Leadership for Inclusion: A Qualitative Content Analysis of Collaboration with Teachers, Families, And Communities

[1]Mae Jean M. Matulac, [2]Joel T. Aclao

[1]Student, Northwestern Mindanao State College of Science and Technology Labuyo, Tangub City, Philippines

[2]Faculty Northwestern Mindanao State College of Science and Technology Labuyo, Tangub City, Philippines

ABSTRACT

Cooperation between teachers, families, and communities is a well-known platform of inclusive education, but the representation of it in policy and leadership documents often demonstrates a disconnect between the symbolic and the real worlds. The current research investigated collaboration within the frames of publicly available online resources concerning leadership to be included. The research had four aims including attempting to conceptualize collaboration, emphasizing practices that are overemphasized or underemphasized, evaluating the level of emphasizing collaboration symbolically and practically, and exploring issues that impede collaboration and how inclusive leadership is relevant. A qualitative content analysis of the data was performed with the help of the thematic coding to determine recurrent patterns and tensions according to the Bowen document analysis framework. The results show that the idea of collaboration is always placed at the top in terms of the inclusive leadership but often articulated in the form of aspirational words instead of being implemented in the form of sustainable structures and accountability systems. There is a focus on teacher collaboration especially in professional learning communities and mentoring, but little to no family or community partnerships which are predominantly event-driven. The primary barriers are the unavailability of resources, work overload among the teachers, the absence of training, cultural stigma and poor accountability mechanisms. Such issues are addressed through inclusive leadership by institutionalizing teamwork, strengthening partnerships, building professional capacity, and promoting culturally responsive practices.

Keywords: Inclusive leadership; Collaboration; Teacher professional learning communities; Family and community engagement; Educational policy; Equity in education; Culturally responsive practices

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has been a growing concern around the world as one of the requirements necessary to achieve equitable and quality education opportunities to every learner (UNESCO, 2024). The key focus of this agenda is efficient educational leadership because effective leaders are not only expected to run schools but also to foster collaborative learning conditions that involve teachers, families, and communities in collective accountability to ensure learning among students (Day et al., 2020). In spite of this focus, it has always been found in research that collaborative practices are scattered and uneven within systems.

The results of the massive international surveys show that only a quarter of teachers all over the world engage in collaborative professional learning at least once a month, and the family and community engagement in the school decision-making process is minimal (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2024). This disparity is especially alarming in the light of the increasing demands of education systems. UNESCO (2025) predicts that the global need of 44 million more primary and secondary teachers will emerge by 2030, and it is known that teacher retention is strictly linked to positive working conditions and powerful professional networks.

Concurrently, the situation of teachers becomes riskier; the results of recent meta-analyses indicate that the levels of burnout are close to 50% of the population after the COVID-19 pandemic, and the lack of professional support is mentioned as one of the contributing factors (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2023). Preparation programs in

leadership, however, tend to weaken the role of collaboration by emphasizing more on administrative and instructional roles and disregarding the relational and inclusive aspects of leadership (UNESCO, 2024).

This under focus causes school leaders to be unprepared to build lasting relationships with teachers, families and communities. Notably, this study is in line with Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations especially SDG 4: Quality Education, which requires inclusive and equitable education and SDG10: Reduced Inequalities, which implies that participatory practices are needed to close gaps among different stakeholders. Through enhancing the partnership with inclusive leadership, schools can not only help to improve the outcomes of education but also to enhance the global objectives of equity, social cohesion, and sustainable development.

To this effect, the proposed study will use a Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) of the most accessible online documents, such as leadership models and policy documents, to explore how the problem of lack of collaboration is framed and determine whether they are made out to be symbolic promises or action plans. In this way, the research will also help advance the research on leadership to include more and provide information on how to develop leadership, policies, and practices at the school level to enhance collaboration and advance inclusive education.

Research Questions

The questions that guide the research are as follows:

1. How is collaboration with teachers, families, and communities framed in publicly available online educational documents related to leadership for inclusion?

2. What specific practices of collaboration (e.g., teacher professional communities, family engagement activities, community partnerships) are emphasized or underrepresented in these online materials?

3. To what extent do these online documents present collaboration as symbolic (values/statements) versus practical (policies, actions, and shared accountability)?

4. What challenges or barriers to effective collaboration are identified or implied in the documents, and how are these addressed in the context of inclusive leadership?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The collaboration between teachers, families, and communities is known to be a very important tool in furthering inclusive education especially in the context of inclusive leadership models. Collaboration is often introduced to policy documents and leadership as one of the basic principles, and it is explained in terms of the promises of diversity, shared responsibility, and inclusion. Nonetheless, a considerable portion of such framing is symbolic, but based on aspirational rhetoric, as opposed to institutionalized practice.

Zheng and Li (2025) argue that such symbolic framing has to be turned into sustainable practice through systems leadership, whereas Ainscow and Sandill (2010) further state that inclusive education needs organizational cultures where collaboration is structuralized and not rhetorically supported. This is indicative of the fact that despite the consistent emphasis on collaboration, its implementation is not necessarily done at the policy or governance level.

Professional learning communities (PLCs), mentoring, and peer inquiry has been well-researched as an effective means of teacher development, should they be supported and resource-based by school leadership. Wang and Dai (2024) validate meta-analysis that PLCs have a significant effect on teacher efficacy, and Makhmetova et al. (2025) claim that fragmented professional learning opportunities cannot produce significant effects in the long run when they are not incorporated into systemic structures.

On the other hand, family and community involvement was either underrepresented or compliance-based, in line with the Epstein (2024) emphasis of the fact that it takes decision-making authority to truly engage families, and van Laere and Warin (2025) assert that inclusive schools have to establish longer professional communities that use authentic family and community voices.

It has been argued that collaboration is an idealized value rather than a reality in practice, and that there are few systems of shared accountability, systems of monitoring, or actual action of policy. Keddie (2021) criticizes the common symbolic inclusion policies with no substantive reform, whereas Norwich (2022) emphasizes the multi-level models, which entail collaboration at policy, leadership, and classroom practice level.

The research addressing effective patterns of family and community interaction can offer valuable experiences as to how cooperation can transcend rhetoric. Evidence of community schools shows that an integrated service model, in which schools collaborate with health, social, and community agencies, is linked to higher student attendance, academic success, and family involvement in case of a stable financing (RAND Corporation, 2020; Learning Policy Institute, 2025).

According to OECD (2022), such systemic limitations of collaboration are workload and resource disparities, whereas Khalifa et al. (2016) note that culturally responsive school leadership can help eliminate stigma and build trust between various stakeholders.

The research on family-school collaboration also highlights the fact that effective collaboration presupposes the redistribution of power and acknowledgement of families as co-creators of educational practice. Empirical data indicates that schools that consider families in decision-making, i.e. school councils or co-design, are more likely to combat inequities and establish trust with the marginalized populations (Ishimaru et al., 2023; Pushor and Amendt, 2022).

The symbolic commitments are defined as the generalized language that fosters cooperation, inclusion, and collective responsibility that is mostly defined as ethical or moral imperatives. On the other hand, practical actions can be identified by clear leadership provision, time allocation, specific roles and mechanisms of monitoring. Because the studies indicate that the incorporation of the inclusive leadership works only once the practices of collaboration are established instead of being proclaimed as rhetorical (Ainscow, 2020).

The recent research on inclusive leadership indicates that the distributed and participatory leadership styles are especially useful in enhancing the teacher support, families and community partnerships. On the same note, Morrissey (2021) pointed out that inclusive leadership should be a combination of distributed, transformational, and instructional leaders to guarantee that not only are teachers, families, and communities involved, but that they take an active part in the decision-making process as well.

Research shows that although international and national models tend to advance the rhetorical goals of engaging with families, school-level advice is often not specific in terms of implementation, responsibility, and cultural responsiveness (OECD, 2022; UNESCO, 2024).

This paper confirms that inclusive leadership should emerge as an intermediary of impediments as well as a generator of genuine collaboration through the organization of alliances, developing the capacity of teachers, anchoring the accountability models, and advancing equity-informed, culturally respectful practices.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) will be used as the research design in this study with the Document Analysis Model proposed by Bowen (2009). QCA is a more systematic but less rigid method, which is used to analyze written texts and establish patterns, themes, and meanings in a text (Schreier, 2012). This process is reinforced through Bowen model which describes the sequence of steps, skimming, reading, interpreting, coding, and categorizing the content in order to extract the meaning. The application to online sources like policies, leadership models and school improvement plans will guarantee that the analysis will be transparent, rigorous and contextually accurate as well as fit the goals of investigation of collaboration in inclusive education leadership.

Research Environment

The digital and online environment is the research setting of the present study, as educational documents and reports become publicly available on the websites of international organizations, government agencies, and

academic institutions. Leadership frameworks, policy papers, and improvements plans that talk about working with teachers, families and communities could be found in sources like UNESCO, OECD, national education departments, and school websites. It is necessary to concentrate on this digital environment to have access to the latest, reliable, and globally applicable materials, and the study has to investigate the frames in which leadership towards inclusion and collaborative practices are laid in official and publicly available sources.

Sources of Data and Sampling

This research will use the digitally available and publicly accessible online sources that are connected with educational leadership, inclusion, and collaboration. These are policy documents, leadership models, school development proposals and international reports of reputable organizations like UNESCO, OECD, UNICEF, national education departments, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions. The selection of these sources is based on the fact that they offer authoritative and up-to-date information and represent the world and local outlooks of inclusive leadership and cooperation with teachers, families, and communities. The current study will employ purposive sampling a method that is suitable in document analysis because the researcher will include only relevant and credible materials. The following criteria will be used to select documents: (a) published in the past five years, (b) made publicly accessible in full-text online, (c) published by an organization or institution with a good reputation, and (d) reflecting directly on the topic of educational leadership, inclusion, or collaboration with the teachers, families, and communities. The sampling method would guarantee that the data sample is not only narrow but also accurate as well, thus making it possible to analyze the concept of collaboration in the framework of inclusive educational leadership in a meaningful way.

Research Instrument

The data collection tool in the proposed study will be a coding frame developed by the researcher with the assistance of AI-based text analysis tools and organized in accordance with the Document Analysis Model by Bowen (2009). Bowen highlights that the process of document analysis needs scientific skimming, reading, and interpreting followed by the content coding and thematic grouping to get meaning out of documents. Based on this model, the coding frame will involve teacher collaboration, family engagement, community partnerships, symbolic and practical collaboration, and leadership strategies to be included. The AI tools (ChatGPT, Gemini and Co-pilot) will assist in the scanning and clustering of the content, and the researcher will revise and validate the codes using manual review and guarantee the accuracy of the codes in the context. The correlation of the coding tool with the Bowen framework will guarantee that the analysis of the documents will be structured, rigorous, and credible, as well as combine the effectiveness of the AI-supported tools.

Research Tool

The key research instrument in this paper will be a coding frame developed by a researcher, which will be designed according to the Document Analysis Model created by Bowen (2009) and will be facilitated by AI-based text analysis software, e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini and Copilot. Categories and subcategories that will be incorporated in the coding frame will be based on the objectives of the study that will encompass teacher collaboration, family engagement, community partnerships, symbolic and practical collaboration, and leadership strategies used. AI solutions will help scan and cluster the text and define repeated terms and themes, whereas the researcher will use the coding frame to authenticate and interpret the findings. This guarantees the systematic rigor and contextual validity of the analysis of the framing of collaboration in online educational documents.

Data Collection

The data to be used in this research will be gathered in accordance with Bowen (2009) Document Analysis Model, which presupposes locating, selecting, and interpreting the appropriate documents. The author of the research will use publicly available online resources, including leadership frameworks, policy papers, school improvement plans, and reports of reputable organizations, including UNESCO, OECD, UNICEF, and national education departments. The data search will involve the use of specific keywords that will filter out the documents published within the past decade and are related to educational leadership and collaboration, excluding the outdated or non-credible information sources. After that, all chosen documents will be placed in a data source matrix and ready to be analyzed using AI-assisted qualitative content analysis.

Data Analysis

In this study, the application of the Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) will help to analyze data relying on the Document Analysis Model suggested by Bowen (2009). The researcher will then perform a skimming, reading and coding of the documents to extract the relevant content after collecting and organizing the documents. Data will be grouped into themes that will be interpreted by coding frame, which is aligned with the objectives of the study, including the collaboration between teachers, families, community partnerships, and symbolic and practical collaboration. The tools that will help to identify the patterns of words, clusters, and new themes will be AI-assisted (ChatGPT, Gemini and Copilot), and the researcher will verify and optimize these results in order to guarantee contextual accuracy. Lastly, the coded data will be synthesized to bring out recurring themes, gaps and implications to inclusive educational leadership.

Ethical Considerations

This research will be guided by the ethical principles of research although there will be no human subjects as it uses only the publicly available online documents. Given that the materials are already in the open-access, consent and confidentiality issues do not apply directly. Nevertheless, to prevent plagiarism and support academic integrity, the researcher will make sure that all the sources will be recognized with the help of correct citation and reference. Special attention will also be paid to the objective presentation of the data without misinterpretation and bias and use of the information exclusively on scholarly purposes only. Through such provisions, the study is transparent, credible, and ethically responsible when conducting research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Collaboration with teachers, families, and communities framed to leadership for inclusion

Table 1: Collaboration with teachers, families, and communities framed to leadership for inclusion

Theme	How Collaboration is Framed to Leadership for Inclusion
Collaboration as a Core Leadership Responsibility	Inclusion is framed as impossible without leaders institutionalizing teacher–family–community collaboration. Leaders are supposed to incorporate team work in governance, planning and day in day out practice.
Relational Trust and Shared Accountability	Leadership frames collaboration as relational: trust, reciprocity, and mutual accountability with teachers, families, and communities are emphasized.
Symbolic vs. Practical Collaboration	Leaders are judged on whether collaboration is symbolic (policies, events, rhetoric) or practical (sustained, embedded in teaching, curriculum, and decision-making).
Leaders as Mediators of Barriers	Collaboration is situated as such that it needs leadership to overcome systemic, cultural, and resource constraints, which act against participation.
Equity-Oriented and Inclusive Leadership	Collaboration is seen as a pathway to equity: leaders frame inclusive practices as valuing cultural diversity, addressing marginalization, and ensuring accessibility.

As the results indicate, the cooperation with teachers, families, and communities is always presented as a necessary role of inclusive leadership based on both structural (councils, professional learning communities, and policy frameworks) and relational (trust-building, shared accountability, and open communication) types of practices. This is to say that although a number of school systems have accepted collaboration as a value, its role in enhancing inclusion lies on the capacity of leaders to translate symbolic utterances into real and sustainable behaviors. In this regard, inclusive leadership is not just a vision-making maker but also a compromise between barriers, such as resource limitations and culture, that define the quality of collaboration. Wang et al. (2022) have discovered that schools that have inclusive leadership models highlight the existence of greater levels of teacher collaboration and family involvement, and these factors impacted the student participation and belonging positively. On the same note, Garbacz et al. (2020) established that with the support of school leaders, structured family-school partnerships had a considerable positive impact on the educational success of marginalized learners.

The interpretation of this theme provides significance to leave rhetoric confined to symbols and to provide

collaboration as a part of daily governance and teaching and learning. Recent research confirms that collaborative efforts are successful when leaders offer the structures that will allow them to make decisions collectively and share the ownership of inclusive education. An example is that Zheng and Li (2025) highlight that systems leadership enhances the inclusive results by harmonizing the policy with the instructional and community work, and relational trust is also demonstrated to be a powerful predictor of successful cooperation (University of Arkansas, 2025). In the same way, the evidence on professional learning communities has shown that teacher efficacy can only be promoted when the leaders take time, resources, and coherence in the initiation of such programs (Makhmetova et al., 2025; Wang and Dai, 2024). The implications are obvious: collaboration should be framed as a moral command and a structural requirement by the leaders to achieve inclusion.

This implies the inclusion of equity by making a choice of the family and community voice in the decision-making process, developing credibility among the stakeholders, and establishing sustainable systems by policy and monitoring structures. Inclusive leadership literature proves that these practices change the nature of collaboration to be not tokenistic, but transformative (Epstein, 2024; van Laere and Warin, 2025). This way, leaders are able to make collaboration a driver of equitable access, cultural responsiveness, and joint accountability in education.

Specific practices of collaboration are emphasized or underrepresented in these online materials

Table 2: Specific practices of collaboration are emphasized or underrepresented in these online materials

Theme / Practice Area	Practices Emphasized	Practices Underrepresented
Teacher Collaboration	Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), peer mentoring, shared lesson planning, leadership training, teacher-led inquiry.	Long-term co-teaching models, cross-school collaboration, interdisciplinary collaboration.
Family Involvement	Parent–teacher meetings, parent councils/PTA, home-based learning support, participation in school events.	Co-decision-making in curriculum/governance, consistent IEP collaboration, parental leadership roles.
Community Engagement	Partnerships with LGUs, NGOs, faith-based groups, and use of community cultural knowledge in learning.	Long-term resource-sharing agreements, systematic community advocacy, integration of community voices in governance.
Policy and Institutional Support	Creation of inclusion policies, training programs, diversity committees, professional development on equity.	Monitoring/evaluation systems, funding for sustained collaborative practices, long-term succession planning.
Communication Practices	Parent workshops, translation/interpretation services, use of online platforms for updates.	Two-way feedback mechanisms, culturally responsive dialogue, digital inclusion strategies for rural/low-resource settings.

The review of the online resources shows that there is an unequal focus on certain practices of collaboration. Teacher collaboration is often mentioned, especially in forms of professional learning communities (PLCs), mentoring, joint lesson planning and teacher-led inquiry whereas family involvement is outlined as parent-teacher conference, PTA association, and school event. Partnerships with LGUs, NGOs and cultural groups on short-term basis are observed in cases of community engagement and institutional backing is noticed in terms of inclusion policies, diversity committees and training programs. Nevertheless, stronger practice like cross-school or interdisciplinary cooperation, parental co-decision-making in curriculum, long-term agreement of resource-sharing, monitoring system and culturally responsive communication strategies are still underrepresented. Studies also show that distributed leadership frameworks improve partnership by enabling teachers to act as co-leaders in inclusive conducts. Leithwood et al. (2020) found that the issue of collaboration will become integrated into the routine school activities when teachers are included in decision-making, and they are not regarded as an extra burden.

These results indicate that cooperation is frequently organized at a superficial or symbolic level whereby

involvement is realized but not always translated into mutual authority and sustainable leadership. Recent articles go in line with this interpretation: Wang and Dai (2024) also stress that PLCs can only contribute to teacher efficacy when continuous and supported with sufficient resources and policy, whereas Makhmetova et al. (2025) conclude that professional learning is still disjointed when not systemically integrated. Equally, Epstein (2024) and van Laere and Warin (2025) suggest that family and community engagement, as much as it has been pushed, is at risk of being tokenism once it becomes a matter of attendance at events or consultation but without effective contribution to decision-making. Such a discrepancy between highlighted and underrepresented practices is indicative of a bigger problem of translating rhetorical commitments into practice and sustainability in forms of collaboration.

The implication on inclusive leadership is important. The leaders should be proactive in linking the symbolic at one extreme and the effective cooperation in the other extreme by institutionalizing structures of empowering families and communities in school leadership, and incorporation of accountability mechanisms to track cooperation results and communication strategies must be culturally and context-responsive. In addition, the long-term sustainability entails the development of professional capacity among teachers using interdisciplinary and cross-school networks coupled with the surmounting of the parental availability, scarcity of resources, and inequity within the system. Inclusive leadership can transform the shallow participation process to practices that can result in co-ownership of educational change by revisiting the perspective of collaboration as a structural and equity-based process.

Extent of Collaboration Framed as Symbolic vs. Practical in Online Documents

Table 3: Extent of Collaboration Framed as Symbolic vs. Practical in Online Documents

Collaboration Domain	Symbolic (Values / Statements)	Practical (Policies / Actions / Shared Accountability)	Extent / Balance
Leadership & Vision	Emphasis on "valuing diversity," "shared responsibility," and "inclusive leadership" in policy preambles and mission statements.	Some leaders establish diversity committees, integrate collaboration into school improvement plans, and initiate inclusive leadership training.	**More symbolic than practical** — many documents stop at vision statements with fewer concrete structural actions.
Teacher Collaboration	General claims about "professional growth," "teamwork," and "peer support."	Documented PLCs, mentoring, teacher-led inquiry, workshops, and peer observation in select cases.	**Moderately balanced** — symbolic framing is common, but several sources describe actual collaborative practices.
Family Engagement	Broad assertions that "parents are partners in education" or "parental support is vital."	Some cases mention PTAs, literacy workshops, and limited parent participation in IEPs or school activities.	**Mostly symbolic** — real decision-making roles for parents are rare and underdeveloped.
Community Partnerships	References to "community linkages" or "local support."	Examples include partnerships with LGUs, NGOs, and cultural groups for school projects or resource mobilization.	**More symbolic than practical** — practical efforts exist but are often project-based and unsustained.
Equity & Inclusion Practices	Recurrent rhetoric focus on equity, equity, and respect of cultural diversity.	Practical actions: translation services, professional development on cultural	**Symbolic-heavy** — practical practices are cited, but not consistently across documents.

		competence, inclusive curriculum practices.	
Accountability & Sustainability	Aspirations of "sustained collaboration" and "commitment" often repeated.	Few concrete systems for monitoring, evaluation, or resource allocation are presented.	**Predominantly symbolic** — accountability structures are weakly represented.

The results show that the collaboration in web documents is more symbolically than practically framed. The leadership and vision parts identify the values of diversity, shared responsibility, and inclusive leadership, but they often end with empty rhetorical commitments with no robust structure following up. Teacher collaboration is a bit more equal, with such practices as professional learning community (PLCs), mentoring, workshops existing, but family and community involvement is mostly symbolic, only participation in events or short-term projects with few instances of shared governance or joint decision-making. This indicates that there is an inconsistency between aspirational values and collaboration operationalism.

This disequilibrium indicates a bigger issue in inclusive education leadership: although inclusive principles are always recognized, they do not necessarily create local policies, monitoring systems, or maintain accountable structures. Studies affirm this conflict. Zheng and Li (2025) also note that systems leadership is needed to ensure the transition toward rhetorical inclusivity to embedded, systemic practices. Equally, the meta-analysis study conducted by Wang and Dai (2024) demonstrates that the effect of teacher collaboration is only effective when it is sufficiently resourced and institutionalized. In the meantime, Epstein (2024) and van Laere and Warin (2025) warn that the role of family and community engagement could turn tokenistic when it is perceived as participation attendance or consultation, but not active school governance.

The implication can be seen in the fact that inclusive leaders are essential in the process of closing the symbolic-practical gap. The leaders should go beyond inspirational language to entrench teamwork in the school improvement initiatives, resource deployment, and create accountability mechanisms that help maintain the partnerships. Tactical interventions like co-created IEPs, equity-based policies, and culturally responsive communication plans will be required so as to guarantee genuine cooperation. Inclusive leadership can also change symbolic commitments into substantial, sustainable and equity-driven action through structural and cultural embedding of collaboration that enhances the role of teachers, families and communities in education.

Challenges or barriers to effective collaboration identified and implied, and how they are addressed in the context of inclusive leadership

Table 4: Challenges or barriers to effective collaboration identified and implied, and how they are addressed in the context of inclusive leadership

Challenges / Barriers	Identified or Implied in Documents	How Addressed in Inclusive Leadership
Limited Parental Engagement	Parents often treated as "supporters" but with minimal role in decision-making; participation limited to compliance or school events.	Leaders foster parent capacity-building (workshops, literacy programs), create advisory councils, and open communication channels to deepen authentic involvement.
Resource Constraints	In rural and marginalized settings, schools do not have funding, facilities, technology, and materials used in instruction.	Leaders mobilize partnerships with LGUs, NGOs, and community groups; reallocate funds; encourage resource-sharing and donations to sustain inclusion.

Teacher Burnout and Teacher Workload.	There are heavy administrative workloads, huge class sizes, and conflicting duties that do not allow ample time to collaborate.	Leaders apply distributed leadership (delegation), establish Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and advocate policy changes to ease burdens.
Insufficient Training in Inclusive Practices	Lack of professional preparation in inclusive education, collaboration strategies, and cultural competence is common.	Leaders provide professional development, mentorship, coaching, and integrate inclusion into continuous learning plans.
Cultural and Attitudinal Barriers	Stigma toward disability, biases, and resistance to change persist among some teachers, parents, or communities.	Leaders model inclusive values, conduct awareness campaigns, and embed cultural responsiveness and equity into school culture.
Weak Accountability and Sustainability	Collaboration often framed in rhetoric without clear monitoring or long-term implementation systems.	Leaders institutionalize collaboration in policies, establish committees, and design monitoring/evaluation mechanisms for sustained practice.
Geographic Remote Location and Background Problems	The schools in the rural and remote areas experience the lack of infrastructure, shortage of teachers and high absenteeism.	Leaders adopt community-based approaches, home visits, local partnerships, and flexible, context-driven strategies to maintain collaboration.

The results show that the barriers that impede collaboration during inclusive leadership include low levels of parental involvement, lack of resources, excessive workloads of teachers, bad training, cultural stigma, poor accountability systems, and isolation of geographic locations. These impediments are frequently contained in the documents as latent factors why collaboration finds it hard to go past symbolic commitments into real and deep practice. As an example, parents are often referred to as partners, although the role they play is being compliance-only participants, whereas teacher states that they are overworked, and they have little time to devote to the collaborative effort. This is an indication of a consistent mismatch between the stated ideals of inclusivity and the institutional fact of learning situations.

 The factual meaning of these results is that inclusive collaboration needs a leadership that does not only express the inclusive values but also responds to the system and cultural factors restricting participation. Recent studies confirm this point of view: Zheng and Li (2025) stress the importance of systems leadership to align resources, accountability, and culture to maintain the state of inclusion, and Wang and Dai (2024) show that collaboration among teacher can only enhance efficacy in the case of sufficient time and institutional support. Likewise, Makhmetova et al. (2025) emphasize that long-term professional learning opportunities are suppressed by fragmented professional learning opportunities, which van Laere and Warin (2025) demonstrate to be alleviated by longer professional communities that make inclusive practices a common practice. Together in these studies, it is possible to note that barriers should not be perceived as single-facet problems but as systemic ones that have to be addressed through extensive leadership efforts.

The implication is also obvious: inclusive leadership should be proactive and equity-based to turn the obstacles into opportunities. This would include the integration of the idea of collaboration into school policy and government governance systems, mobilization of cross-sector partnership with LGUs, non-governmental organizations and community organizations to close gaps in resources, and continuous professional development to enhance teacher competence in inclusive methods. In addition, the leaders should promote culturally responsive behaviors that break stigma and promote genuine family and community voice in decision-making. Inclusive leadership can get beyond rhetoric to develop sustainable, meaningful, and equitable partnership that

can indeed ensure inclusive education by institutionalizing accountability mechanisms and a culture of shared responsibility.

FINDINGS

 The following part will provide the results of the research in accordance with the data gathered and processed.

1. Framing of Collaboration to Leadership for Inclusion. The collaboration with teachers, families, and communities is mainly presented in the documents as one of the central aspects of inclusive leadership, which is often described in the form of diversity, shared responsibility, and equity. Nonetheless, even though the framing gives a lot of focus on the significance of partnerships, most of the documents focus on collaboration at a rhetorical or vision-statement level, in contrast to fully integrating it in governance structures and accountability systems.

2. Specific Practices of Collaboration. The documents also lay more emphasis on teacher-focused practices such as professional learning community, mentoring and peer support practices in teachers as opposed to family and community partnerships. Parents are often involved through family involvement where parent-teacher meetings or school activities are common whereas community involvement is usually project based or temporary. Little used practices are parental co-decision-making, cross-school networks over time, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and long-term partnerships in the community. Collaboration will become integrated into the routine school activities when teachers are included in decision-making, and they are not regarded as an extra burden.

3. Symbolic versus Practical Collaboration. At higher levels of policy symbolic commitments are prevalent, and at the school level there are visible traces of practical actions, although not consistently. Cooperation is more frequently put in a form of symbolism where it is frequently cited that they have inclusive values, mission statements, and dedication to diversity. Practical actions, including policies, training programs, and collective accountability systems are not described as often and are usually aimed at teacher collaboration instead of family or community engagement. This implies the lack of correspondence between rhetorical commitments and the systematic nature of collaborative practice.

4. Challenges and barriers to effective collaboration. The documents refer or suggest a number of obstacles to successful cooperation, such as the lack of parental involvement, the shortage of resources, the workload of teachers, the lack of training, the stigma of a specific culture, the lack of responsibility, and isolation. Inclusive leadership is depicted to counter these barriers by organizing partnerships with local governments units (LGUs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), institutionalizing collaboration into policy, offering professional growth, facilitating cultures responsive to cultures, and encouraging trust-based school cultures.

CONCLUSION

The research finds that although working with teachers, families and communities is a well-known concept in educational documents as the foundation of inclusive leadership, it is approached more symbolically than practically, having values and commitments as its central focus rather than tangible actions and accountability measures. Professional learning communities and mentoring are the most substantial attention given to teacher collaboration, with the family and community relationship often being the underrepresented or only compliance-based relationship. Authentic collaboration is further impaired by barriers including resource limitation, excessive workload on teachers, insufficient training, cultural stigma, and poor sustainability structures. Nevertheless, the results also point to the possibility of inclusive leadership to reduce the gap between rhetoric and practice through entrenching collaboration into policies, mobilizing partnerships, building professional capacity, and advancing equity-oriented, culturally responsive strategies. Finally, fruitful cooperation entails leaders turning symbolic promises into viable actions that enable everyone to be a full-fledged stakeholder in comprehensive education.

Combined, the results and literature make it clear that teacher weak support and collaboration are not only the outcomes of personal resistance and/or capacity limitation but closely associated with leadership structure and policy implementation. Although policy documents are becoming more conscious of collaboration as a requirement of inclusion, the existence of symbolic commitments implies that more should be done to ensure a

better fit between leadership rhetoric and implementation policies. The educational leaders should thus not just go by compliance approaches but take an initiative in creating systems that will facilitate meaningful cooperation among all the stakeholder groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings and conclusions made following this study, a number of recommendations are made that could help correct the identified issues and improve the future practices.

For School Leaders. It is suggested that school leaders go beyond symbolic demonstrations of collaboration and institutionalize practice-based, sustainable models like professional learning communities, family advisory councils and community partnership models. They are expected to integrate teamwork in the school development schemes, distribute funds to facilitate inclusion, and provide a mechanism of accountability to make sure that partnerships are not meaningless and inequitable.

For Teachers. The teachers are also to participate in professional learning communities (PLC), peer mentoring, and lesson planning to support their practice and minimize professional isolation. They are advised to perceive collaboration as a source of professional development as well as a method of solving problems collectively and inclusive practice with the assistance of leadership and policy frameworks.

For Families and Communities. It must enable the families and the community members to stop being peripherally involved but rather being co-decisive in the schools. This will involve active involvement in a policy discussion, school governance committee and inclusion-driven programs. Building trust and shared responsibility between schools and their stakeholders can be achieved through strengthening culturally responsive communication strategies and community-driven projects.

For Policy Makers and Education Agencies. Agency and policymakers ought to come up with inclusive leadership models and policies that emphasize cooperation as a value and a practice. It involves sponsoring professional growth, requiring accountability mechanisms of family and community involvement, and sponsoring cross-sector partnerships to multiply resources of inclusion. The systemic barriers that need to also be addressed through policies include the teacher workload, rural isolation, and resource inequity to implement the same fairly across contexts.

For Future Researchers and Academics. This study can be extended through the work of researchers who focus on context-specific models of inclusive collaboration and evaluate the effects of leadership practices on student outcomes in the long term. The paper has also shown the possibility of using AI-assisted content analysis as a methodological tool that can be improved by future researchers through essential modifications and the implementation on bigger data sets or a more comparative study on international studies to further develop the sphere of inclusive education leadership.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

REFERENCES

1. Ainscow, M., & Sandill, A. (2010). Developing inclusive education systems: The role of organisational cultures and leadership. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 14(4), 401–416. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110802504903

2. Bengtsson, M. (2016). How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content analysis. NursingPlus Open, 2, 8–14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.001

3. Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. Qualitative Research Journal, 9(2), 27–40. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027

4. Day, C., Gu, Q., & Sammons, P. (2020). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: How successful school leaders use transformational and instructional strategies to make a difference. Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 48(6), 943–963. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220910438

5. Epstein, J. L. (2024). Lessons learned on design and structure [Slide deck]. Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center. https://ohiofamiliesengage.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Session-8_Joyce-Epstein.pdf

6. Garbacz, S. A., McDowall, P. S., Schaughency, E., Sheridan, S. M., & Welch, G. W. (2020). A multidimensional examination of parent involvement and student outcomes. School Psychology Review, 49(3), 278–293. https://doi.org/10.1080/2372966X.2020.1734010

7. Hickey, N., Flaherty, A., & Mannix McNamara, P. (2022). Distributed leadership: A scoping review mapping current empirical research. Societies, 12(1), 15. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc12010015

8. Hong, X., Li, Q., Wang, L., & Pang, Y. (2023). Linking distributed leadership with differentiated instruction in inclusive schools: The mediating roles of teacher leadership and professional competence. Behavioral Sciences, 13(2), 198. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13020198

9. Ishimaru, A. M., Acevedo, M., Solorzano, D., & Gonzalez, N. (2023). Outcomes of a virtual community of practice with community navigators aimed at fostering family–school–community partnerships. Social Sciences, 14(3), Article 162. https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/14/3/162

10. Keddie, A. (2021). The politics of inclusive education: A critical examination. Educational Review, 73(4), 453–467. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2019.1695090

11. Khalifa, M. A., Gooden, M. A., & Davis, J. E. (2016). Culturally responsive school leadership: A synthesis of the literature. Review of Educational Research, 86(4), 1272–1311. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316630383

12. Learning Policy Institute. (2025). How community schools improve outcomes. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org

13. Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. School Leadership & Management, 40(1), 5–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077

14. Makhmetova, Z., Karabassova, L., Zhakim, A., & Karinov, A. (2025). Exploring the effects of professional learning experiences on in-service teachers' growth: A systematic review of literature. Education Sciences, 15(2), 146. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15020146

15. Morrissey, B. (2021). Theorising leadership for inclusion in the Irish context: A triadic typology within a distributed ecosystem. International Journal of Leadership in Education, 24(3), 408–422. https://doi.org/10.1177/0892020620942507

16. Norwich, B. (2022). Inclusive education and systems change: The need for a multi-level framework. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 26(10), 1147–1163. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1853254

17. OECD. (2019). TALIS 2018 results (Volume II): Teachers and school leaders as valued professionals. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/19cf08df-en

18. OECD. (2022). Supporting teacher professional learning. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/6e10aeed-en

19. Ozamiz-Etxebarria, N., Berasategi, N., Idoiaga Mondragon, N., & Dosil Santamaria, M. (2023). Prevalence of burnout among teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review and meta-analysis. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 20(4), 3197. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20043197

20. Pushor, D., & Amendt, T. (2022). Leading for equity through parent engagement in schools. Leadership and Policy in Schools, 21(3), 439–456. https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2020.1854841

21. RAND Corporation. (2020). Illustrating the promise of community schools. https://www.rand.org

22. RAND Corporation. (2020). Illustrating the promise of community schools: An assessment of the impact of the New York City Community Schools Initiative. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3245.html

23. Schreier, M. (2012). Qualitative content analysis in practice. Sage Publications.

24. Tandfonline. (2024). Distributed leadership in Irish post-primary schools: Mapping the state of the art. Irish Educational Studies, 43(1), 88–105. https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2024.2359697

25. UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030. (2025). Global report on teachers: What you need to know.

26. UNESCO Publishing. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/global-report-teachers-what-you-need-know UNESCO. (2024). Global education monitoring report 2024/5: Leadership for learning. UNESCO Publishing. https://www.unesco.org/reports/gem-report/en/2024

27. University of Arkansas, Department of Education Reform. (2025). The role of relational trust and intentional care in fostering head of school effectiveness (EDRE Working Paper 2025-02). https://edre.uark.edu/_resources/pdf/edrewp-2025-02.pdf

28. van Laere, K., & Warin, B. (2025). Cultivating inclusive schools: The role of extended professional communities. Educational Studies. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2025.2548263

29. Wang, F., Pollock, K., & Hauseman, D. C. (2022). Inclusive school leadership and student engagement: The mediating role of teacher collaboration. International Journal of Educational Management, 36(6), 1069–1084. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-02-2021-006

30. Wang, Z., & Dai, Y. (2024). A meta-analysis of the correlation between professional learning communities and teacher efficacy/behavior. Teaching and Teacher Education, 143, 104536. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2024.104536

31. Zheng, X., & Li, M. (2025). A systematic review of systems leadership in education. International Journal of Inclusive Education.