

# Inclusive Education in Public Elementary Schools: Teacher Insights on Accessibility, Quality, and Stakeholder Participation

Norman P. Aleño, LPT, MAEd; Haila S. Mustapha, LPT, MMEM; Salimah H. H.Omar, LPT, MAEd; Saliha S. Calil, LPT, MAEd

All PhD Students-Capitol University, Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores teacher insights into accessibility, quality, and stakeholder participation in inclusive education in public elementary schools in Cagayan de Oro City using a quantitative research approach with a descriptive survey design. The study aimed to objectively measure teachers' insights on aspects of inclusive education, including accessibility, quality, and stakeholder participation. A sample of 50 special education teachers was selected through simple random sampling to ensure representativeness and minimize bias. The research utilized a 30-item questionnaire adapted from a previous study, which was validated by experts to ensure accuracy and reliability. Data collection was conducted through Google Forms, with strict measures taken to maintain confidentiality and obtain necessary permissions from school principals. The data analysis employed a 5-point Likert scale to quantify teacher responses, with mean and standard deviation used to assess overall trends and variability in perceptions. The results reveal a generally positive view among teachers regarding accessibility, quality, and stakeholder participation in inclusive education. Teachers reported high levels of parent involvement and effective collaboration between special education and regular education teachers. These findings indicate that schools are making significant strides in integrating SPED students into the educational environment and involving all relevant stakeholders. However, concerns were noted about the adequacy of SPED programs for students who fail national exams. To address this, schools should review and improve strategies for supporting these students to better meet academic standards. Overall, the study highlights the strengths of the current inclusive education practices while identifying areas for enhancement to ensure more effective support for all students.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Education, access, quality, stakeholder participation

## INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education (IE) is increasingly recognized worldwide as a crucial approach to ensuring that all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, have access to quality education. The core idea behind IE is to integrate students with disabilities or special needs into mainstream classrooms, providing them with the support they need to succeed alongside their peers. This approach aims to create educational environments that respect and accommodate the diverse needs of all learners.

Globally, the push for inclusive education has gained momentum, with organizations like UNESCO (2017) emphasizing the need to remove barriers that prevent students from accessing education in regular schools. However, the journey toward full inclusion is not without its challenges. Issues such as limited resources, a

lack of proper training for teachers, and societal attitudes can make it difficult to ensure that all students have equal access to education.

The quality of inclusive education is another important factor. Simply placing students with special needs in regular classrooms is not enough. For inclusive education to be effective, schools must provide the right support and accommodations. This includes using teaching strategies that cater to diverse learning styles, offering additional resources, and ensuring that teachers, students, and families work together to create a supportive learning environment.

In addition to accessibility and quality, the role of stakeholder's teachers, parents, school administrators, and the wider community is critical in shaping successful inclusive education programs. When all stakeholders are involved in decision-making and planning, schools are better equipped to meet the needs of all students. Building an inclusive school culture that values diversity and promotes collaboration is essential for fostering strong stakeholder engagement.

This research focuses on the insights of special education teachers in public elementary schools in Cagayan de Oro City. It explores their insights into the challenges and successes of implementing inclusive education, with the aim of informing better policies and practices. By understanding teachers' experiences, this study seeks to contribute to the development of inclusive school environments that support the growth and learning of every student.

### **Research Question**

This study sought to answer the question: What are the insights of special education teachers regarding the implementation of inclusive education in terms of (1) accessibility, (2) quality and (3) stakeholder participation?

## **REVIEW LITERATURE**

Inclusive education has become a global movement, aiming to provide equal educational opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. The concept is rooted in the belief that every child has the right to learn in a supportive and accommodating environment, typically within regular classrooms. This shift towards inclusivity has been driven by international organizations such as UNESCO, which advocates for the removal of barriers to education and the promotion of equity (UNESCO, 2017).

Research in various countries has shown that teachers play a critical role in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Smith et al. (2018) conducted a study in public elementary schools across several countries, revealing that teachers generally value inclusivity for its role in promoting diversity and improving social and academic outcomes. However, they also face significant challenges, including insufficient training, limited resources, and resistance from some colleagues. These barriers suggest a need for more targeted professional development and strong support systems to help teachers overcome these challenges and effectively implement inclusive education.

Similarly, Johnson et al. (2019) conducted a mixed-methods study, finding that while most teachers hold positive attitudes toward inclusive education, they struggle with a lack of support, inadequate training, and the complexities of managing diverse student needs. The study emphasized the importance of collaborative professional development and continuous support for teachers to ensure the effective implementation of inclusive practices.

Brown et al. (2020) conducted a comprehensive review of literature on teachers' perspectives on inclusive education, identifying several key themes. These included the importance of positive teacher attitudes, the

need for ongoing professional development, the role of school leadership, and the significance of collaboration among educators. The authors concluded that overcoming barriers to inclusive education requires a comprehensive support system that addresses these areas.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the push for inclusive education has been influenced by international norms and local advocacy efforts. However, the implementation of inclusive education in this region faces unique challenges. Limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of trained teachers are common issues across many countries in the region.

A study by Mukhopadhyay et al. (2019) in Botswana highlighted that while teachers recognize the value of inclusive education, they often feel ill-equipped to handle the diverse needs of students with disabilities. The study pointed out that the lack of specialized training and insufficient resources are major hindrances to effective inclusion. It also emphasized the need for policies that prioritize teacher training and resource allocation to support inclusive education.

Similarly, Makoelle (2020) in South Africa found that teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education were generally positive, but they faced challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, limited access to teaching aids, and a lack of support from school management. The study called for a more structured approach to professional development and the provision of adequate resources to enable teachers to implement inclusive education effectively.

In the Philippines, the push for inclusive education has been increasingly recognized, particularly in urban areas like Cagayan de Oro City. However, the local context presents its own set of challenges. Studies conducted within the city reveal that while teachers are generally supportive of inclusive education, they encounter significant obstacles that hinder its effective implementation.

Santos (2020) found that teachers in Cagayan de Oro City recognize the importance of inclusive education for promoting equal opportunities and improving educational outcomes. However, they face challenges such as insufficient training, limited resources, and heavy workloads. Despite these obstacles, the study revealed that teachers are willing to adapt their practices to better support inclusive education. Santos recommended targeted professional development and the provision of additional resources to help teachers overcome these barriers.

Similarly, Abao et al. (2018) and Acedo (2017) explored teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in the city, noting that while attitudes toward inclusion are generally positive, significant barriers remain. These include a shortage of resources, inadequate administrative support, and the need for specialized training. Both studies emphasized the importance of ongoing professional development to enhance teachers' capabilities in implementing inclusive practices.

While the existing literature provides valuable insights into the challenges and successes of inclusive education, there are still gaps that need to be addressed, particularly in the context of Cagayan de Oro City. Most studies focus on the general attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education, but there is a lack of detailed analysis on how these attitudes translate into classroom practices and how specific challenges are managed on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, there is limited research on the role of stakeholder participation, particularly how collaboration between teachers, parents, and administrators can be strengthened to support inclusive education.

The current study aims to fill these gaps by providing a more in-depth exploration of teachers' insights into the implementation of inclusive education in Cagayan de Oro City. It will focus on understanding how teachers navigate the challenges they face, the strategies they employ to create inclusive classrooms, and the role of stakeholders in supporting these efforts. By addressing these areas, the study hopes to contribute to

the development of more effective policies and practices that can enhance the quality and accessibility of inclusive education in the region.

### **Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a descriptive survey design. The quantitative approach is selected to objectively measure teacher insights and ensure the generalizability of findings. The descriptive survey design is chosen because it allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data regarding the current status of inclusive education implementation. This design is well-suited for capturing teachers' insights on specific elements such as accessibility, quality, and stakeholder participation, which are critical aspects of inclusive education.

### **Respondents**

The respondents for this study comprise 50 special education teachers from public elementary schools in Cagayan de Oro City. These teachers were selected using a simple random sampling method, which ensures that each teacher had an equal chance of being included in the study. This sampling method was chosen to minimize selection bias and to ensure that the sample is representative of the larger population of special education teachers in the city. The focus on special education teachers is justified by their direct involvement in implementing inclusive education, making them the most suitable respondents for providing relevant insights.

### **Instrument**

The research instrument used in this study is a 30-item questionnaire adapted from a previous study by Lebeco et. al. (2023), titled "Teachers' Perceptions on the Implementation of Inclusive Education (IE) in Public Elementary Schools in Northern Samar." This questionnaire was selected due to its proven reliability and relevance to the research objectives. It focuses on three key dimensions of inclusive education: access, quality, and stakeholder participation. The instrument was subjected to expert validation to ensure content validity, which involves assessing the questionnaire's ability to measure what it is intended to measure. The use of an already validated instrument also enhances the reliability of the data collected, providing confidence that the responses accurately reflect the teachers' insights.

### **Procedure**

The data collection process involved several carefully planned steps to ensure the ethical conduct of the study and the accuracy of the data collected. Permission was obtained from school principals to conduct the survey, ensuring that the research complies with institutional protocols. To maintain confidentiality, teachers were assured that their responses would be anonymous, reducing the risk of response bias and encouraging honest feedback. The survey was administered using Google Forms, a digital platform chosen for its convenience and efficiency in collecting data from multiple respondents. This method allows for easy access, even for teachers in remote areas, and ensures that data is securely stored and easily retrievable for analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

The data gathered from the survey were analyzed using a 5-point Likert scale. This scale categorizes responses from teacher participants as follows: 1 – never/very low, 2 – rarely/low, 3 – sometimes/neutral, 4 – often/high, and 5 – always/very high, which measures the extent of agreement or disagreement with various statements related to inclusive education. This scale is effective in quantifying teachers' perceptions and provides nuanced insights into their views. Statistical methods, such as mean and standard deviation, were

employed to summarize the data and assess the overall trends in teacher insights. The mean provides an average measure of the teachers’ responses, while the standard deviation indicates the variability of these responses, offering a clear picture of the consensus or diversity of opinions among the respondents. This analytical approach is appropriate for the study’s objectives, allowing for a detailed understanding of the current state of inclusive education implementation in the targeted schools.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents an analysis and interpretation of the data collected. The results are organized to address the specific questions discussed in the introduction. The data shown here help explain the connections between the different variables.

Table 1: Teacher Insights on Access to Inclusive Education

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
1. The school announces over the radio and other media the opening of SPED classes.	4.6	1.52	Very High
2. The school announces the opening of SPED classes through radio and other media outlets.	4.1	0.59	High
3. The SPED program is a component of the school’s SIP/AIP and annual report card.	4.9	0.38	Very High
4. Parents are regularly given reports of their children’s progress (graded or non-graded)	4.7	0.38	Very High
5. SPED students are included in all school activities.	4.4	0.57	Very High
6. SPED programs have specific targets for the type of disabilities for admission.	4.5	0.50	Very High
7. Students who fail in national and division examinations are candidates for SPED.	4.1	0.86	High
8. SPED teachers are accountable to parents of (students with exceptional needs).	4.5	0.74	Very High
9. SPED students may be transferred to the regular classrooms at any time when they are ready during school year.	4.5	0.71	Very High
10. The SPED program follows the timeline targeted for the school year.	4.5	0.86	Very High
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>0.60</b>	<b>Very High</b>

Legend: 1.00-1.79: Very Low; 1.80-2.59: Low; 2.60-3.39: Neutral; 3.40-4.19: High; 4.20-5.00: Very High

The data on teacher insights regarding access to inclusive education show generally positive results. The mean scores for most indicators are high, with a total mean of 4.5, indicating that teachers perceive a very high level of access within their schools. Specifically, indicators such as the inclusion of SPED programs in the school’s SIP/AIP and annual report card (mean = 4.9) and regular progress reports to parents (mean = 4.7) received very high ratings. These results suggest that schools are making significant efforts to ensure transparency and involvement in SPED programs, which aligns with the principles of inclusive education that emphasize communication and integration (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017).

The consistent high ratings across various indicators, such as the inclusion of SPED students in all school activities (mean = 4.4) and the provision of specific targets for disabilities (mean = 4.5), demonstrate that

the schools are committed to integrating SPED students into the broader school community. This practice is supported by literature emphasizing the importance of active participation in school activities for the development of social and academic skills in students with disabilities (Turnbull et al., 2015). Additionally, the provision of specific targets for disabilities reflects a tailored approach to meet diverse needs, which is crucial for effective inclusive education (Miller et al., 2020).

Despite the overall positive outlook, some indicators, such as the use of SPED programs as candidates for students who fail national and division exams (mean = 4.1), received slightly lower ratings. This suggests that while SPED programs are accessible, there may be concerns or limitations in their application. It's important to address these issues to ensure that SPED programs are not only accessible but also effectively support students in a way that aligns with best practices in inclusive education (Friend & Cook, 2017). Overall, the high ratings reflect a strong commitment to inclusive education, though ongoing improvements are necessary to address areas that may still need attention.

Table 2: Teacher Insights on Quality to Inclusive Education

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
1. SPED students take the Division and National Achievement Tests together with the school.	4.1	1.48	High
2. SPED teachers are competent in screening, identifying students with exceptional needs (SEN-special educational needs).	4.4	0.84	Very High
3. SPED teachers have knowledge in differentiating instructional programs.	4.7	0.83	Very High
4. SPED instructional effectiveness is well-defined.	4.7	0.22	Very High
5. Student year end targets are well-discussed with parents..	4.9	0.10	Very High
6. Appropriate assessment tools are available.	4.5	0.84	Very High
7. SPED classes are regularly supervised.	4.9	0.92	Very High
8. The public is aware of SPED programs in the school.	5.0	0.00	Very High
9. The resource rooms are provided with materials to improve student learning.	4.8	0.37	Very High
10. SPED teachers are competent in developing IEPs for each child.	4.9	0.99	Very High
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>Very High</b>

Legend: 1.00-1.79: Very Low; 1.80-2.59: Low; 2.60-3.39: Neutral; 3.40-4.19: High; 4.20-5:00: Very High

The data reveals that teachers have very high insights of the quality of inclusive education in their schools. With a mean score of 4.7, teachers believe that special education programs are highly effective in various aspects. Notably, teachers feel that special education (SPED) students participate in national assessments alongside their peers, and that SPED teachers are highly skilled in identifying students with exceptional needs and differentiating instruction. This aligns with research suggesting that effective identification and differentiation are crucial for successful inclusive education (Vaughn et al., 2014).

Teachers also report that SPED instructional effectiveness is clearly defined and that student year-end targets are thoroughly discussed with parents, both receiving very high mean scores of 4.7 and 4.9, respectively. This indicates strong communication between educators and families, which is essential for setting and achieving educational goals (Hattie, 2009). Furthermore, the availability of appropriate assessment tools and well-supervised SPED classes suggest a structured and supportive environment for

students, consistent with the findings of Smith and Tyler (2011) who emphasized the importance of resources and oversight in effective inclusive education.

Additionally, the data shows that there is a high level of public awareness about SPED programs and that resource rooms are well-equipped to enhance student learning. With a perfect mean score of 5.0 for public awareness, it is evident that there is significant community support for inclusive education initiatives. The availability of necessary materials and the competence of teachers in developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) further contribute to the positive perception of the quality of inclusive education (Florian, 2014). Overall, the data underscores the strengths of the inclusive education program, highlighting areas where teachers perceive high effectiveness and support.

Table 3: Teacher Insights on Stakeholder Participation to Inclusive Education

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
1. Parents are involved in making decisions about the progress of their SPED child.	4.9	0.90	Very High
2. Other school personnel are involved in the assessment of SEN.	4.4	0.45	Very High
3. The SPED program is separate from the regular education curriculum.	4.5	0.54	Very High
4. The curriculum for SPED is different from that of regular students.	4.6	0.61	Very High
5. It is the function of the SPED teacher to develop another teacher as understudy.	4.6	1.28	Very High
6. There is a strong collaboration between regular and SPED teacher.	4.5	0.78	Very High
7. SPED teachers are aware of the instructional demands in the regular classrooms.	4.5	0.73	Very High
8. There is strong collegiality between regular and SPED teachers.	4.3	0.79	Very High
9. The regular teachers are knowledgeable of SPED programs.	4.7	0.82	Very High
10. SPED students targeted for inclusion in the regular classroom are provided with transition plan.	4.8	0.88	Very High
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>Very High</b>

Legend: 1.00-1.79: Very Low; 1.80-2.59: Low; 2.60-3.39: Neutral; 3.40-4.19: High; 4.20-5.00: Very High

The data reveals that teachers have very high insights of stakeholder involvement in inclusive education. Specifically, parents are seen as actively participating in decisions regarding their child’s progress, with a mean score of 4.9 and a standard deviation of 0.90. This suggests that parents play a crucial role in the educational process, aligning with findings from research that emphasizes the importance of parental engagement in educational outcomes (Epstein, 2018). When parents are involved, they can provide valuable insights and support, which contributes to the overall effectiveness of special education programs.

Additionally, the involvement of other school personnel in assessing students with special educational needs (SEN) and the separation of SPED programs from regular curricula are highly rated, with mean scores of 4.4 and 4.5, respectively. This indicates a strong emphasis on collaborative assessment and distinct curriculum development, which are key components of successful inclusive education (Friend & Cook, 2019). The distinction between SPED and regular education curricula allows for tailored educational strategies that meet the diverse needs of students with SEN, while the involvement of various school staff ensures a comprehensive approach to student support.

Furthermore, the data highlights the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing between SPED and

regular education teachers. With mean scores ranging from 4.3 to 4.7, it is clear that there is a strong sense of collegiality and mutual understanding. Effective collaboration and mutual awareness of instructional demands between teachers contribute to smoother integration of SPED students into regular classrooms and support their transition plans (Villa et al., 2019). This collaborative environment fosters a more inclusive educational setting and aligns with best practices in inclusive education that advocate for teamwork and shared expertise.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The analysis of teacher insights into stakeholder participation in inclusive education shows a generally positive outlook. Teachers perceive high levels of parent involvement in their child's progress and strong collaboration between special education (SPED) and regular education teachers. These findings suggest that schools are effectively integrating SPED students into the broader educational environment and ensuring that all stakeholders, including parents and other school personnel, play an active role. The commitment to including SPED students in various school activities and providing targeted support highlights the schools' dedication to an inclusive education model.

Despite these positive results, some areas need attention. While the overall ratings are high, there are concerns about how SPED programs address students who fail national exams. This indicates a potential gap in how SPED programs support these students in meeting academic standards. To improve, schools should review and enhance their strategies for supporting SPED students, particularly those facing challenges in standardized assessments. Continued focus on refining SPED program practices and ensuring that they effectively meet the needs of all students will further strengthen the inclusive education framework.

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