

Inclusive education perspectives of teachers, school administrators, and parents of children with special needs

Jessa B. Leones, PhD

Cebu Technological University-Main Campus

Cebu City, Cebu, Philippines

Email: jessaleones20@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explored the perspectives of teachers, school administrators, and parents regarding inclusive education at Liloan Central School for the school year 2025–2026. Specifically, it examined their levels of knowledge and involvement, identified significant differences among these stakeholder groups, and proposed an action plan to enhance inclusive practices. The study employed a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative data from structured questionnaires and qualitative insights from open-ended responses. A total of 85 participants, composed of 50 teachers, 5 school administrators, and 30 parents of children with special needs, were selected using convenience sampling. Findings revealed that all three groups possessed a good understanding of inclusive education, with parents demonstrating slightly higher awareness of their rights and roles. However, gaps were noted in specific areas such as teachers' involvement in Individualized Education Program (IEP) development and collaboration with SPED specialists, as well as parents' familiarity with technical aspects of inclusion. Statistical analysis using one-way ANOVA confirmed significant differences in knowledge and no significant differences in involvement levels among the groups. Thematic analysis of qualitative responses highlighted common challenges, including a lack of training, unclear roles, and insufficient stakeholder collaboration. Based on these findings, an action plan was developed focusing on capacity-building initiatives, stakeholder coordination, and policy alignment. The plan aims to improve inclusive education implementation through targeted training, school-community partnerships, and system-wide support. This study underscores the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement and continuous professional development in fostering inclusive, equitable, and supportive learning environments for children with special needs.

Keywords: special education, inclusive education, stakeholder perspectives, quantitative and qualitative method, action plan, Liloan, Cebu, Philippines

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is generally acknowledged as the most effective method to guarantee that all children, including those with special needs, receive equitable access to excellent education that promotes their development and social integration. It fosters academic skills, as well as social acceptance, respect, and adaptable attitudes, by incorporating children with disabilities into mainstream schools, thereby facilitating their comprehensive development (UNICEF, 2024). Inclusive education is a matter of social justice, promoting the coexistence and learning of historically marginalized pupils alongside their classmates, thereby mitigating stigma and discrimination (PMC, 2019). The collaboration of educators, parents, and administrators is essential for fostering supportive environments that address the needs of diverse learners, emphasizing the significance of comprehending all stakeholders' views in inclusive education.

Moreover, inclusive education corresponds with global commitments to fairness and quality in education, as evidenced by policies and frameworks that promote the inclusion of all excluded groups, including children with disabilities (UNESCO, 2021). Effective inclusive education necessitates adaptable curricula, comprehensive teacher training, and sufficient resources to accommodate diverse learner needs and to prevent the reinforcement of stereotypes or educational disparities (UNESCO, 2021). The involvement of parents is crucial, as their beliefs and activism directly impact educational reforms and the effective inclusion of their children (PMC, 2019). Thus, examining the viewpoints of educators, school administrators, and parents yields essential insights into the obstacles and opportunities associated with implementing inclusive education.

Despite the worldwide focus on inclusive education, the study reveals ongoing disparities and obstacles in its implementation across various nations. Numerous countries face financial constraints, including inadequate funding for adaptive learning materials, assistive technologies, and infrastructure, which hinder effective inclusion. Teacher training programs often exhibit inconsistency and superficiality, resulting in educators being inadequately equipped to address the varied needs of students with special educational requirements. Moreover, congested schools, particularly in rural regions, hinder the successful integration of children with impairments (Dunajeva, 2025). Attitudinal obstacles and incomplete legislative enforcement exacerbate the challenges of achieving inclusive education (UNESCO, 2021).

Furthermore, global research suggests that although regulations generally endorse inclusion, the implementation of these rules is inconsistent, and curricula frequently lack the relevance or adaptability necessary to serve all learners, which can occasionally reinforce exclusion or stigma (UNESCO, 2021). There is a significant deficiency of thorough studies on the viewpoints of all principal stakeholders, particularly parents and school administrators, regarding the efficacy and challenges of inclusive education (Paul et al., 2022). This gap hinders the understanding of the implementation of inclusive education policies and their potential for enhancing fair learning outcomes worldwide.

In the context of the Philippines, studies on inclusive education reveal significant challenges related to teacher readiness, resource accessibility, and community awareness. Research indicates that a minimal proportion of students with disabilities are integrated into general education environments, underscoring a significant disparity in access and inclusion.

Educators frequently report insufficient training and support to effectively implement inclusive approaches, which in turn impacts the educational quality for students with special needs. Disparities in infrastructure and resources between urban and rural areas exacerbate these issues, limiting the effectiveness of inclusive education programs (Dayso et al., 2025).

Moreover, there exists a paucity of studies regarding the viewpoints of school administrators and parents in the Philippines, which is essential for comprehending the systemic and social determinants affecting inclusive education. The lack of extensive data regarding stakeholders' perceptions of inclusion, their challenges, and their roles in supporting children with special needs creates a knowledge deficit that hinders the development of policies and programs tailored to the local context. This disparity highlights the need for research that integrates multiple perspectives to develop more effective and culturally relevant inclusive education practices in the Philippines.

In the Liloan District of Cebu Province, there is a lack of localized research examining the perspectives of educators, school officials, and parents on inclusive education. This gap hinders the understanding of the implementation and experience of inclusive education policies at the community level, where cultural, economic, and infrastructural issues can significantly impact educational practices. In the absence of localized data, it is challenging to address specific obstacles, such as resource limitations, the adequacy of teacher training, and parental engagement, in this district.

The lack of study on the Liloan District hinders the creation of specific solutions that align with the district's socio-cultural characteristics and educational requirements. Comprehending the lived experiences and perspectives of primary stakeholders in this domain is crucial for developing inclusive education programs that are contextually relevant and sustainable. Rectifying this deficiency will further the overarching objective of attaining fair education for children with special needs in the region and yield significant insights for analogous situations in the Philippines.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to determine the knowledge and involvement perspectives of teachers, school administrators, and parents of children with special needs in inclusive education at Liloan Central School for the 2025-2026 school year, which served as the basis for an action plan. Specifically, this sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and highest educational attainment?
2. To what extent are the respondents knowledgeable about inclusive education?
3. To what extent are the respondents involved in inclusive education practices?
4. Is there a significant difference in the level of knowledge and involvement in inclusive education among the three respondent groups?
5. What are the experiences of the respondents regarding the implementation of inclusive education?
6. Based on the findings, what action plan can be proposed?

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively examine the knowledge and involvement of teachers, school administrators, and parents in implementing inclusive education at Liloan Central School, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to inform a proposed action plan. A descriptive-comparative design quantified the levels of understanding and participation among the three respondent groups through tailored structured questionnaires using a 5-point Likert scale, aiming to identify significant differences in their engagement. To enrich the numerical data, open-ended questions were embedded to capture personal experiences, challenges, and suggestions, with responses analyzed thematically to provide deeper insights and contextualize the statistical findings.

The study on inclusive education was conducted at Liloan Central School in Liloan District, a large public school with 2,177 learners and 70 staff. The researcher used convenience sampling to gather data from 100 participants, including 50 teachers, 5 school administrators, and 30 parents of children with special needs. This approach allowed for the collection of valuable insights from key, actively engaged stakeholders, providing a comprehensive and balanced perspective on the understanding and implementation of inclusive education practices within the local context, despite limiting the generalizability of the findings.

The researcher employed a modified structured survey questionnaire adapted from Muega (2016) to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from teachers, school administrators, and parents of children with special needs, aligning with the study's objectives. The instrument consisted of four parts: Part I gathered demographic information to contextualize responses and enable comparative analysis; Part II assessed knowledge of inclusive education through 15 tailored statements rated on a 5-point Likert scale; Part III measured involvement in inclusive practices using another set of 15 role-specific statements; and Part IV included three open-ended questions that explored personal experiences, challenges, and suggestions, which were analyzed thematically. This comprehensive tool effectively captured measurable trends and deeper insights, supporting the development of recommendations to enhance inclusive education at Liloan Central School.

The data collection process for this study was conducted in three key stages: preliminary, data gathering, and post-data gathering to ensure ethical, systematic, and efficient research execution. Initially, the researcher secured approval from the district supervisor and school heads in Liloan District, validated the instrument with experts, and pilot-tested it to refine clarity and structure. Ethical protocols, including informed consent, were strictly followed. During the data gathering stage, questionnaires were distributed to eligible teachers, administrators, and parents either in person or electronically, with clear instructions and support provided. After collection, responses were checked for completeness and encoded for analysis; quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics and One-Way ANOVA, while qualitative responses underwent thematic analysis. The results informed the development of a proposed action plan to enhance inclusive education practices at Liloan Central School.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profile of the respondents

Teachers, predominantly female (74%) and in the 31-40 age group (66%), represent a mid-career workforce with a strong female presence, aligning with global trends. Most teachers hold a bachelor's degree (60%), with many pursuing graduate studies, suggesting a commitment to professional growth. This demographic profile indicates a balance of experience and adaptability, making them well-suited to implement inclusive education practices. However, the low percentage of younger and older teachers, as well as those with completed graduate degrees, could limit diverse perspectives and highlight challenges such as time or financial constraints in pursuing higher education. As such, professional development and support systems should be tailored to this group to enhance their skills and ensure the effective implementation of inclusive education initiatives.

School administrators are a small group of five, slightly female-dominated, and predominantly middle-aged to senior adults. The majority of them are highly educated, with 60% having completed doctoral units and 20% having a doctoral degree, indicating a strong commitment to professional and academic advancement. Their extensive experience and advanced qualifications position them well to lead and manage complex inclusive education programs. However, their age range suggests a need for continuous professional development to keep up with the latest educational innovations. Targeted training and capacity-building programs are essential to translate their academic knowledge into effective leadership and to foster a more inclusive school culture.

The parent respondents are primarily female (80%) and fall within the 41-50 age group (63.33%), reflecting a common trend where mothers are the primary caregivers and advocates for their children's education. Most parents are high school graduates (56.67%), with a smaller portion holding bachelor's degrees or higher. While this demographic shows a strong involvement from middle-aged mothers, the lower educational attainment for a majority of the group suggests that they may face challenges in fully supporting their children's inclusive education due to limited knowledge or resources. Therefore, parental engagement programs and communication from schools need to be accessible and designed to empower parents with diverse educational backgrounds, helping them to participate in their children's learning journey actively.

Respondents are knowledgeable about inclusive education

Based on the data, teachers generally have a good foundational understanding of inclusive education principles and policies, but recognize a need for more practical, skills-based training. With a weighted mean of 3.98, teachers showed strong knowledge of core concepts like principles, objectives, and diversity. However, they reported lower familiarity with specific technical skills like designing or adapting lesson plans and implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This indicates that while teachers grasp the "what and why" of inclusive education, they need additional support and resources to apply these concepts in their

day-to-day classroom activities effectively. Targeted professional development focused on these practical skills is crucial for enhancing instructional quality and supporting diverse learners.

School administrators demonstrated a strong understanding of inclusive education, with an average weighted mean of 4.13. They are confident in their roles as leaders in providing instructional support and fostering an inclusive school culture. Their highest agreement was in understanding their leadership role and recognizing the importance of diversity and ongoing challenges in Philippine schools. While their grasp of inclusive education is solid, a slightly lower mean in familiarity with specific DepEd and international policies suggests a need for continuous updates. This highlights that while administrators are well-equipped to lead, ongoing training is necessary to ensure they are fully aligned with evolving policies and can effectively manage the complexities of inclusive education.

Parents generally showed a strong understanding of inclusive education with an average weighted mean of 4.31. They are highly knowledgeable about what inclusive education means for their child and recognize the importance of collaborating with school staff. They are also aware of their child's rights within the school system. However, their familiarity with technical aspects like Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and knowing how to request support services from the school was slightly lower. This indicates that while parents are informed and engaged advocates for their children, they would benefit from more targeted information and training on the technical components of inclusive education, to further empower them in their partnership with the school.

Respondents' involvement in inclusive education practices

Teachers demonstrated active involvement in inclusive education, with an average weighted mean of 3.98. They are highly engaged in adjusting their teaching methods, fostering a positive classroom culture, and communicating with parents. However, a key gap exists in their participation in more specialized areas, such as the development and implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), where their involvement received a lower mean. This suggests that while teachers are committed to creating inclusive environments and adapting their instruction, they may lack the necessary training or systemic support to fully engage in the collaborative, specialized planning that is crucial for learners with special needs.

School administrators are highly involved in inclusive education, with an average weighted mean of 4.20. They are committed to ensuring physical accessibility, allocating resources, and fostering a school culture of diversity and equity. However, they reported slightly lower involvement in coordinating with parents and specialists and facilitating collaboration between special education and general education teachers. This suggests that while administrators are effective in top-down support, such as policy and resource management, there is room for improvement in their efforts to facilitate direct, inter-departmental collaboration and stakeholder partnerships, which are vital for a holistic approach to inclusive education.

Parents are actively involved in inclusive education, with an average weighted mean of 4.02. They are proactive in attending meetings, monitoring their child's inclusion, and advocating against unfair treatment. A key area for improvement, however, is their limited involvement in consulting with professionals outside of the school, which received a lower mean. This suggests that while parents are highly engaged within the school system, they may face barriers in seeking

external support for their children, such as a lack of awareness, resources, or access. Strengthening communication and providing resources to help parents connect with a broader support network is essential for maximizing their positive impact on their child's inclusive education journey.

Significance of the difference in the level of knowledge in inclusive education

A statistically significant difference exists in the level of inclusive education knowledge among the three groups, with parents scoring the highest, followed by school administrators, and then teachers. The data suggest that parents' direct advocacy for their children and administrators' leadership roles give them a comparative advantage in knowledge. In contrast, teachers' lower scores and greater variability highlight a critical need for enhanced, targeted training and professional development. This finding underscores the importance of focusing on teacher education to bridge this knowledge gap and ensure effective classroom implementation of inclusive practices, fostering a more unified and prosperous approach to inclusive education across all stakeholders.

Significance of the difference in the level of involvement in inclusive education

Although a statistical analysis showed no significant difference in the level of involvement among teachers, administrators, and parents in inclusive education, minor variations in the mean scores suggest that administrators are slightly more involved, followed by parents and then teachers. The similar involvement levels across all three groups indicate a shared commitment to inclusive practices. However, this finding should be interpreted cautiously, as the quality and nature of involvement may vary, with potential challenges such as a lack of clear roles or communication barriers. Therefore, to improve the effectiveness of inclusive education, efforts should focus on strengthening the quality of involvement by fostering genuine collaboration and meaningful partnerships among all stakeholders.

Experiences of the respondents regarding the implementation of inclusive education

What challenges do you experience in implementing or supporting inclusive education?

Teachers experience multifaceted challenges when implementing inclusive education, which can be categorized into five key areas. The most prevalent issue is a shortage of resources, including a lack of appropriate facilities, assistive technologies, and learning materials. This is compounded by inadequate teacher training, as many educators feel they lack the practical skills and continuous professional development needed to manage diverse classrooms and adapt curricula. Oversized class sizes and heavy workloads further complicate this, making it difficult to provide individualized attention. Additionally, teachers struggle with parental engagement, citing issues with communication and a lack of support from some parents. Finally, inconsistent policy implementation and insufficient administrative backing create a gap between what is

mandated and what is achievable in practice, underscoring the need for systemic support and investment in teacher education and infrastructure.

School administrators identify several critical challenges in supporting inclusive education, which closely align with the issues raised by teachers. A primary concern is the lack of appropriate infrastructure and resources, with many school facilities not being fully equipped to meet the needs of exceptional learners. This is directly linked to inadequate funding and a scarcity of specialized materials. Administrators also point to a significant gap in teacher competency, noting that general education teachers often lack the training to identify and instruct students with special needs effectively. They also highlight attitudinal barriers, such as a lack of positive attitudes toward diversity and unclear policies, as major obstacles. Finally, administrators recognize that insufficient community and parental engagement hampers collaborative efforts and limits support for inclusive education. Overall, they believe that overcoming these challenges requires comprehensive teacher training, adequate infrastructure, and a clear policy framework to foster a supportive and inclusive school environment.

Parents face several key challenges in supporting inclusive education, as highlighted by their responses. A significant concern is bullying and negative peer behavior, which they say can cause psychological harm to their children. Parents also frequently mention the lack of sufficient resources and facilities, noting that a scarcity of learning materials and funding limits the quality of support their children receive. They also experience a lack of information and understanding among themselves and the broader community regarding inclusive education. This can make it difficult for them to advocate effectively or access available support. Finally, parents report communication gaps with schools and teachers, which makes it challenging to get timely assistance and collaborate on their children's needs. These challenges underscore the need for effective anti-bullying programs, increased resources, improved communication channels, and parental education to ensure that inclusive education is successful and supportive.

What do you think are the most important improvements needed in inclusive education in your community?

Teachers believe that the most important improvements needed in inclusive education are enhanced teacher training, particularly in specialized skills, and the provision of sufficient resources and infrastructure, such as appropriate physical facilities and assistive technologies. They also stress the importance of community awareness to reduce stigma and foster acceptance, and the need for robust policy enforcement to ensure that inclusive education is effectively implemented. These improvements would provide teachers with the tools, knowledge, and support necessary to create genuinely inclusive classrooms.

School administrators prioritize several key improvements to advance inclusive education. They emphasize the need for better physical infrastructure and learning resources, arguing that schools are currently ill-equipped to meet the diverse needs of all learners. They also call for enhanced stakeholder commitment, particularly from local government units and parents. Additionally, administrators want to hire more specialized staff, like full-time special education teachers, to support general education educators. Finally, they highlight the need for prompt and increased funding to acquire necessary materials and services. These improvements would

provide administrators with the resources and specialized personnel needed to lead and manage inclusive schools effectively.

Parents believe that the most crucial improvements needed for inclusive education include making educational resources more accessible to all students and providing comprehensive training for teachers and parents. They also advocate for stronger anti-bullying initiatives and a greater promotion of respect and acceptance within the school and community. Parents also highlight the need for stronger systemic support from the government, including increased funding and specialized professionals. These improvements are seen as essential for ensuring that their children have a safe, supportive, and equitable learning environment where they can thrive.

How do you ensure that children with special needs are included in school activities?

Teachers ensure the inclusion of children with special needs in school activities by adapting tasks to suit individual capabilities. For example, they will assign roles in a group activity based on a student's strengths or provide accommodations like visual aids. They also focus on creating a positive and inclusive classroom culture by teaching empathy and kindness to all students. This reduces bullying and helps children with special needs feel a sense of belonging. Finally, teachers emphasize collaboration with special education staff, parents, and other peers to provide the necessary support, often using buddy systems to facilitate social integration.

School administrators ensure the inclusion of children with special needs through differentiated and accessible programming. They advise teachers to adapt activities to the specific needs of students, using methods like individualized learning plans and visual aids. Administrators also encourage proactive teacher support by urging them to closely monitor students for academic and social challenges so that targeted interventions can be developed. They focus on fostering an inclusive school culture that supports positive behavior and prevents social isolation. Finally, they stress the importance of collaborative partnerships with families to ensure a holistic support system for the student.

Parents ensure their children with special needs are included in school activities by advocating for personalized accommodations and flexible support from schools. They also emphasize the importance of having well-trained teachers who possess the necessary skills to support their children effectively. Parents prioritize active collaboration with teachers and school staff to ensure their child's needs are met and any issues are addressed quickly. They also highlight the need for a positive, respectful, and motivating school environment that is free from bullying and exclusion.

Findings

The study revealed that the demographic profiles of the respondents influenced their perspectives and participation in inclusive education. Most teachers were female and belonged to the 31–40 age group, suggesting a mid-career workforce with some experience but potential for further professional growth. School administrators were generally older, holding doctoral

degrees, which indicated a high level of formal education and leadership experience. Parents of children with special needs were primarily mothers aged 41–50, most of whom were high school graduates, reflecting common caregiving patterns and moderate educational backgrounds.

In terms of knowledge of inclusive education, all three respondent groups demonstrated a good understanding, though with varying levels of depth. Teachers demonstrated a strong awareness of inclusive principles, teaching strategies, and legal frameworks, but showed less confidence in practical areas, such as the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and lesson adaptation. School administrators showed a high level of familiarity with inclusive policies and leadership responsibilities, particularly in supporting inclusive practices and managing resources. Parents, while not as deeply versed in technical areas, displayed a strong understanding of their children's rights and the importance of collaboration with educators, reflecting a high level of engagement and advocacy.

Regarding involvement in inclusive practices, the findings indicated that teachers were generally active in fostering inclusive classrooms, modifying instruction, and supporting students with special needs. However, their participation in IEP planning and consultation with special education professionals was notably lower. School administrators were highly involved in implementing inclusive policies, allocating resources, and providing leadership for inclusive education. Parents were engaged in supporting their children's education at home and communicating with teachers, though they needed more structured opportunities for involvement in school-based planning and decision-making.

Statistical analysis using ANOVA confirmed that there were significant differences in the levels of knowledge and involvement in inclusive education among teachers, school administrators, and parents. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Qualitative responses to open-ended questions revealed common challenges, including limited training opportunities, unclear role expectations in IEP development, a lack of inclusive infrastructure, and insufficient collaboration among stakeholders. Participants also highlighted the need for more effective communication, consistent monitoring, and targeted interventions to support inclusion more meaningfully.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that inclusive education is recognized and valued by all key stakeholders in Liloan Central School. However, disparities exist in knowledge and involvement levels, particularly in technical areas such as IEPs and instructional accommodations. While teachers, administrators, and parents demonstrate strong support for inclusive education, targeted capacity building and inter-stakeholder collaboration are crucial to enhancing the quality and effectiveness of its implementation.

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that the proposed Action Plan be implemented to address the identified knowledge and involvement gaps among teachers, school administrators, and parents in inclusive education. This Action Plan outlines strategic activities, training programs, and collaborative initiatives designed to strengthen stakeholder engagement and enhance the overall implementation of inclusive practices. Its adoption will help ensure more effective, equitable, and sustainable inclusive education within the school community. Several key recommendations are proposed to enhance the implementation of inclusive education in the

Liloan Central School. First, there is a need to provide regular professional development opportunities for teachers focusing on inclusive pedagogy, classroom accommodations, differentiated instruction, and the preparation and implementation of IEPs. These training programs should be practical, role-specific, and supported by continuous mentoring from experienced special education professionals.

School administrators should be encouraged to attend leadership development workshops that equip them with skills in implementing inclusive policies, managing resources, and engaging stakeholders. They must also strengthen collaboration between general education and special education staff to build a more coordinated and inclusive school culture.

For parents, schools should organize orientation sessions and capacity-building programs that simplify technical inclusive education concepts and empower them to participate confidently in their children's education. Materials and training should be designed to accommodate varying levels of educational attainment, with a focus on parental rights, IEP participation, and at-home learning strategies.

In terms of infrastructure and resources, it is recommended that schools increase investment in assistive devices, adaptive materials, and physical accessibility improvements. Local educational authorities should ensure that schools have the necessary tools to implement inclusive practices effectively and equitably across all grade levels.

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