

**An in-depth analysis of barriers to the effective implementation
of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in SDO-Malaybalay City**

Vicente G. San Miguel*

University of Perpetual Help System DALTA, Las Pinas City, Philippines

ABSTRACT

Inclusive education in the Philippines is strongly supported by national policies that promote equitable learning opportunities for learners with disabilities, with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) serving as a key mechanism for delivering individualized support. However, despite policy mandates, the implementation of IEPs in public schools remains challenged by contextual and operational realities. This study examined the barriers affecting IEP implementation, assessed the effectiveness of inclusive education practices, explored the relationship between inclusive practices and IEP effectiveness, and developed a context-responsive framework to strengthen implementation in the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Malaybalay City. Using a mixed-methods convergent parallel design, quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed concurrently. Quantitative data were obtained through a structured survey administered to 26 teachers from ten public schools, while qualitative insights were gathered through interviews and focus group discussions involving teachers and school administrators. Descriptive statistics and Spearman's rho correlation were used to analyze quantitative data, while thematic analysis was employed to examine qualitative findings. Results revealed that inclusive education practices were highly implemented (grand mean = 4.16), and IEP implementation was perceived as highly effective (grand mean = 3.96), particularly in terms of goal clarity, learner behavioral outcomes, and policy compliance. Despite these positive findings, participants identified significant barriers, including limited access to diagnostic assessments, inadequate instructional resources, heavy teacher workload, inconsistent parental engagement, and complex documentation requirements. Correlation analysis indicated strong positive relationships between inclusive education practices and IEP effectiveness, with learner participation ($\rho = .83$) and parental and community involvement ($\rho = .81$) emerging as the strongest contributors to successful implementation. The study concludes that while IEP implementation in SDO–Malaybalay City demonstrates considerable strengths, its long-term sustainability depends on strengthening assessment systems, fostering collaborative partnerships, simplifying administrative processes, and enhancing family engagement. These findings informed the development of the S.T.R.O.N.G.-IEP+ Model, a systems-oriented framework designed to bridge policy and practice and promote sustainable, learner-centered inclusive education in Philippine public schools.

Keywords: Inclusive education, individualized education plans (IEPs), learners with disabilities, inclusive practices, IEP implementation.

*Corresponding author / Email: vicente.sanmiguel@deped.gov.ph
DOI: <http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS05031291>

Recommended citation:

San Miguel, V. G. (2026). An in-depth analysis of barriers to the effective implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in SDO-Malaybalay City. *Pantao (International Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences)* 5 (3), 636-651. <http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS05031291>

Date Submitted: June 25, 2026

Date Accepted: July 1, 2026

Date Published: June 8, 2026

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is built on the fundamental belief that every learner, regardless of ability, background, or circumstance, deserves access to quality education in an environment where they can participate, learn, and thrive.

More than simply placing learners with disabilities in regular classrooms, inclusive education seeks to ensure that schools respond to the diverse learning needs of every student through appropriate support, equitable opportunities, and meaningful participation. Central to this commitment is the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), a learner-centered document that guides teachers in designing appropriate goals, instructional strategies, accommodations, and interventions that enable learners with disabilities to achieve their fullest potential. As educational systems continue to strengthen inclusive practices, the effective implementation of IEPs has become increasingly recognized as a critical indicator of educational quality and equity.

The importance of inclusive education is reinforced by international and national policy frameworks that recognize education as a fundamental human right. Global instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025, and Sustainable Development Goal 4 all emphasize the need to provide inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all learners. In the Philippine context, this commitment is reflected in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Republic Act No. 7277 (Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities), Republic Act No. 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013), and Republic Act No. 11650, as well as Department of Education policies such as DepEd Orders Nos. 26, s. 1997; 72, s. 2009; 29, s. 2018; 21, s. 2019; and 44, s. 2021, all of which provide the legal and policy foundations for inclusive education and the implementation of IEPs.

Despite these comprehensive policy frameworks, translating inclusive education into effective classroom practice remains a significant challenge. Recent studies have shown that schools continue to experience persistent barriers related to inadequate teacher preparation, limited instructional and assistive resources, inconsistent stakeholder collaboration, and insufficient institutional support (Lingayon, 2025; Geronimo et al., 2024; Beltran et al., 2025). Other local investigations have similarly reported that large class sizes, inadequate professional development, weak monitoring systems, and limited access to specialized services continue to hinder the successful implementation of IEPs in Philippine public schools, despite existing legal mandates (Ilagan City, 2023; Camarines Norte, 2024). These findings suggest that while policies have established a strong framework for inclusion, the realities experienced by teachers often prevent the consistent delivery of individualized educational support.

Although a growing body of literature has examined inclusive education, much of the existing research has focused on teacher preparedness, inclusive instructional practices, or policy implementation in general. Comparatively few studies have provided a comprehensive examination of the barriers that specifically affect the implementation of Individualized Education Plans. Likewise, limited research has explored how inclusive education practices influence the effectiveness of IEP implementation while simultaneously examining the experiences of teachers responsible for translating policy into classroom practice. This gap is particularly evident in local school divisions, where contextual realities often differ from those reported in national or metropolitan settings.

The Schools Division Office (SDO) of Malaybalay City presents a relevant context for examining these issues. The division has continuously strengthened its commitment to inclusive education through the expansion of Special Education (SPED) programs, collaborative partnerships, and various learner support initiatives. Nevertheless, significant challenges remain, including shortages of trained SPED personnel, limited access to assistive technologies and instructional resources, inconsistent implementation of IEPs, and varying levels of stakeholder engagement. With only a limited number of qualified SPED teachers serving hundreds of learners with disabilities, schools continue to experience difficulties in providing individualized educational support that fully responds to learner needs. Similar implementation concerns have also been reported in studies conducted in Davao City (2024) and Pili East District (2025), indicating that these challenges extend beyond a single locality.

Furthermore, there remains limited empirical evidence that integrates quantitative measures of IEP implementation effectiveness with qualitative accounts of teachers' experiences to explain why implementation barriers persist despite strong policy support. Understanding these realities is essential because effective IEP implementation depends not only on policy compliance but also on the interaction of teacher competence, school leadership, collaboration among stakeholders, availability of resources, and continuous institutional support. Examining these interconnected factors can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how inclusive education can be strengthened in Philippine public schools.

Recognizing these concerns, the present study seeks to conduct an in-depth analysis of the barriers affecting the effective implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in the Schools Division Office of Malaybalay City. Specifically, it examines inclusive education practices that support IEP implementation, determines the effectiveness of current IEP practices, identifies the barriers encountered by teachers, explores how schools respond to these challenges, and develops a context-responsive framework that can strengthen IEP implementation within the Philippine public school system. Ultimately, this study aims to bridge the gap between policy and practice by generating evidence-based recommendations that will contribute to more responsive, equitable, and sustainable inclusive education for learners with disabilities.

Statement of the problem

The purpose of this study was to conduct an in-depth analysis of the barriers affecting the effective implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Malaybalay City. Specifically, the study sought to examine the implementation of inclusive education practices, determine the effectiveness of IEP implementation, identify the barriers encountered by teachers, and develop a context responsive framework to strengthen inclusive education in Philippine public schools.

More specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, highest educational attainment, years of teaching experience, and SPED related training or specialization?
2. What is the level of implementation of inclusive education practices that support Individualized Education Plan (IEP) implementation in terms of classroom adaptations and differentiated instruction, learner participation and social inclusion, teacher collaboration and support systems, and parental and community involvement?
3. What is the level of effectiveness of Individualized Education Plan (IEP) implementation in terms of the quality of IEPs developed, improvement in learner

outcomes, compliance with inclusive education policies, and teacher and stakeholder engagement?

4. What are the perceived barriers affecting the effective implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)?
5. How do schools and teachers manage and respond to the barriers affecting IEP implementation?
6. Is there a significant relationship between inclusive education practices and the perceived effectiveness of Individualized Education Plan (IEP) implementation?
7. Based on the findings of the study, what context responsive framework or model can be developed to strengthen the effective implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and promote greater alignment with inclusive education policies in the Philippine public school system?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, specifically the convergent parallel design, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the barriers affecting the effective implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Malaybalay City. The use of this design allowed the researcher to collect quantitative and qualitative data during the same phase of the study, analyze them separately, and integrate the findings during interpretation.

The quantitative component provided measurable information on inclusive education practices, the effectiveness of IEP implementation, and the barriers experienced by teachers. Meanwhile, the qualitative component captured the participants' experiences, perspectives, and practical insights that could not be fully explained through numerical data alone. By combining both forms of evidence, the study generated a more complete and balanced understanding of the realities surrounding IEP implementation in public schools.

The study was conducted in selected public elementary and secondary schools under the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Malaybalay City, Bukidnon. These schools were chosen because they actively implement inclusive education and Special Education (SPED) programs, making them appropriate settings for examining the implementation of Individualized Education Plans.

The participating schools included Malaybalay City Central School, Casisang Central Integrated School, Kalasungay Central School, Aglayan Central School, Macote Elementary School, Bangcud Central School, Linabo Central School, Bukidnon National High School, Bangcud National High School, and Managok Central School. These schools represent diverse educational settings that provide valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges encountered in implementing inclusive education within the division.

The respondents of the study consisted of twenty-six (26) teachers who were directly involved in the education of learners with disabilities. These included Special Education (SPED) teachers and general education teachers assigned to inclusive classrooms. Because they are actively engaged in developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating Individualized Education Plans, they were considered the most appropriate participants for the quantitative phase of the study.

To enrich the survey findings, selected teachers and school administrators also participated in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Their experiences and professional insights provided a deeper understanding of the barriers encountered in implementing IEPs and the strategies adopted by schools to address these challenges.

The primary instrument used in this study was a researcher-developed questionnaire designed to gather quantitative data. The questionnaire consisted of sections that measured the

respondents' demographic profile, inclusive education practices, perceived barriers to IEP implementation, school responses to these barriers, and the overall effectiveness of IEP implementation. A five-point Likert scale was used to determine the extent to which each indicator was practiced or observed.

To complement the survey data, the researcher also prepared semi-structured interview guides for the qualitative phase of the study. These guides encouraged participants to share their experiences in developing and implementing IEPs, the challenges they encountered, and the practices they considered effective in supporting learners with disabilities.

Before the actual data collection, the research instruments underwent expert validation to establish content validity and were subjected to reliability testing to ensure that they consistently measured the intended variables. These procedures helped strengthen the credibility and accuracy of the data gathered.

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher secured the necessary approvals from the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA, the Schools Division Office of Malaybalay City, and the school heads of the participating schools. Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and their voluntary participation was ensured through the signing of an informed consent form. Confidentiality, anonymity, and the privacy of all respondents were likewise maintained.

The quantitative data were collected through the administration of the validated questionnaires using printed and online formats, depending on the availability and preference of the respondents. After the survey, selected participants were invited to participate in interviews and focus group discussions. These sessions allowed the participants to describe their experiences more fully and provided additional explanations for the quantitative findings. With the participants' consent, the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and prepared for analysis. Throughout the entire process, the researcher ensured that all information gathered was handled responsibly and used solely for academic purposes.

The quantitative data were analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while weighted means and standard deviations were employed to determine the levels of inclusive education practices, perceived barriers, and the effectiveness of IEP implementation. To determine whether a significant relationship existed between inclusive education practices and the effectiveness of IEP implementation, Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was utilized.

The qualitative data gathered from the interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis. Responses were carefully reviewed, coded, and organized into meaningful categories from which common themes emerged. These themes provided a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences, the barriers they encountered, and the strategies they used in implementing IEPs.

Finally, the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative phases were compared and integrated through the convergent parallel mixed-methods approach. This process of triangulation strengthened the validity of the findings by allowing the numerical results to be supported and explained by the participants' narratives, resulting in a richer and more comprehensive understanding of IEP implementation in the Schools Division Office of Malaybalay City.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined the barriers to the effective implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in selected public schools within the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Malaybalay City using a convergent mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were collected from 26 teacher-respondents and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Spearman's rho correlation, while qualitative evidence from interviews and focus group discussions provided contextual explanations for the statistical findings. The integration of both datasets enabled a comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences, revealing not only the extent of inclusive education practices and IEP implementation but also the institutional conditions that influence their effectiveness.

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The respondents represent a professionally experienced and academically qualified teaching workforce. Nearly one-third (30.8%) were between 41 and 45 years old, suggesting that most participants were in the mid-career stage, where accumulated teaching experience is often accompanied by greater instructional confidence and reflective practice. Previous studies have shown that experienced teachers are generally more capable of adapting instruction to accommodate learner diversity because they have developed practical strategies through years of classroom experience (Gheyssens et al., 2020; Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021).

Female teachers comprised 76.9% of the respondents, reflecting the demographic composition commonly observed in Philippine basic education. Although gender was not examined as a predictive variable, this distribution indicates that the findings largely capture the experiences of female educators who continue to play a central role in implementing inclusive education. Their perspectives on collaboration, learner support, and family engagement therefore provide important insights into current inclusive practices.

The respondents also demonstrated a high level of academic preparation. Almost half (46.2%) had completed doctoral units, while 42.3% had master's degree units, indicating strong engagement in graduate education and continuous professional learning. Such qualifications suggest familiarity with evidence-based instructional approaches and current educational research. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that professional competence alone does not ensure successful implementation of IEPs. This observation supports Lambrecht et al. (2022), who argue that teachers' knowledge translates into effective practice only when accompanied by supportive organizational structures, sufficient resources, and collaborative professional environments.

Similarly, the majority of respondents had between 11 and 15 years of teaching experience and had participated in SPED-related professional development, including international training. These findings suggest that the participating teachers possess both theoretical knowledge and practical experience to implement inclusive education effectively. However, the qualitative findings demonstrate that teacher competence is only one component of successful implementation. Institutional support, leadership commitment, and access to resources ultimately determine whether professional expertise can be translated into meaningful educational outcomes.

Inclusive Education Practices

Inclusive education practices were rated highly practiced (Grand Mean = 4.16), indicating that inclusive teaching has become an established component of classroom practice rather than merely a policy expectation. This finding reflects the gradual institutionalization of

inclusive education within participating schools, where teachers routinely modify instruction to address learner diversity. Similar conclusions have been reported by Deunk et al. (2018), who found that differentiated instruction becomes more effective when teachers intentionally adapt content, instructional processes, and assessment to learners' varying abilities.

Among the domains examined, Classroom Adaptations and Differentiated Instruction received one of the highest ratings ($M = 4.27$), with lesson modification emerging as the strongest practice ($M = 4.58$). These findings suggest that teachers actively adjust instructional strategies to accommodate individual learning needs, reflecting principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which advocate flexible instructional approaches that minimize learning barriers (Oswal et al., 2025). However, comparatively lower ratings for flexible pacing and assistive technology indicate that instructional innovation remains constrained by limited technological resources and infrastructure. As Fernández-Batanero et al. (2022) observed, successful technology integration requires both teacher competence and institutional investment, suggesting that resource limitations continue to restrict the full realization of inclusive instruction.

Learner Participation and Social Inclusion demonstrated the highest level of implementation ($M = 4.38$), with individualized interventions receiving the strongest rating ($M = 4.81$). This finding underscores the importance of learner-centered approaches in promoting meaningful participation among students with diverse educational needs. Consistent with Jung et al. (2018), individualized interventions appear to enhance learner engagement and classroom participation by addressing specific learning barriers. Nevertheless, slightly lower ratings for social-emotional development indicate that fostering emotional well-being and peer relationships requires more sustained and intentional interventions. Hassani and Schwab (2021) similarly argue that social inclusion develops gradually and depends on consistent opportunities for meaningful peer interaction beyond instructional accommodations alone.

Teacher collaboration was likewise rated highly ($M = 3.99$), particularly in peer mentoring and team teaching ($M = 4.23$). These findings reinforce the view that collaborative professional practices enable teachers to exchange expertise, solve instructional challenges collectively, and strengthen inclusive instruction. Jortveit and Kovac (2022) likewise emphasize that collaborative teaching cultures enhance both instructional quality and teachers' confidence in implementing inclusive education. However, lower ratings for administrative support and structured collaboration indicate that collaboration remains largely dependent on individual initiative rather than institutionalized systems. This finding highlights the continuing need for school leadership to establish sustainable collaborative structures that extend beyond informal professional relationships.

Parental and community involvement also received favorable ratings ($M = 4.00$), particularly in mobilizing resources and support services. These findings support Mueller and Vick (2019), who argue that meaningful family-school partnerships strengthen learner outcomes by extending educational support beyond the classroom. However, inconsistencies in communication and parental participation suggest that engagement remains uneven across families. Johnston and Burke (2024) contend that effective partnerships require systematic communication structures and shared decision-making processes rather than occasional participation, providing a plausible explanation for the observed variability.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that inclusive education practices have become embedded in teachers' daily instructional routines. Nevertheless, sustaining these practices requires institutional conditions that support innovation, collaboration, and continuous professional learning.

Effectiveness of IEP Implementation

The implementation of Individualized Education Plans was rated highly effective (Grand Mean = 3.96), indicating that IEPs generally function as intended in supporting learners with special educational needs. However, the findings also suggest that effectiveness varies across implementation domains, implying that successful implementation extends beyond compliance with procedural requirements.

The quality of IEP development emerged as one of the strongest dimensions ($M = 4.16$). Respondents consistently reported developing clear instructional goals and regularly reviewing learner progress, reflecting adherence to recommended IEP practices. These findings support Kurth et al. (2022), who identified measurable goals and continuous monitoring as essential characteristics of effective IEPs. However, collaborative planning received comparatively lower ratings, suggesting that stakeholder participation remains an area requiring improvement. Ruble et al. (2019) similarly found that multidisciplinary collaboration is often the weakest component of IEP development despite its recognized importance.

Learner outcomes were likewise rated positively ($M = 4.09$), with behavioral improvement representing the most consistent outcome. This finding suggests that individualized interventions effectively promote classroom adjustment, engagement, and behavioral regulation. Consistent with Shepley et al. (2023), behavioral gains often emerge earlier than measurable academic improvements because behavioral interventions produce more immediate observable changes. In contrast, academic progress demonstrated greater variability, supporting Findley et al. (2022), who argue that sustained academic improvement depends on continuous monitoring, instructional fidelity, and consistent implementation of individualized accommodations.

Policy compliance and stakeholder engagement also received favorable evaluations, reflecting respondents' recognition of leadership support in implementing inclusive education policies. Nevertheless, variability in monitoring mechanisms, documentation processes, and professional development opportunities suggests that implementation quality differs across schools. These findings reinforce Hardy and Woodcock's (2024) assertion that leadership influences not only policy dissemination but also the sustainability of inclusive educational practices through organizational support and continuous professional learning.

Perceived Barriers to IEP Implementation

Although quantitative findings portray generally effective implementation, qualitative findings reveal that teachers continue to encounter significant structural barriers. Participants consistently identified inadequate diagnostic services, shortages of instructional resources and specialized personnel, heavy teaching workloads, large class sizes, inconsistent parental participation, extensive documentation requirements, and varying levels of administrative support as major obstacles to effective IEP implementation.

Importantly, these barriers are largely systemic rather than individual. Teachers demonstrated commitment, professional competence, and willingness to implement inclusive education, yet their efforts were frequently constrained by organizational conditions beyond their control. This finding is consistent with Rashid and Wong (2023), who argue that institutional capacity, rather than teacher readiness alone, determines the success of inclusive education initiatives.

These results also reinforce the Social Model of Disability, which conceptualizes disability as arising from environmental and systemic barriers rather than individual impairments (Florian & Beaton, 2022). The findings suggest that improving IEP implementation requires strengthening institutional systems that enable teachers to deliver

individualized instruction effectively, rather than focusing solely on enhancing teacher competence.

Relationship Between Inclusive Education Practices and IEP Effectiveness

Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between inclusive education practices and IEP effectiveness ($p = .79$), indicating that improvements in inclusive practices are associated with more effective implementation of Individualized Education Plans. The strongest associations were observed for learner participation ($p = .83$) and parental involvement ($p = .81$), emphasizing the central role of active engagement in achieving successful educational outcomes.

These findings extend previous work by Ni'mah and Ni'am (2024), demonstrating that effective IEP implementation depends not only on instructional quality but also on meaningful collaboration among teachers, learners, families, and school communities. Inclusive education therefore functions as an interconnected system in which improvements in one domain reinforce effectiveness across other implementation processes.

Overall Interpretation

Taken together, the findings portray IEP implementation in SDO Malaybalay City as a system characterized by both substantial progress and persistent institutional challenges. Teachers have largely embraced inclusive education through differentiated instruction, learner-centered pedagogies, and collaborative professional practices. These efforts have translated into generally effective IEP implementation and positive learner outcomes.

However, the qualitative evidence demonstrates that teacher commitment alone cannot overcome structural limitations. Persistent constraints related to diagnostic services, resource availability, leadership support, documentation requirements, and family engagement continue to influence the consistency and sustainability of implementation. These findings align with Implementation Science Theory (Fontaine et al., 2025), which argues that successful implementation depends on the interaction among individual competence, organizational capacity, leadership, and contextual support systems.

The study therefore contributes to the growing body of evidence that effective IEP implementation is not simply a function of teacher expertise. Rather, it emerges from the dynamic interaction between capable educators and supportive educational systems. Strengthening diagnostic services, institutional collaboration, school leadership, professional learning opportunities, and family partnerships will be essential to achieving equitable, sustainable, and high-quality inclusive education. These findings underscore that the future of inclusive education lies not merely in improving classroom practice, but in developing educational systems that consistently enable teachers to translate their professional competence into meaningful learning opportunities for every child.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in selected public schools within the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Malaybalay City by exploring teachers' demographic characteristics, the extent of inclusive education practices, the effectiveness of IEP implementation, the barriers encountered during implementation, and the relationship between inclusive education practices and IEP effectiveness. By integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of

how IEPs are implemented in actual school settings and the conditions that influence their success.

The findings reveal that the participating teachers constitute a professionally competent and academically prepared workforce. Most respondents were experienced mid-career educators with graduate-level qualifications and specialized training in special education. These characteristics suggest that teachers possess the knowledge, skills, and professional readiness needed to implement inclusive education. However, the study also demonstrates that teacher competence alone is insufficient to guarantee effective implementation. The extent to which teachers can translate their expertise into meaningful educational outcomes depends largely on the institutional environment in which they work.

Inclusive education practices were found to be consistently implemented across participating schools, particularly in differentiated instruction, learner participation, classroom adaptation, and collaborative teaching. Likewise, IEP implementation was generally perceived to be highly effective, with teachers demonstrating strength in developing individualized goals, monitoring learner progress, and promoting positive behavioral outcomes. These findings indicate that inclusive education has progressed beyond policy compliance and has become an integral part of everyday classroom practice. Nevertheless, variations in academic outcomes, stakeholder engagement, and collaborative planning suggest that the quality of implementation remains inconsistent across schools.

Despite these encouraging results, the study identified several persistent barriers that continue to influence IEP implementation. Limited access to diagnostic assessments, shortages of instructional resources and specialized personnel, heavy teaching workloads, extensive documentation requirements, inconsistent parental participation, and variations in administrative support emerged as the most significant challenges. Importantly, these obstacles are largely systemic rather than individual. Teachers consistently demonstrated commitment to inclusive education, yet their ability to implement high-quality IEPs was often constrained by organizational conditions beyond their control.

A key contribution of this study is the demonstration of a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between inclusive education practices and the effectiveness of IEP implementation. The findings indicate that schools with stronger learner participation, collaborative practices, and family engagement also reported more effective IEP implementation. This relationship reinforces the understanding that successful inclusion is not achieved through instructional strategies alone but through the combined efforts of teachers, school leaders, families, and the wider community. Effective IEP implementation therefore depends on the quality of the educational ecosystem that surrounds the learner.

Taken together, the findings suggest that inclusive education in SDO Malaybalay City has established a solid foundation but has not yet achieved full consistency across all school contexts. While teachers have shown remarkable adaptability, commitment, and professionalism, the sustainability of inclusive practices cannot continue to rely primarily on individual effort. Lasting improvement requires educational systems that provide timely diagnostic services, sufficient instructional resources, collaborative professional cultures, responsive leadership, and meaningful family partnerships. Strengthening these interconnected systems will enable schools to move from isolated examples of effective practice toward a more equitable and consistently inclusive educational environment.

The study therefore concludes that the effectiveness of Individualized Education Plans is shaped not only by the competence of teachers but also by the capacity of schools to create conditions in which inclusive education can flourish. Inclusive education is most successful when policy, leadership, collaboration, resources, and community engagement work together to support individualized learning. As schools continue to strengthen these dimensions, IEPs

can become more than compliance documents—they can serve as dynamic instruments that ensure every learner receives equitable, responsive, and meaningful educational opportunities.

REFERENCES

- Al-Moteri, M., et al. (2025). Strengthening educator competencies through implementation science in inclusive education. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 98, 102–118.
- Alnahdi, G., et al. (2022). Inclusive education practices and student participation outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Special Education Research*, 45(2), 145–160.
- Azad, G., et al. (2021). Barriers to collaboration in special education: A review of stakeholder communication systems. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 105, 103–115.
- Baxter, J., & Kilderry, A. (2022). Family–school partnerships in inclusive education: Building effective communication systems. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 26(4), 367–382.
- Beltran, M., et al. (2025). Inclusive education policy implementation in Philippine public schools. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 45(1), 23–39.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2023). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Davies, L., & Soni, R. (2025). Teacher perspectives on inclusive pedagogy and collaborative instruction. *Journal of Inclusive Education*, 29(3), 210–226.
- Deunk, M. I., et al. (2018). Effective differentiation practices in primary education: A systematic review. *Educational Research Review*, 24, 31–54.
- Donaire, M., et al. (2024). Teacher preparedness and inclusive education outcomes in Southeast Asia. *Education Sciences*, 14(2), 145–162.
- Fetters, M. D., & Molina-Azorin, J. F. (2020). Utilizing mixed methods research in education: Integration and best practices. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 14(3), 301–317.
- Findley, M., et al. (2022). Improving IEP goal quality and alignment with instruction. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 35(1), 17–29.
- Florian, L., & Beaton, M. (2022). Inclusive education in practice: Rethinking classroom approaches. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 115, 103–133.

- Forlin, C., & Sin, K. (2021). Teacher training and attitudes toward inclusive education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 25(6), 661–677.
- Fraenkel, J. R., Wallen, N. E., & Hyun, H. H. (2021). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (11th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Garrote, A., et al. (2017). Social participation of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 32(4), 513–528.
- Gaspar, R. (2025). Student participation in IEP processes: Impact on self-regulation and learning outcomes. *Educational Psychology Review*, 37, 203–220.
- Geronimo, L., et al. (2024). Inclusive education practices in Philippine schools. *Philippine Journal of Education*, 98(1), 45–62.
- Gheysens, E., et al. (2020). Differentiated instruction practices and teacher perceptions. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 87, 102–115.
- Hardy, I., & Woodcock, S. (2024). Policy enactment in education: Translating mandates into practice. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*, 32(18), 1–22.
- Hassani, S., & Schwab, S. (2021). Social-emotional learning in inclusive settings. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 25(10), 1131–1146.
- Hedin, L., & DeSpain, S. (2018). Developing effective IEP goals. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 54(2), 89–97.
- Hernández-Saca, D., et al. (2023). Inclusive education as systemic reform. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 33(4), 265–278.
- Holmqvist, M., & Lelinge, B. (2021). Collaborative professional development in inclusive education. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(3), 350–365.
- Huang, Y., et al. (2023). Student agency and goal setting in special education. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 38(2), 85–96.
- Johnston, M., & Burke, A. (2024). Strengthening stakeholder engagement in inclusive education systems. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 38(1), 55–72.
- Jortveit, M., & Kovac, V. (2022). Co-teaching as a collaborative model in inclusive education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 112, 103–119.
- Jung, P. G., et al. (2018). Data-based individualization in special education. *Exceptional Children*, 84(4), 371–390.
- King-Sears, M. E., et al. (2021). Co-teaching and inclusive practices: Evidence-based approaches. *Remedial and Special Education*, 42(5), 271–285.
- Kuyini, A. B., et al. (2021). Sampling techniques in educational research. *African Educational Research Journal*, 9(3), 78–85.

Lambrecht, J., et al. (2022). Leadership for inclusive education: A review of practices. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 50(2), 239–256.

Lingayon, R. (2025). Barriers to inclusive education implementation in the Philippines. *Philippine Educational Research Journal*, 40(1), 12–28.

Lyons-Vitalone, K. (2024). Challenges of instructional delivery in inclusive classrooms. *Journal of Special Education Teaching*, 23(1), 45–59.

Mates, L. (2025). Effective IEP implementation and learner outcomes. *Journal of Learning Support*, 17(2), 89–104.

Melgarejo, J., et al. (2020). Monitoring and evaluation in education policy implementation. *Educational Evaluation Review*, 12(3), 66–81.

Morales, J., & Chen, L. (2024). Universal Design for Learning in inclusive classrooms. *Journal of Educational Innovation*, 19(2), 112–130.

Mueller, T., & Vick, A. (2019). Parent involvement in IEP processes. *Journal of Special Education*, 53(3), 146–158.

Murillo-Jiménez, P., et al. (2025). System-level influences on inclusive education effectiveness. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 99, 102–120.

Ni'mah, S., & Ni'am, A. (2024). Implementation fidelity of IEPs and student outcomes. *Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28(1), 75–91.

OECD. (2022). *Education policy outlook 2022*. OECD Publishing.

OECD. (2023). *Teachers and school leaders as lifelong learners*. OECD Publishing.

Opertti, R., Walker, Z., & Zhang, Y. (2022). Curriculum flexibility in inclusive education. *Prospects*, 52(1), 17–33.

Oswal, S., et al. (2025). Designing accessible learning environments through UDL. *Educational Technology Research*, 73(1), 145–160.

Palinkas, L. A., et al. (2023). Purposeful sampling in qualitative research synthesis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 33(4), 623–635.

Patel, J., & Grayson, T. (2025). Enhancing IEP implementation through UDL. *Educational Practice Review*, 21(2), 89–103.

Peltomäki, A., et al. (2021). Collaborative practices in IEP development. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 36(2), 173–189.

Perez, R., et al. (2025). Individualized instruction and student learning outcomes. *Journal of Special Education Research*, 48(1), 33–49.

Rademaker, F., et al. (2020). Social inclusion in classrooms: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 32(1), 207–232.

Rahayu, T., et al. (2025). Barriers in IEP implementation: A systematic review. *Inclusive Education Journal*, 14(2), 98–115.

Rashid, A. (2023). Implementation challenges of IEPs. *Journal of Special Needs Education*, 29(3), 155–170.

Rashid, A., & Wong, M. (2023). Teacher perspectives on barriers to IEP implementation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 119, 103847.

Scheef, A., Yeager, B., & Deardorff, M. (2024). Organizational barriers in inclusive education systems. *Educational Policy Analysis*, 35(2), 112–128.

Sharma, U., Aiello, P., & Pace, E. (2022). Preparing teachers for inclusive education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 26(3), 225–241.

Shepley, C., et al. (2023). Progress monitoring in special education. *Exceptional Children*, 89(2), 145–162.

Smale-Jacobse, A., et al. (2019). Differentiated instruction in practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 83, 154–168.

Strogilos, V., et al. (2023). Effects of co-teaching on inclusive education outcomes. *Journal of Inclusive Education*, 27(4), 481–498.

Tedeschi, A. (2024). Social model of disability in education. *Disability Studies Journal*, 19(1), 45–60.

UNESCO. (2021). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. UNESCO.

Woods, A., et al. (2024). Using IEPs as tools for instructional improvement. *Journal of Educational Leadership*, 82(1), 44–58.

Woulfin, S., & Jones, B. (2022). Policy implementation in schools. *Educational Research Review*, 34, 100–115.

Xu, X., et al. (2021). Sampling strategies in educational research. *International Journal of Research Methods*, 15(2), 78–89.

Yusoff, M. S. B. (2020). ABC of content validation for educational instruments. *Education in Medicine Journal*, 12(2), 49–56.