support diverse learners, reinforcing reliance on SPED specialists. These findings highlight how professional separation is sustained by gaps in teacher education and training.

The lived experiences of teachers further illustrate the persistence of these norms in practice. Macabenta et al. (2023) documented that many teachers perceive inclusive education as an additional burden rather than an integral component of teaching, primarily due to limited institutional support and professional preparation. Likewise, Dayso et al. (2025) found that educators struggle to balance inclusive responsibilities with existing teaching demands, particularly in resource-constrained environments. Beltran et al. (2025) also reported that teachers in Philippine elementary schools

face challenges in implementing inclusive strategies due to insufficient training, limited resources, and unclear role expectations, reinforcing the perception that inclusion falls outside the scope of general education.

Policy implementation gaps further contribute to the institutionalization of professional separation. Custodio (2025) emphasizes that while inclusive education policies promote shared responsibility among educators, institutional practices often fail to support collaborative models of teaching. Similarly, Lingayon (2025) notes that policy directives frequently lack mechanisms that encourage cooperation between general and special education professionals, resulting in fragmented implementation. These systemic inconsistencies contribute to the persistence of professional boundaries that hinder inclusive practice.

The structure of teacher education programs also plays a crucial role in shaping professional norms. Carvajal et al. (2025) argue that traditional teacher education curricula in the Philippines tend to maintain separate tracks for general and special education, thereby reinforcing distinct professional identities and limiting opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. Kilag et al. (2025) further highlight that the current state of special education in the country reflects structural divisions in training and professional practice, which restrict the development of integrated inclusive teaching competencies.

Professional development initiatives have been identified as potential mechanisms for addressing professional separation, yet challenges remain in their implementation. Rivera et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of expanding access to in-service training and teacher professional development programs to strengthen inclusive competencies among educators. MOON (2023) also established that teacher readiness significantly influences teaching performance in inclusive settings, underscoring the need for continuous professional learning opportunities. However, uneven participation and limited access to such programs continue to constrain efforts to build collaborative professional cultures.

International and regional studies provide further insight into the persistence of professional separation in inclusive education. Faragher et al. (2021) and Arias et al. (2023) observed similar patterns across Asian educational systems, where institutional structures and teacher preparation models often reinforce distinctions between general and special education roles. Floranza (2025) likewise found that both developed and developing countries experience challenges in promoting collaborative teaching practices due to entrenched professional boundaries. These comparative findings suggest that professional separation is not unique to the Philippine context but reflects broader systemic patterns in inclusive education implementation.

Beyond structural and institutional factors, the literature also emphasizes the need to reconceptualize teacher roles and professional identities to support inclusive practice. Raguindin and Ping (2025) identified key competencies required for Filipino teachers to effectively implement inclusive education, including collaboration, adaptability, and learner-centered pedagogy.

Miramón et al. (2024) further highlight the importance of teacher leadership in fostering inclusive school cultures, while Robinson-Pant (2020) argues for a broader understanding of inclusion that extends beyond institutional systems to encompass social and cultural dimensions of education. Collectively, these perspectives suggest that addressing the norms of professional separation requires systemic reforms in teacher education, professional development, and institutional culture to promote shared responsibility and collaborative practice in inclusive education.

### **The Impact of Resource Constraints**

Resource constraints significantly influence the implementation of inclusive education and contribute to the continued separation between general and special education systems. In the Philippines, funding for Special Education (SPED) programs is often allocated separately from general education budgets, creating institutional arrangements that unintentionally reinforce professional and structural divisions.

Rather than promoting integrated reforms, this funding structure frequently results in “SPED-only” initiatives, limiting opportunities for collaboration and shared responsibility among educators. Consequently, resource allocation practices play a crucial role in sustaining systemic inequalities within teacher education and classroom implementation.

Research consistently identifies insufficient funding, limited instructional materials, and inadequate infrastructure as major barriers to inclusive education. Dayso et al. (2025) reported that teachers face persistent challenges related to overcrowded classrooms, lack of assistive technologies, and insufficient teaching resources, which hinder their ability to support diverse learners effectively. Similarly, Marohombsar et al. (2026) found that public school teachers encounter structural limitations that restrict the full implementation of inclusive practices, emphasizing the need for increased institutional support and resource provision.

Limited resources also affect teacher preparedness and professional competence in inclusive education. Alcosero et al. (2023) found that regular teachers often lack adequate training and instructional support due to resource limitations within teacher education programs. Masongsong et al. (2023) further observed that the level of teacher training significantly influences educators' sense of efficacy in implementing inclusive practices, suggesting that insufficient funding for professional development directly impacts teaching quality. These findings indicate that resource constraints not only affect classroom implementation but also shape teacher confidence and instructional effectiveness.

The allocation of resources within education reform systems further influences the quality of teacher preparation and program outcomes. Olvido et al. (2024) highlighted concerns regarding the quality of graduates from teacher education institutions, noting that institutional limitations, including inadequate training facilities and limited exposure to inclusive teaching practices, affect graduate readiness. Joong et al. (2019) similarly emphasized that the broader ecology of education reforms, including resource distribution and institutional capacity, shapes the success of reform initiatives and influences stakeholders' perceptions of educational change.

Resource constraints also intersect with issues of equity and access, particularly for marginalized groups. Cucio and Roldan (2020) examined inclusive education initiatives for indigenous learners and found that limited funding and infrastructure create barriers to equitable access to education. De Jesus (2019) further emphasized that inclusive education in developing contexts requires sustained investment in support systems, teacher preparation, and institutional capacity to ensure meaningful participation of all learners. These findings highlight how resource limitations disproportionately affect vulnerable populations and undermine inclusive education goals.

Regional and international studies reveal that resource challenges represent a widespread concern in inclusive education systems. Faragher et al. (2021) and Arias et al. (2023) documented similar patterns across Asian countries, where limited funding, inadequate training opportunities, and insufficient institutional support hinder the implementation of inclusive practices. These comparative findings suggest that while resource constraints are context-specific, they reflect broader structural challenges in aligning policy goals with institutional capacity.

Beyond financial resources, leadership and institutional support are critical in addressing resource-related barriers. Miramon et al. (2024) highlighted the role of teacher leadership in strengthening educational reforms and promoting collaborative practices within schools. Raguindin and Ping (2025) identified key competencies for inclusive education, including collaboration and adaptability, which require supportive institutional environments and access to appropriate resources. Robinson-Pant (2020) further argues that inclusive education must extend beyond structural reforms to address social and cultural factors that influence resource distribution and access.

The literature demonstrates that resource constraints significantly shape the implementation of inclusive education by reinforcing structural separation, limiting teacher preparedness, and restricting equitable access to learning opportunities. Paguirigan (2020) noted that teachers' perceptions of inclusion are strongly influenced by the availability of institutional support and resources, emphasizing the need for comprehensive investment in inclusive education systems. Addressing these challenges requires integrated funding mechanisms, sustained professional development initiatives, and strengthened institutional capacity to support inclusive practices. Without adequate and strategically allocated resources, inclusive education reforms risk remaining fragmented and ineffective in achieving their intended goals.

### **Bridging Parallel Tracks in Philippine Teacher Education**

The synthesis indicates that the teacher education system in the Philippines operates on parallel tracks, where general education and special education continue to function as distinct domains despite policy efforts toward inclusion. Similar to the United States system described by Blanton et al. (2018), the Philippine context demonstrates structural

divisions in teacher preparation that reinforce separate professional pathways. These parallel systems limit opportunities for collaboration and hinder the development of comprehensive inclusive competencies among future educators, thereby affecting the effectiveness of inclusive education reforms.

Recent educational reforms have intensified accountability mechanisms within teacher education, particularly through the implementation of the K–12 curriculum and the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). While these reforms aim to enhance teacher quality and professional competencies, evidence suggests that learners with disabilities remain marginalized in the evaluation of teacher education outcomes.

Malbas et al. (2023) and Diano et al. (2023) note that the K–12 reform has strengthened curriculum standards and global competitiveness but has not fully addressed inclusive education competencies. Consequently, teacher education programs continue to prioritize general instructional performance over the development of inclusive teaching practices. The broader ecology of educational reform also shapes how accountability measures are implemented within teacher education institutions.

Joong et al. (2019) emphasize that reform initiatives operate within complex institutional environments influenced by leadership, policy alignment, and stakeholder perceptions. Similarly, Reyes (2023) highlights the importance of leadership, innovation, and partnerships in advancing educational reforms, suggesting that inclusive education requires coordinated institutional efforts rather than isolated policy mandates. These findings underscore the need to align accountability frameworks with inclusive education goals.

The synthesis further reveals that teacher preparation programs often inadequately equip educators with competencies necessary for inclusive teaching. Masongsong et al. (2023) found that teachers' levels of training significantly influence their sense of efficacy in inclusive classrooms, while Olvido et al. (2024) raised concerns about the readiness of graduates from teacher education institutions to address diverse learner needs. Marohombsar et al. (2026) also reported persistent challenges among public school teachers in implementing inclusive practices, indicating gaps in professional preparation that stem from fragmented teacher education curricula.

Issues of inclusion extend beyond disability to encompass broader concerns related to equity and diversity. Cucio and Roldan (2020) emphasize the importance of inclusive education programs for indigenous communities, highlighting the need for culturally responsive teacher preparation. Similarly, Tagaza and Manalansan (2025) stress the significance of integrating gender and cultural perspectives into educational programs, while Gadaza et al. (2025) argue that teacher education curricula should incorporate cultural heritage to foster inclusive and contextually relevant teaching practices. These perspectives support the need for a comprehensive and socially responsive framework for teacher education.

Given these challenges, the meta-aggregation identifies dual certification—preparing teachers in both general and special education—as a viable strategy for bridging the structural divide in teacher preparation. This approach promotes interdisciplinary competencies and encourages shared responsibility for diverse learners. Raguindin and Ping (2025) identified collaboration, adaptability, and learner-centered pedagogy as key competencies for inclusive education, which dual certification programs could effectively cultivate. However, implementing such reforms requires systemic changes in curriculum design and institutional structures. International evidence also supports the importance of comprehensive teacher professional development for inclusive education.

Ahmed et al. (2022) highlight significant gaps in disability-focused teacher training across low- and middle-income Asia-Pacific countries, emphasizing the need for sustained professional development initiatives. Arias et al. (2023) similarly observed that many Asian education systems face challenges in integrating inclusive competencies into teacher education programs. Khine and Liu (2022) further argue that teacher education globally is at a crossroads, requiring innovative approaches to address evolving educational demands and promote inclusive practices.

Thus, addressing the divide between general and special education requires a fundamental re-envisioning of teacher education curricula rather than merely adding isolated SPED courses. Robinson-Pant (2020) argues that inclusive education must move beyond technical reforms toward a broader transformation of educational values and systems. Paguirigan (2020) also emphasizes that teachers' perceptions of inclusion are shaped by institutional support and

professional preparation, highlighting the importance of comprehensive reform. Therefore, bridging parallel tracks in teacher education necessitates integrated curricular frameworks, strengthened professional development, and a holistic commitment to equity and inclusion in educational practice.

### Conclusions:

The findings of this meta-aggregative study highlight the urgent need for systemic reforms to strengthen inclusive teacher education in the Philippines. The synthesis reveals persistent structural divisions between general and special education preparation, reinforcing the need for coordinated policy implementation, curriculum transformation, and institutional collaboration. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that aligns standards, promotes shared leadership, and advances a broader equity-driven framework for teacher education.

First, unified professional standards are essential to ensure coherence between national policy and teacher preparation programs. Greater collaboration between the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is necessary to align teacher education curricula with the competencies required for inclusive education. The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers should be more explicitly connected to inclusive teaching practices, including differentiated instruction, learner-centered pedagogy, and support for students with diverse needs. Strengthening policy alignment can help bridge the gap between pre-service preparation and classroom realities, ensuring that teachers are adequately equipped to support all learners.

Second, shared leadership and institutional collaboration should be promoted within teacher education programs. Future teacher education grants and development initiatives should require cooperative leadership across general and special education departments to dismantle entrenched norms of professional separation. Collaborative program design, joint research initiatives, and interdisciplinary training models can foster shared responsibility for inclusive education and encourage the integration of diverse pedagogical perspectives. Such collaborative structures can strengthen institutional capacity and promote sustainable inclusive practices.

Lastly, teacher education must adopt a comprehensive equity agenda that moves beyond viewing disability as a separate category of concern. Instead, programs should embrace a social justice framework that recognizes the intersecting dimensions of diversity, including culture, language, gender, socioeconomic status, and learning differences. By embedding equity and inclusion as foundational principles in teacher education, institutions can prepare educators to respond effectively to diverse classroom contexts. Ultimately, advancing inclusive teacher education in the Philippines requires coordinated policy action, systemic curriculum reform, and a sustained commitment to educational equity for all learners.

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